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ON LIFE & LETTERS

BY ANATOLE FRANCE

FIRST SERIES

TRANSLATED BY
A. W. EVANS

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PREFACE

TO MONSIEUR ADRIEN HÉBRARD, SENATOR, EDITOR OF THE "TEMPS"

EAR SIR,—Permit me to offer you this little book; I certainly owe it to you since, assuredly, but for you it would not be in existence. I had hardly any thought of writing critical articles for a newspaper at the time when you invited me to the "Temps." Your choice astonished me and I am still surprised at it. How was it possible for a mind so keen, so practical, and so versatile as yours, in constant communion with everybody and everything, a mind in such full possession of life and always steeped in affairs, to have conceived a liking for thoughts so grave, sober, and detached as mine?

But nothing is alien from you, not even meditation. Those who know you best declare that there is in you something of the dreamer. They are not mistaken. Only you dream very rapidly. You possess in everything the genius of promptness in its highest degree. The facility with which you think is prodigious. You understand everything in a flash. Your conversation, as rapid and brilliant as the light, always dazzles me. Yet it is always judicious. To

objective art, and all those who deceive themselves into the belief that they put anything but their own personalities into their work are dupes of the most fallacious of illusions. The truth is that we can never get outside ourselves. That is one of our greatest misfortunes. What would we not give to be able for a moment to see heaven and earth through the many-faceted eye of a fly, or to comprehend nature with the rude and simple brain of an orang-outang? But to do so is absolutely forbidden us. We cannot, like Tiresias, be a man and have recollections of having been a woman. We are shut up in our own personality as if in a perpetual prison. The best thing for us, it seems to me, is to admit this frightful condition with a good grace, and to confess that we speak of ourselves every time we have not strength enough to remain silent.

To be quite frank, the critic ought to say :

"Gentlemen, I am going to speak about myself apropos of Shakspeare, apropos of Racine, or of Pascal, or of Goethe. The occasion at least is excellent enough."

I had the honour of knowing M. Cuvillier-Fleury, who was a veteran critic and one with firm convictions. One day, when I went to see him at his little house in the Avenue Raphaël, he showed me the modest library of which he was proud.

"Sir," said he, "eloquence, literature, philosophy, history, all branches are represented here, not to mention criticism, which includes all the others. Yes, sir, the critic is in turn an orator, a philosopher, and an historian."

M. Cuvillier-Fleury was right. The critic is all this, or at least he may be. He has the opportunity for displaying the rarest, the most manifold, and the

most varied of intellectual faculties. And when he is a Sainte-Beuve, a Taine, a J. J. Weiss, a Jules Lemaître, a Ferdinand Brunetière, he does not fail to do so. Without going outside himself, he constructs the intellectual history of man. Criticism is the last in date of all literary forms; it will perhaps end by absorbing them all. It is admirably adapted to a very civilised society whose memories are rich and whose traditions are already long. It is particularly suited to a curious, learned, and polished race of men. In order to prosper, it demands more culture than all other literary forms. It had for its creators Montaigne, Saint-Évremond, Bayle, and Montesquieu. It proceeds at once from philosophy and from history. It needed, in order to develop, an epoch of absolute intellectual liberty. It replaces theology, and if we look for the universal doctor, the St. Thomas Aquinas of the nineteenth century, is it not of Sainte-Beuve that we must think?

He was a saint of criticism, and I venerate his memory. But, to speak frankly to you, dear Monsieur Hébrard, I believe it is wiser to plant cabbages than to write books.

There are bookish souls for whom the universe is but paper and ink. The man whose body is animated by such a soul spends his life before his desk, without any care for the realities whose graphic representation he studies so obstinately. Of the beauty of women he knows only what has been written about it. He knows of the labours, sufferings, and hopes of men only what can be sewn on to tapes and bound in morocco. He is monstrous and ignorant. He has never looked out of the window. Such was the worthy Peignot, who collected other people's opinions to make books out

of them. Nothing had ever disturbed him. He conceived of passions as subjects for monographs, and knew that nations perish in a certain number of octavo pages. Up to the day of his death he toiled with an equal ardour and without ever understanding anything. That is why work was not bitter to him. He is to be envied, if peace of heart can be won only at such a cost.

Blessed be books if life can flow among them in a long and pleasant childhood! Gustave Doré, who sometimes imprinted a certain feeling of profound fantasy and strange poetry upon his most comic drawings, once gave us, almost without knowing it, the ironical and touching emblem of those existences whom the religion of books consoles for every painful reality. In the monk Nestor, who wrote a chronicle during barbarous and troubled times, he has symbolised the whole race of bibliomaniacs and bibliographists. His drawing is not larger than a hand's-breadth, but he who has once seen it can never forget it. You will find it in a series of caricatures which he published at the time of the Crimean War under the title of "La Sainte Russie," and which, I dare maintain, is not the happiest inspiration of his talent and his patriotism.

You ought to see that Nestor. He is in his cell with his books and papers. Seated like a man who is fond of sitting, his head buried in his cowl, he is writing. All the country round is given up to fire and massacre. Arrows darken the air. Nestor's monastery itself is so furiously assailed that great sections of the wall are falling down on all sides. The good monk keeps on writing. His cell, spared as by a miracle, remains hung on to a gable like a cage to a window. Archers crowd on what is left of the

roof, walk like flies along the walls, and fall like hailstones to the ground which bristles with lances and swords. The fight is going on even in his chimney-corner; he keeps on writing. A terrible commotion knocks over his inkstand; he still writes. That is what it is to live among books! There is the power of pieces of paper for you!

Even to-day, the libraries still shelter some sages like Nestor. They come to them to accomplish the labour of patience which fills their lives and overwhelms their souls. They never fail to take their seats even in the days of troubles and revolutions.

They are happy. Let us say no more about them. But I know many other people of a very different temperament. These search in books for all sorts of fine secrets about men and things. They seek continually, and their minds give them no rest. If books bring peace to the peaceful-minded, they trouble these restless souls. I myself know many restless souls. They are wrong to plunge into too much reading. Look, for instance, at what happened to Don Quixote because he devoured the four volumes of "Amadis de Gaule" and a dozen other excellent romances. After he had read enchanting stories he believed in enchantments. He believed that life was as beautiful as the stories, and he did a thousand mad things which he would never have done had he not been bitten by the itch of reading.

A book, according to Littré's dictionary, is a collection of several sections of manuscript or of printed pages. That definition does not satisfy me. I would define a book as a work of witchcraft from which there escape all sorts of images which disturb people's minds and change their hearts. I will put it better still—a book is a small magical apparatus which transports

us into the midst of images of the past or among supernatural shades. Those who read much are like hasheesh-eaters. They live in a dream. The subtle poison which penetrates their brains renders them insensible to the real world and throws them as a prey to terrible or to delightful phantoms. Books are the opium of the West. They devour us. A day will come when we shall all be librarians, and that will end it all.

Let us love books in the way that the lover described by the poet loved her pain. Let us love them, for they cost us dear enough. Let us love them, for we are dying because of them. Yes, books are killing us. Believe me when I tell you this, for I adore them, I long since gave myself unreservedly to them. Books are killing us. We have too many of them and too many kinds. Men lived for long ages without reading anything, and that was the very time when they did the greatest and most useful things, for it is the time when they passed from barbarism to civilisation. Though without books then, they were not devoid of poetry and of morals ; they knew songs and catechisms by heart. Old women told them in their childhood "The Goose Girl" and "Puss in Boots," stories of which editions were afterwards made for the bibliophiles. The first books were large stones, covered with inscriptions couched in an administrative and religious style.

All that is long ago. What frightful progress we have made since! Books multiplied in a marvellous fashion during the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. To-day, their production is multiplied a hundredfold. We publish now, in Paris alone, fifty volumes a day, not to mention the newspapers. This is a monstrous orgy. It will end by driving us mad.

Man's destiny is to fall into contrary excesses in succession. In the Middle Ages, ignorance gave birth to fear. There then prevailed mental maladies which we no longer know. Now, we are rushing, through study, into general paralysis. Would it not be wiser and more eclectic to observe some moderation?

Let us be bibliophiles and let us read our books. But let us not take them in armfuls. Let us be delicate, let us choose, and, like that lord in one of Shakespeare's comedies, let us say to our bookseller, "I would have them to be well bound, and I would have them speak of love."

I do not flatter myself that this book has anything of love in it, or that it deserves a beautiful binding. But, as you, my dear sir, know, those who read it will find in it perfect sincerity (falsehood requires a talent that I do not possess), a great deal of indulgence, and some natural fondness for the beautiful and the good. This is why, dear sir, I am bold enough to offer it you as a feeble testimony of my gratitude, esteem, and fellow-feeling.

A. F.

On Life and Letters *is a translation of M. France's* La Vie Littéraire, *a series of articles contributed to* Le Temps. *The translation, like the original, extends to four volumes, but each volume is complete in itself.*

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ON LIFE & LETTERS

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HAMLET AT THE COMÉDIE-FRANÇAISE

" OOD-NIGHT, sweet prince, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!" That is what, on Tuesday, at midnight, we said with Horatio to young Hamlet, as we were leaving the Théâtre-Français. And, surely, we ought to wish a good-night to him who had caused us to pass so delightful an evening. Yes, Prince Hamlet is a sweet prince. He is handsome and he is unhappy; he knows everything and he can do nothing. He is to be envied and to be pitied. He is worse and better than any of us. He is a man, he is man, he is the whole of man. And there were, I swear to you, at least twenty persons in the house who had that feeling. "Good-night, sweet prince!" we cannot leave you without having our heads full of you, and for the last three days I have had no other thoughts than yours.

I felt, when I saw you, a sad joy, my Prince. And that is more than a joyous joy. I will whisper to you that the house seemed to me just a little

heedless and frivolous ; but we must not complain too much of that and we must not be at all astonished at it. It was a house made up of French men and French women. You were not in evening dress, you had no amorous intrigue in the world of high finance, and you did not wear a gardenia in your button-hole. That is why the ladies coughed a little, as they ate iced fruits in their boxes. Your adventures could not interest them. They are not fashionable adventures ; they are only human adventures. You force people to think, and that is a wrong we will not pardon you here. However, there were here and there throughout the house some spirits whom you deeply moved. In speaking to them of yourself you spoke to them of themselves. That is why they prefer you to all the other beings who, like you, have been created by genius. A lucky chance placed me in the house beside M. Auguste Dorchain. He understands you, my Prince, just as he understands Racine, because he is a poet. I believe that I also understand you a little, because I have just come from the sea. . . . Oh ! do not be afraid that I am going to say that you are two oceans. That is all words, words, and you do not care about words. No, I only mean that I understand you because, after two months of rest and quiet amidst wide horizons, I have become very simple and very accessible to what is truly beautiful, great, and profound. In our Paris, in winter, we readily acquire a taste for pretty things, for fashionable affectation, and the intricate refinements of the coteries. But one's perception is elevated and purified in the fruitful idleness of rural walks and amid the broad horizons of sea and fields. When we come back from them we are quite ready for intercourse with the wild genius of a Shakespeare.

That is why you have been welcome, Prince Hamlet. It is why all your thoughts wander confusedly upon my lips, and envelop me with terror, poetry, and sadness. You saw, of course, that in the "Revue bleue" and elsewhere the question of the origin of your melancholy has been raised. It has been judged to be so deep that even the most frightful domestic catastrophes were incapable of having formed it in all its extent. A very distinguished political economist, M. Emile de Laveleye, thinks that it must be the sadness of a political economist. And he has written an article with the sole object of proving this theory. He intimates that he and his friend, Lanfrey, experienced a similar melancholy after the *coup d'état* of 1851, and that you, Prince Hamlet, must have suffered, even more than they did, from the terrible condition to which the usurper Claudius had reduced the affairs of Denmark.

In truth, I believe that you were deeply concerned for the fate of your country, and I applaud the words used by Fortinbras when he commanded four captains to bear your body like a soldier to the stage. "Had Hamlet lived," he exclaimed, "he would have proved most royally." But I do not think your melancholy was quite that of M. Emile de Laveleye. I believe that it was nobler and more intelligent. I believe that it was inspired by a keen perception of destiny. Not Denmark only, but the whole world appeared gloomy to you. You had faith in nothing, not even, as M. de Laveleye has, in the principles of public law. Let those who doubt this recall the fine and bitter prayer which left your lips when already growing cold in death.

"O God! Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me.

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story."

These were your last words. He to whom they were addressed had not, like you, a family poisoned by crimes; he was not, like you, an assassin. His was an unfettered, wise, and faithful nature. He was a happy man, if such there be. But you, Prince Hamlet, knew that there never was one. You knew that all is evil in the universe. We must out with it, you were a pessimist. Doubtless, your destiny drove you to despair; it was tragic. But your nature was consonant with your destiny. That is what renders you so admirable; you were formed to taste misfortune, and you had full opportunity for exercising your taste. You were well served, Prince. And how you relish the evil in which you are steeped! What subtlety of taste? Oh! you are a connoisseur, a *gourmet* in sufferings.

Of such a nature did the great Shakespeare give you birth. And it seems to me that he was hardly an optimist himself at the time he created you. From 1601 to 1608, he, with his enchanted hands, gave life to what is, I think, a pretty large crowd of afflicted or violent shades. It was then that he showed Desdemona perishing through Iago, and the blood of a fatherly old king staining the little hands of Lady Macbeth, and poor Cordelia, and you, his favourite, and Timon of Athens.

Yes, even Timon! There is decided reason for believing that Shakespeare was a pessimist like you. What will his colleague, M. Moreau, the author of the second "Falcon," say about it, he who, I am told, maltreats the poor pessimists so violently every

evening at the Vaudeville. Oh! he gives them a bad quarter of an hour every day, I assure you. I pity them. There are, indeed, happy people everywhere who jest at them without pity. In their place I would not know where to hide myself. But Hamlet ought to give them courage. They have Job and Shakespeare on their side. That redresses the balance a little. So that M. Paul Bourget is saved this time. And it is you who have done it, Prince Hamlet.

I have under my eyes, as I write, an old German engraving, which represents you, but in which I can hardly recognise you. It represents you as you appeared in the Berlin theatre about 1780. You did not then wear that solemn mourning of which your mother speaks, that doublet, those hose, that mantle, that cap with which Delacroix so nobly clothed you when he fixed your type in his awkward but sublime drawings, and which M. Mounet-Sully wears with so virile a grace and so many poetic attitudes.

No! you appeared before the good people of Berlin in the eighteenth century in a costume which would seem very strange to us to-day. You were clad—my engraving proves it—in the latest French fashion. Your hair was elaborately dressed and powdered; you wore an embroidered collar, satin knee-breeches, silk stockings, buckled shoes, and a little mantle in the Court style, in short the whole mourning costume of the courtiers of Versailles. I was forgetting your Henri IV. hat, the true hat of the nobility in the time of the States-General. Thus equipped, with your sword at your side, you lie at Ophelia's feet, Ophelia who, upon my word, is exceedingly pretty in her hooped gown

and lofty head-dress *à la* Marie-Antoinette, which is surmounted by a great plume of ostrich feathers. All the other personages are dressed in a corresponding style. They are present, with you, at the tragedy of Gonzaga and Baptista. Your beautiful Louis XV. armchair is empty and we can see all the flowers of its upholstery. Already you creep on the ground, you spy on the king's face for the mute confession of the crime which you are charged to avenge. The king also wears, just as Louis XVI. did, a splendid Henri IV. hat. Perhaps you think that I am going to smile and to scoff, and to boast about the progress of our decorations and our costumes. You are mistaken. Most certainly, if you are no longer dressed in the fashion of my old print, and no longer look like the Comte de Provence wearing mourning for the Dauphin, and if your Ophelia is no longer dressed like Mesdames, I do not regret it in the least. Far from that, I like you much better as you are now. But dress is nothing to you, you can wear any costume you please; they will all suit you if they are beautiful. You are of all times and of all countries. Your soul is of the same age as all our souls. We live together, Prince Hamlet, and you are what we are, a man in the midst of universal woe. Your words and your actions have been cavilled at. You have been shown to be inconsistent with yourself. How are we to understand this incomprehensible personage? So they have asked. He thinks in turns like a monk of the Middle Ages and like a scholar of the Renaissance; his mind is philosophic and yet it is full of impishness. He has a horror of lies and his life is only one long lie. He is irresolute, that is clear, and yet certain critics have pronounced him to be full of decision, and we cannot

entirely contradict them. Lastly, my Prince, they have said that you were a warehouse of thoughts, a heap of contradictions, and not a human being. But that, on the contrary, is the sign of your profound humanity. You are prompt and slow, audacious and timid, kind and cruel; you believe and you doubt, you are wise and, above all, you are mad. In a word, you live. Which of us does not resemble you in something? Which of us thinks without contradictions and acts without incoherence? Which of us is not mad? Which of us may not say to you with a mixture of pity, sympathy, admiration, and horror: "Good-night, sweet prince!"

SERENUS *

HE time is near at hand when Pontius Pilate will be held in high esteem for having spoken a sentence that has weighed heavily on his memory during eighteen hundred years. Jesus having said to him: "For this cause came I into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice," Pilate answered him: "What is truth?"

To-day the most intelligent among us say nothing else but "What is truth?" M. Jules Lemaître has just published a little philosophical tale, "Serenus," which, though but a trifle for his alert and charming mind, may one day stand out in the history of thought in the nineteenth century, just as to-day "Candide" or "Zadig" stands out in that of the eighteenth.

Following M. Ernest Renan and some others, M. Jules Lemaître repeats, under the most ingenious forms, the profound saying of the old Roman functionary: "What is truth?" He admires those who believe, but he does not believe himself. One can say that in his case criticism has decidedly emerged from the theological age. He holds that there are a great many truths about everything without a single one of these truths being the truth. He has, even

* "Sérénus." Par Jules Lemaître.

more than Sainte-Beuve, who is the master of us all, the sense of relativity and the unrest, as well as the love of the eternal illusion which envelops us. An old Greek poet has said: "We are tossed about at random by lies." From this idea M. Jules Lemaître has derived thousands and thousands of other ideas and, so to speak, a philosophy scattered amid detached leaves.

It is the philosophy of an honourable man. You understand the phrase. When I say an honourable man I mean a gentle and resolute spirit, an intelligence which knows no fear, a cheerful and an indulgent soul. M. Jules Lemaître is all this. If I add that he has a genial irony and a delicate though somewhat acute sensualism, I shall have drawn the outline of his portrait. Despite his exquisite classical culture he does not hold too much to the past. I discovered this one day when I took him to the Galerie des Beaux-Arts to look at the Hermes of Praxiteles and the pediments of the Parthenon. Three of us, mortals, stood before the true gods and the true goddesses, and I was the only one who was perfectly respectful. It happened on that day, as it usually happens, that wit and respect were in opposite camps. I do not know whether M. Jules Lemaître has a great admiration for his own time, but he loves it. Paris, as it is, pleases him greatly. He is happy here despite "the boredom which is common to every well-born creature." That saying is not mine; it belongs to Margaret of Angoulême, the sister of Francis I.

But why, you ask, if he likes Paris so much, does he in "Serenus" take us to Rome? I answer that he has chosen Rome at a time when it held many ideas and feelings which we have in Paris to-day.

The misfortune of Serenus was that it was impossible for him to believe. His sister was a Christian; she was beautiful; she had the imperious gentleness of the saints. She led him into the little church where he experienced strange and contradictory feelings, something like what an honest man introduced into an assembly of spirits would feel, if the spirits were martyrs, or into a meeting of Nihilists, if the Nihilists were expecting death and had no intention of giving it to others. He was seized with a species of admiration and at the same time he experienced an invincible repugnance. Here is how he describes this double feeling. First of all he analyses his reasons for admiring and liking these worthy people.

"All the virtues," he says, "that the philosophers had already known and preached appeared to me, among the disciples of Christ, to be transformed by a new feeling—the love of a God-man, of a crucified God, a love, sensible, ardent, full of tears, of confidence, of tenderness, and of hope. Evidently neither the personification of the forces of nature nor the abstract God of the Stoics has ever inspired anything similar, and this love of God, the source and beginning of the other Christian virtues, communicated to them a sweetness, an unction, and, as it were, a perfume, which I had never before breathed."

That is what attracts him. Here now is what would have driven him away if he had not been retained by the chaste allurement of Serena.

"The idea which my new brethren entertained in regard to this world and this life offended some perception of nature in me. . . . In spite of my persistent pessimism . . . I was displeased that men should have so thorough a contempt for what is, after all,

the only life of which we are sure. Besides, I found them far too simple, shut off from artistic impressions, narrow, and without elegance. . . . A little anxiety for the Roman commonwealth awoke in me, and I was frightened at the harm which, if it continued to spread, such a conception of life, such a detachment from civil duties and from profane occupations, might do to the Empire. . . . I was offended that these saints should be so sure of so many things, and of such wondrous things, while I myself had sought so much but without finding, had had so much doubt in my life, and had at last taken a pride in my unbelief."

Soon the Christians had the good fortune to be persecuted. Serenus, who was a man of taste, remained among them. His stoical death had the appearance of a martyrdom. His body was buried amidst those of the saints in the tomb of the Flavian family. Transported to Beaugency-sur-Loire, in the year of grace 860, it showed no hesitation in performing miracles. In particular, it restored sight to a blind man and life to a priest's mule.

That is the story of Serenus. And observe that the impossibility of believing, which was the misfortune of that worthy man, does not rage in the religious part of his soul alone. It devours the entire man. In politics, as in love, he is without belief. His only reason for coming to any conclusion is to be found in a certain feeling of moral elegance, which in his case survives every conviction and every philosophy. The pity of it is that a man ceases to act when he is in this state. And that is a ground for uneasiness. The worthy Franklin was far from having so much intellect and taste as Serenus, but he had sound common sense, and he knew how to make himself useful to his fellow citizens. He was

industrious, he performed his own task, and he wanted everybody else to perform theirs.

When you find it difficult to come to a decision, said he, take a sheet of white paper and divide it into two columns. Write in one of these columns all the reasons you have for acting and in the other all the reasons you have for abstaining. As in algebra we cancel similar quantities, strike out the reasons that balance one another and decide according to the reasons that remain.

This method is not suited to Serenus, and he never employs it. Serenus would exhaust all the papyrus and all the waxen tablets in the world, he would use up all the reeds of the Nile and his steel stylus as well, before he would have exhausted the reasons that his subtle intellect would suggest to him, and, finally, he would not decide that any one of them was better or worse than the others.

Is it necessary then to act? Beyond question it is. Recollect the first word uttered, in the second part of "Faust," by the little man whom the famulus Wagner has just made by means of his retorts: "I must act since I exist." Men can live without thinking. Indeed, it is generally thus that men do live, and no great harm to the community results. On the other hand, the State has need of the diverse and harmonious action of all its citizens. It is by acts and not by ideas that peoples live.

THE RECEPTION OF M. LÉON SAY AT THE FRENCH ACADEMY

E listened on Thursday at the Institute to the ant eulogising the grasshopper. The praise was piquant, unexpected, felicitous. It must be said also that the ant is not all that the fabulist believed. She is economical of the public fortune; that is to say, she is what one calls a political economist. She is prudent, she is industrious, she is not ungrateful, and she knows that we must not offend the grasshopper, the darling of the Muses. That amounts to saying that M. Léon Say spoke agreeably of the good Jules Sandeau, whose memory is so endearing. The new Academician also said some quite interesting things about Edmond About. He expressed himself like a man of taste, with a natural elegance and the vivacity of a keen intellect that has been sharpened by the practice of affairs, and he did not give himself more of a literary air than became him. He did not fall into the error of Philip, King of Macedonia, who wanted to know more about songs than the song-writers themselves. He wished to remain the man who tastes and feels. He did well, for his taste is excellent and his feeling exact. However, I shall contradict him on two points, since, if we must always speak the truth, it is conquerors above all who should

be made to listen to it. My principal grievance is that he passed a little lightly over Sandeau's novels. He did not even mention "La Maison de Penarvan." I shall return immediately to this subject. My second reproach is directed against a portrait which he made incidentally, and in a few rapid lines, the inaccuracy of which I regard as unprecedented. He showed us "a charming master, full of tact and moderation, a refined poet, who says things without laying stress upon them, thus leaving to the audience the pleasure of believing that, as it listens to him, it collaborates with the man of genius who wrote the play." In this charming master, in this refined poet, in this man of talent, he wants us to recognise M. Emile Augier. For my own part I have some difficulty in doing so, and I declare that the portrait is not a likeness. It is not that the author of the "Fils de Giboyer" is without refinement and moderation, but his essential qualities are not these. He does not say things without laying stress upon them; on the contrary, he lays stress upon them with a felicitous firmness. He is robust, he is firm, he strikes hard and straight. He has more energy than grace, and more exactness than flexibility. His creations leave nothing to be divined. The master throws them into the fullest light. They have nothing incomplete, nothing mysterious. We have only to name Vigour and Probity in order to make M. Emile Augier appear between his two Muses. God forbid, Monsieur Léon Say, that you should know these things as well as I do. At Rome, in the time of Nero, a certain military tribune, the son of a worthy tax-collector, showed in his military administration as much talent as he had previously employed in the civil administration. He was industrious and

prudent, but he slept at the theatre. He rose, none the less, to the chief magistracy of the State. I suspect M. Léon Say of having in like manner dozed at the Théâtre-Français whilst "Gabrielle" or "Les Fourchambault" was acted. There is no great harm in that, and M. Emile Augier would, I am sure, be the first to forgive him for it. Statesmen have not always leisure to frequent the Muses; it is only necessary for them not to fall out with them, for that would be to fall out with grace and seductiveness, and what, I ask you, is a Prime Minister without seductiveness and without grace? Many things are necessary to be able to govern, many good things and some bad ones. But make no mistake about it; good taste is one of them. Without good taste a man offends even those who are themselves without it. My colleague and friend, M. Adolphe Racot, furnishes the hero of his latest novel with the idea that, in dealing with men, good taste is as valuable as both intellect and integrity. I will not go so far as that. But it is true that good taste implies justness of understanding, delicacy of feeling, and several other valiant qualities of which it is itself the flower.

M. Léon Say has good taste. It is visible in the elegant simplicity, in the fluent clearness of his speech.

His political discourses, particularly those that treat of finance, are of a finished art. All seems easy in them. It is a rare pleasure to hear M. Léon Say deliver a speech in the Senate. His voice is clear. At first it seems a little piercing, just enough to make one grateful to the orator for softening it later on. From the second sentence onwards it retains only enough sharpness to make it enter our ears with

comfort. It bites but does not wound them. The diction, although easy, is not fluent to excess. M. Léon Say has not that lathery speech which glides but does not penetrate. The tribune, indeed, is no place for painful orators. They make their hearers share the fatigue which they themselves experience; by an involuntary sympathy one is pained by their pain. But an orator whose speech is too fluid and is poured out in an equal flow, inspires an assembly with no more than a superficial interest. The speaker must appear to seek and to choose his ideas and his words. The search ought to be rapid and the choice sure, yet both should be felt by the inflexions of the voice and by certain hesitations in the delivery. Lastly, the labour of thought should be perceptible through the gestures of the orator. M. Léon Say's speeches are what one may call living. He animates abstractions; in order to attract and to retain the attention he uses several of the resources which M. Thiers employed. He explains, he compares, he quotes examples, he tells anecdotes, he is familiar, he penetrates to the very heart of things. He has subtleties which form a piquant contrast with the rotundity of his build. If he cannot be impassioned, he says nothing that requires heat. As he is always master of his subject he confines it within the limits of his talent and so arranges that he never has any need of the qualities he lacks.

He makes statistics interesting, and that is a great merit. I shall refrain from saying, what is often said, that it is a surprising feat. That would be false praise. Financial questions are in themselves as interesting as all other great questions; although they are more abstract than others they are not more arid. The mind derives a profound satisfaction from their

study. They offer large and solid grounds for deductions. They please the reason by their exactness, and the imagination by their extent. Finally, they are a human affair; by their principle and by their end they belong to man. They are thus interesting in themselves, and lend themselves naturally to good speaking. There is a good financial style as well as a good literary style.

But I return to my grievance. I am the more obstinate about it since it is a poor grievance. I should have liked M. Léon Say to have said of Jules Sandeau, in his agreeable style—why should I not admit it?—all that I would like to say myself. At bottom we never reproach people except for not feeling and not thinking as we do ourselves.

For me, Sandeau is more than a delicate writer and a poetical romancer, he is one of my childhood's memories. Many a time as I went to school or returned from it have I met the worthy man, smiling a welcome upon everybody, along the quays where he was at home—for the quays are the happy hunting-ground of every man of thought and taste. The excellent old man! One can say of him that he was well backed up, for he had one of those broad backs which have visibly borne the burden of life with unaffected courage, and which the griefs of the soul have only slowly bent. He was not gay or even smart in his dress. I have known him wear for a long time a big overcoat that had become green and yellow and had got hitched up behind and drooped to a point in front. Together with this overcoat he wore his hat on the side of his head, and trousers like a hussar's, so that swagger and good-nature were joined in the old man's figure. Good-natured people almost always bear some resemblance to soldiers. Sandeau, with his clear eyes,

his large red nose, his rough, white mustache, and his unsophisticated air, had about him something of a retired officer, I mean one of those honest souls who, in their eyes and in their heart, preserve the candour of childhood, because they have never tried to make money and all through their lives have known nothing but duty, sentiment, and sacrifice. Jules Sandeau's whole person exhaled good-nature, and even when the sadness of a fatal affliction had marked itself on his features, he still retained the air of one of the best of men; and, as you know, grief is not pleasing except in the good.

To tell the truth, the reason why, when I was fifteen years old, I looked at M. Jules Sandeau on the quays with so much interest and curiosity, is that at the time I was reading "Marianna" during my classes from behind the shelter of a pile of books. May the worthy M. Chéron, my teacher, forgive me for it! Whilst he explained Thucydides I was kneeling before Madame Belnave. Great Heavens! what a fire burned in my veins! I was far away then, M. Chéron, from the stems in μι and from the years of the Eight-Year Period which you were explaining to us. I was rapt in the spheres of ideal passion. I was in love. I was in love with Marianna. I was suffering through her and I was making her suffer, but both our pains were dear to me. I have been told since that "Marianna" is a book which teaches duty. At fifteen, it only taught me love. M. Léon Say tells us that the book has become old-fashioned. He speaks of it with detachment. One sees that he did not read it, like me, between the pages of his Greek dictionary. No! no! "Marianna" will never become old-fashioned for me. But, out of prudence, I shall never re-read it.

You can imagine, after what I have just said, that I could not meet M. Jules Sandeau in the neighbourhood of the Mazarin Palace without trembling from head to foot. He seemed to me an extraordinary being, marked with a mysterious seal. What I heard whispered around me, as he passed, regarding his close intimacy with an illustrious lady, and the melancholy that, because of it, he retained to the end of his life, made him still more interesting and extraordinary to me. I opened my eyes wide to see this privileged being who had lived in marvellous, unknown regions whither I had no hope of ever entering. I perceived that he was not fashionably dressed, and that he had merely the appearance of a fine old man. However, I admired him. When I saw him I experienced something similar to the feeling that seized on Madame Bovary when she looked at the old man who sixty years before had been the Queen's lover. There, said I to myself, is a man who comes back from the land of the ideal. I envied his sufferings. When one is fifteen one is eager for suffering.

After all, I do not say that M. Léon Say may not be right. "Marianna" has become old-fashioned and so have I. I had already lost many of my illusions when I happened to read Sandeau's real masterpieces, "Mademoiselle de la Seiglière" and "La Maison de Penarvan." They did not move me in the same way as "Marianna." The fault was mine and not the author's. However, I still thought him graceful and pleasing. His works are intimate poems whose heroes float between the real and the ideal in a middle region where it is delightful to wander. And observe that there is as much or even more truth in this idealism than there can be in the most

scrupulous realism. Sandeau has seized very well the character of the epoch which he wished to paint. He has been perfectly happy in the choice of his personages and of his action. Balzac has also painted, and with incomparable genius, the types of that age—the purchaser of the confiscated property, the Colonel of the First Empire, the old nobleman, &c.—but he has not made them move in a simple enough action, he has not fixed them in pure enough forms, he has not enclosed them in an indestructible and perfect poem. He has dispersed them through an infinite series of adventures. Sandeau, though less powerful, has been more fortunate. If he has not comprehended the sentimental history of the old *régime* when confronted by the new, except under aspects that have but little variation, he has, at least, expressed his vision in stories as endearing as they are discreet.

His talent was natural to him and owed nothing to study. Sandeau, who lived among books, read but little. The worthy man was only eager to feel. In the pursuit of knowledge there is a basis of pride and bitter audacity which this peaceable and gentle soul never knew. He was never seen turning over the pages of old books. He left undisturbed those nests of dust from which, as soon as they are opened, doubt and disquiet escape like mites. I shall not offend his memory by saying that the Librarian of the Mazarine Library did not know his library very well. Who would reproach him for it? He had too many fine books in his own head to bother himself about those which filled the hall where he and Philarète Chasles used to sit side by side.

There is a story, on this subject, that a scholar who was working at the Mazarine Library used to consult Father Lelong's "Historical Library" every day.

He could have taken down that book himself had he been permitted to do so, for he knew exactly where it was kept. It was solely to conform to the rules of the Library that he used to ask the librarian for it. One day ill-luck ordained that Jules Sandeau was the librarian. To the demand that was made him:

"Father Lelong's 'Library,'" answered Sandeau, "this is not it, sir. This is the Mazarine Library."

"Behind you," cried the other, stretching out his arm towards the folio which he was eager to open.

"Behind me, that is the Louvre, sir," gently replied Sandeau.

I hasten to add that I do not believe a word of this story, and that I only tell it for the amusement of bibliophiles, who are a most worthy race.

M. ALEXANDRE DUMAS, MORALIST

ALEXANDRE DUMAS is a moralist as well as a dramaturge. For the past fifteen years he has shared with M. Renan the functions of spiritual director to the multitude. But what a difference in temperament there is between these two confessors! M. Renan always absolves. Every road, he tells us, leads to salvation. Each day he brings us fresh indulgences. On the first of January of this year, his last jubilee, did he not pardon M. Laguerre in advance, for all the ills which a narrow and violent policy will draw down upon France? If we are to believe this peaceful guide of our souls we cannot escape from the divine goodness, and we shall all enter into Paradise—unless there should be no Paradise, which after all is very probable.

Such a doctrine could only spring from a spacious and kindly temperament. I take a great pleasure in its serenity. But the pride of the mass of sinners does not accord with so much clemency. We are all of us so fashioned that we set no small value on both our virtues and our vices. We would like our very weaknesses to appear great, and we are annoyed when we are told that they are of no consequence. I know some pious people who flatter themselves

that they give considerable grounds for uneasiness to their confessor and to their God. Such persons will never go to M. Renan. He does not trouble himself enough about them. I will not conceal from him that his article on Amiel two years ago lost him a part of his spiritual connection. In that article he showed himself far too ready to pardon. If he asks almost nothing of us, pious souls have thought, it is because he does not believe us capable of much. He despises us.—And it is a fact that consciences are not captured by gentleness. In the sixteenth century there lived a canon of Saint-Cloud called Nicolas Feuillet. He was a great capturer of souls. He addressed himself to unsophisticated persons and persuaded them that, all their lives long, they had not put one foot before another or merely opened their mouths, without making God and the angels weep, and that their lightest thought roused the infernal regions to bursts of inextinguishable laughter. These good people were astonished to find that they had so much importance in the other world when they were given so little in this. Hence they conceived a pride and an alarm which threw them into all the transports of asceticism. M. Feuillet despatched them to heaven in two or three years at the most. Unless I am greatly mistaken that is the way to be a good spiritual director!

I am not afraid to say that M. Alexandre Dumas is more akin to M. Feuillet than to M. Renan. He presents us with an enlarged and coloured image of our sins, and it astonishes us, interests us, and troubles us. He shows us to be greater and stronger in wickedness than we really are. It is by this flattery that he captures us; it is quite enough for his purpose, and he takes care to employ

no other. Pious people will not, I hope, be offended because I have compared M. Alexandre Dumas to the canon of Saint-Cloud. It is generally admitted that the author of the "Idées de Madame Aubray" is a mystic. He has seen the Beast, and breathed the spirit of God into the actresses of the Gymnase and the Comédie-Française. It is true that he is not a Catholic, and that he does not profess any revealed religion. Indeed, that is the only thing which prevents him from being a saint. For, make no mistake, there is in this man the stuff out of which saints are made, and more than one of the blessed whose names are read in the calendar was fashioned like him. I do not speak of the degenerate and sordid saints of recent creation, of a Curé d'Ars, or of a St. Labre, or of an Aloysius Gonzaga, whose modesty was so great, his biographer says, that he could not remain alone in a room with the princess, his mother, without blushing. No, no, I am thinking of the early saints, of those apostolical men who proclaimed the good news to the nations and whose memory is still imprinted on the soul of the races. I think, above all, of those who left their soul and their blood on our ancient soil, men whose names the land of France still utters: Hilary of Poitiers, Martin of Tours, Germain of Auxerre, Marcel of Paris. These were deep-chested and strong-lunged men who held their heads high. They felled oaks and proclaimed new tidings. They knew the whole of life, and were better fitted to lead men than to serve as models for young ladies. They did not put their teaching into theatrical pieces, since they had good reasons for not writing comedies. But their speech was full of images, and to it they also joined action. That is an advantage which they owe to the rudeness of their

times, and it is one which places them far above M. Alexandre Dumas. He, like them, is an apostle. But they were soldiers besides. That surpasses everything else. I must tell you, M. Alexandre Dumas, that there is some one in your family whom I esteem more highly than I do you, and that person is not your father. Your father certainly was a prodigious man. He came, like a good giant, with his hands full of toys for us poor children. He was gay, and he was good, and he consoled men by telling them delightful stories which never came to an end. His was a great and a candid soul. But you have been able to give your speech a seriousness that his never had: he amused me and you have taught me. I owe more to you than I do to him, and that is why I rate you higher. But the greatest of the Dumas is neither he nor you; it is your grandfather, the son of the negress, General Alexandre Dumas of La Pailleterie, the conqueror of the St. Bernard and of Mount Cenis, the hero of Brixen. He offered his life sixty times to France, he was admired by Bonaparte, and he died a poor man. Such an existence is a masterpiece with which there is nothing to be compared. It is a happy fate to descend from such a man. The chances are that one may preserve something of him in oneself. I am tempted to believe that the energy for work, the absolute frankness, and the courage to say everything, which we value in the third Alexandre, come to him from the first.

Admire in what ways God (there, I have become a mystic by contagion) gave a lay director to the souls of this age! A poor African girl thrown into the arms of a colonist at Saint Domingo, gives birth to a hero who in his turn begets a colossus, whose son, brought up in the theatres of Paris, awakens

people's consciences in these theatres with an exemplary force and an unheard-of audacity. In morality, it is true, M. Alexandre Dumas has touched only a single point. But it is the point from which all else issues, it is the universal principle. He tells us how we are born, and he shows us that we are born ill; he tells us how we give life and he shows us that we give it badly; and he foretells the end of the world if we do not speedily give

"A stainless bridegroom to a virgin bride."

What he fights against, what he indicts everywhere, is the shameful traffic in love. According to him, prostitution has either publicly or secretly invaded everything. It displays itself in our streets. Marriage has installed it in the homes of the rich. Only among a few courtesans is it not to be seen. It is the seven-headed Beast whose diadems overtop the loftiest mountains.

It is going to devour France, Europe, and the world.

The seer has seen it face to face. "This Beast," he tell us, "was like a leopard; her feet were like the feet of a bear, her throat like the throat of a lion, and the dragon gave her his strength. And this beast was clothed in purple and scarlet, she was adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls. In her hands, which were white like wool, she held a golden vase full of the abominations and impurities of Babylon, of Sodom, and of Lesbos. At intervals, this Beast, in whom I thought I recognised that which St. John had seen, released from her whole body an intoxicating vapour through which she appeared shining like the most beauteous of the angels of God, and into which thousands of the anthropo-

morphic animalcules, whose birth had preceded hers, came to sport, to writhe in pleasure, to shriek in pain, and, finally, to vanish in a vapour. They vanish spontaneously with a little explosion. In other words they burst, and nothing remains but a little drop of liquid, water or blood, which the air immediately absorbs. The Beast was not satiated by this. In her haste she trampled them under her feet, she tore them with her nails, she ground them with her teeth, she crushed them against her breast. These latter were the happier and the most envied. . . ." *

Such is the monster. All that the apostle and prophet can say to reassure us is that the Beast devours only what ought to perish, what is condemned to death for its moral weakness, and that the pure, the strong, the good, those, in a word, who are fit to live, will alone survive. It is precisely what the Darwinians call natural selection. But it acts slowly, and, judging by what it has done up to the present, we cannot hope that it will deliver us from fools and scoundrels in the immediate future.

Oh! M. Dumas is not so agreeable a doctor as M. Renan! He does not merely attack the Beast. He has a grudge against love itself, against love as we ordinarily pursue it. Lebonnard, in the "Visite de Noces," concludes that "that ends by hatred on the woman's part and contempt on the man's." And Lebonnard is no fool. M. de Ryons shows himself still more cruel when he says to Madame de Simerose: "M. de Montègre is going to do you an injury, for he loves you." This M. de Ryons is very

* M. Cuvillier-Fleury's "Édition des Comédiens," vol. v. p. 248.

impressive. He is the friend of women, and this amounts to saying that he does not love them. "I have pledged myself," he tell us, "never to give either my heart, or my honour, or my life to be devoured by those charming and terrible little beings for whom we ruin, dishonour, and kill ourselves, and whose sole preoccupation, in the midst of this universal carnage, is to dress themselves up sometimes in the form of umbrellas and sometimes of bells." * How admirable! It is what the wise Epicurus used to teach in those books which unfortunately have been lost. His pupil, Lucretius, learnt and repeated the lesson with ardour. M. de Ryons is, in his turn, a great philosopher. There is a reason for that; it is because he is not in love. Let him fall in love and immediately his own philosophy and that of Epicurus and that of Lucretius and that of Dumas will be in headlong flight. Our strong man will become a weak man, and he will give all he possesses as a prey to a little being—bell or umbrella.

Oh! I see the evil plainly. The evil is that Love is the oldest of the gods. The Greeks have told us this. When he was born neither justice nor intelligence were as yet in the world. The luckless wretch could not find in all the cosmic matter anything out of which he could fashion for himself a brain or eyes or ears. He was born blind and dependent on his instincts, and as he was born, so he is still, and so he will always remain. He has to grope his way about. He has been represented in the form of a winged child, but that is a piece of flattery. His real appearance is that of a headless bull. Far from being the child of Venus, he is her father. Look at his labours; they are immense. He has produced everything, but he has

* "Édition des Comédiens," vol. iv. p. 72.

done it all without reason, without morality, without intelligence. First, he made living creatures, and what awful creatures they were! Molluscs, fishes, and reptiles. At this time he dwelt in the water. That is how he fitted himself for his future task of humouring the fastidiousness and modesty of the maidens of our world! Improving his methods by accident and little by little, he reached marsupials and then viviparous animals. The mammalia cost him a great deal of trouble, and for a long time the monkeys remained his masterpiece. In making man after them, he made no change either in nature or in method. He remained dark, blind, and violent, and did not call reason to his aid. He never will call it. And he is right, for life would soon end if it relied upon intelligence to plant it throughout the earth. He is blind and he guides us. That is the whole evil. And it is an eternal evil, for love will last as long as the worlds.

We behave like M. de Ryons, we oppose our will to his, and we dominate him when he is weaker than we are. But every time he is stronger he dominates us in his turn, and that is what we call the struggle against passion. The result is decreed by fate. Will and instinct are like the two scales of a balance, and that which is most heavily loaded sinks.

I do not know whether my mythology is very clear, but I know what I mean. It amounts to saying that there are in man obscure forces, anterior to him, which act independently of his will, and which he cannot always master. Must we on that account have a hatred for life and a horror for man? No, there is good even in the headless Bull himself. We must not abuse him too much. On the whole, he has always done more good than evil. Otherwise

he would not survive. What he wants is what nature wants, and nature, after all, is indifferent rather than evil. I even believe that the two of them, she and he, have a hidden ideal. Unfortunately it is not ours, and I have good reasons for believing that it is inferior to ours.

Men are better than nature. It is a consoling and an agreeable truth which I shall never weary of repeating.

If they could endow the headless Bull with a little heart and brain, be sure that they would do so at once.

M. Alexandre Dumas believes them to be worse than they are, and he has two good reasons for it: he is a dramatist and he is a prophet.

The theatre lives solely by our woes, and, since the days of Israel, the prophets have proclaimed nothing but misfortune; that is the price of their eloquence.

If M. Alexandre Dumas is right in saying that man is brutal and that woman is absurd, we can, like Musset's Perdican, reply that "there is one holy and sublime thing in the world—the union of two such imperfect beings."

THE YOUNG GIRL OF THE PAST AND THE YOUNG GIRL OF THE PRESENT *

E often say: This or that is a sign of the times. And, nine times out of ten, the thing that we believe new is in reality as old as the world itself. It is even noticeable that in all epochs people are alarmed by the same signs. In all epochs there are to be found candid and generous spirits who lament the universal decay of men and things and foretell the end of the world. Homer, anticipating M. Henry Cochin, has said: "The men of the past were better than the men of the present." Others, through a contrary illusion, proclaim the hour in which they were born to be fortunate. They honestly think that the past was dark and wretched, and that the future will be splendid, since it issues from themselves. It occurs to nobody to think that, before our time, human affairs were a mixture of good and bad, and that, after us, the world will pursue its ordinary way and remain mediocre,—though this view is, however, the most probable one. But we know our own age

* "Histoire d'une Grande Dame au dix-huitième Siècle: La Princesse Hélène de Ligne." Par Lucien Perey. "Princesse." Par Ludovic Halévy. "Jeanne Avril." Par Robert de Bonnières.

badly, and we do not know other ages at all. We judge them solely by our feelings.

It is true that everything moves and changes. Movement is life, or at least it is all of life that we see. The form of humanity never remains the same for a moment. Its transformations are continuous, and, in fact, it is for this reason that they are so imperceptible. They operate with the pitiless slowness of natural laws. They never stop and they never hasten. Sudden revolutions exist only in our imaginations. If we are not precisely similar to our fathers we resemble them more than we think, and sometimes more than we like. It is a matter of the utmost delicacy to mark the points of similarity and of difference by which we draw close to them or diverge from them. And, as we detect them, we are tempted to exaggerate both.

These reflections took their rise from my reading Lucien Perey's "Histoire d'une Grande Dame au dix-huitième Siècle." We find in that book a journal written at the Abbaye-au-Bois, from 1772 to 1777, by the young Princess Massalska, who began it at nine years of age and continued it up to her fourteenth year. I may say at once that M. Lucien Perey has by zealous research completed the biography of this princess who, having by a first marriage become the daughter-in-law of the amiable Prince de Ligne, married, after an audacious divorce, Prince John Potocki, the Chamberlain of the King of Poland. It is perhaps generally known that the name Lucien Perey is the pseudonym of a scholarly lady who has for many years employed her penetrating erudition upon those old manuscripts in which our grandfathers and grandmothers have left behind them a little of their spirit. The figure

which the pseudo-Perey has revived for us on this occasion is that of a very pretty and very amorous little creature who did a great deal of evil during her lifetime without the least remorse, for she did it through love. And it must be admitted that that is an excellent motive. "No one has the right to judge those who love," thought M. de Bonnières' Jeanne Avril when she herself was in love.

Hélène de Massalska wrote very well. The reason is that she felt strongly and had not been taught to make her style fine. Hélène was an orphan, and her uncle, the Prince-Bishop of Wilna, placed her in the Abbaye-au-Bois when she was nine years old. At that epoch, when, among so many women, there were no mothers, the convent served as a family for young girls of quality. Mademoiselle de Fresnes, the granddaughter of Chancellor d'Aguesseau, was placed there with her nurse, at the age of three. Children used to cut their teeth there, and they were married at twelve or thirteen. The frequency of these marriages was one of the plague-spots of society. The betrothed, the husbands, used to come to the reception room of the convent. The little Princess Massalska relates that Mademoiselle de Bourbonne came back one day very sad after seeing company; the second day after she told her companions of her approaching marriage with M. d'Avaux. She was scarcely twelve; she was to make her first communion that week, marry a week later, and go back to the convent. "She was so excessively melancholy," Hélène relates, "that we asked her if she was dissatisfied with her future husband. She told us that he was very ugly and very old, she told us also that he was coming to see her the next day. We begged the Abbess to allow the Orleans apartment, which

looked upon the abbatial courtyard, to be opened, so that we might see our companion's future husband. The favour was allowed us. The following day Mademoiselle de Bourbonne received a large bouquet when she got up, and, in the afternoon, M. d'Avaux came. We thought him what he was, hideous. When Mademoiselle de Bourbonne came out of the reception room everybody said : 'Good Heavens, how ugly your husband is ! If I were you I would not marry him. Poor girl!' And she said : 'Yes, I shall marry him, for papa wishes it; but I shall not love him, that is certain.'"

All that is very far away from us. If we compare the Abbaye-aux-Bois, the Presentation, Penthémont, St. Mary's, or any of the convents where the daughters of the nobility were brought up a hundred years ago, with the convents in which rich young ladies are received to-day, we are struck by the change of customs. Some things, indeed, which we can regret are lost in this great change. The heiresses of the first houses of France were taught household employments. They were employed by turns in the linen-room, in the library, in the refectory, in the kitchen, and in the infirmary. They learned to put away linen, to sweep rooms, to wait at table, to cook. Mademoiselle de Vogüé had a special talent for cooking. They learned to prepare herb-teas and to light the lamps. This teaching was as good as the mineralogy and chronology on which we pride ourselves so much to-day. It taught the rich not to despise the poor; it prevented them from believing that to work with one's hands humiliates those to whose lot it falls, or that it is noble to do nothing. It showed them the end of life, which is to serve, and that not occasionally, and at splendid

junctures, but every day, at every moment, humbly and with simplicity. Mesdemoiselles d'Aumont, de Damas, and de Mortemart knew that there is no humiliation in washing up the plates. I doubt whether it would be easy to persuade Mademoiselle Catherine Duval of this, she who, as you know from "Princesse," is the daughter of a successful paper-merchant. We see very clearly the prejudices of the old aristocracy. They were cruel, I quite agree, and I pity little Mademoiselle de Bourbonne with all my heart for being forced to marry M. d'Avaux. But we must not attribute to the society of former days prejudices which we have and which it had not. Look at young Baron de Thondertentronck. What infuriates him is not that his sister Cunégonde should wash up dishes in the home of a Prince of Transylvania; it is that she should marry Candide, who is not a noble. We have invented an aristocracy that never soiled its hands, and now the granddaughters of our big merchants do not understand how the Goose Girl should have made cakes, since she was a king's daughter.

Madame Duval, a middle-class lady of the Marais, wished to teach her daughter housekeeping and cookery. "The daughters of the Queen of England," she told her, "learn to wait on themselves, to sweep their room, to wash, and to iron." But her daughter opposed her, and the father, the big paper-manufacturer, was on the daughter's side. ("Princesse.")

If we can note in Princess Massalska's journal some differences between the young girls of her time and those of our own, these are not always to the advantage of the latter. I shall take care not to judge the two epochs from trivial indications, but

I am occasionally inclined to see in the minds of Hélène and her companions a strength which has since weakened, an intrepidity, an elevation of thought, that has become rare to-day. The characters of those children have already become resolute. Little girls of eight or ten show themselves unconquerable; they count punishments nothing if they make them suffer without humiliating them. Their rebellions have a strength and a duration which would astonish the nuns of the Sacred Heart or of the Oiseaux in our own day.

At the age of twelve, Mademoiselle de Choiseul, suddenly hearing of her mother's shame, imposes silence and respect upon her companions by the noble firmness of her attitude. At eight, Mademoiselle de Montmorency is threatened for some fault by Mademoiselle de Richelieu, then Abbess, who says to her in anger: "When I see you like that I could kill you." She answers: "It would not be the first time that the Richelieus have been the executioners of the Montmorencys." At fifteen, she dies like a nun of Port-Royal. Her bones were rotting, her arm gangrened. "You see I am beginning to die," said she. She asks pardon from the household whom she has called together, and she receives the sacraments. . . . Some moments later she has a grave conversation with her sister. "Tell all my companions of the Abbaye-aux-Bois that I give them a great example of the emptiness of human things; nothing was wanting to make me happy according to the world, and yet death comes to snatch me from all that was destined for me." She made an effort to cough and expired.*

Those daughters of the most illustrious houses of

* "Histoire d'une Grande Dame au xviii^e^ Siècle," p. 73 *et seq.*

France are distinguished by pride and courage. Their mistresses, who are for the most part of the same blood as themselves, develop these virtues in preference to others. They hate tale-bearing with a hatred which, it is said, has since declined in the convents. When Mademoiselle de Lévis makes it out a merit that she had not taken part in the latest rebellion, Mademoiselle de Rochechouart, her mistress, pays her an ironical compliment. These well-born women have above all a horror of baseness, and are, moreover, very mild about grammar and the catechism. They cannot endure affectation. One of them is told, with a great outcry, that the young ladies have put ink into the holy water font, that the nuns have smeared themselves with it at Matins, and that the deed is a black one. She replies tranquilly that no doubt it is black because of the ink.

If Princess Massalska's companions are prouder spirited, as a rule, than the daughters of our middle classes to-day, they are also more violent and more brutal. They beat one another with extreme violence. Hélène, who has been accused of carrying tales, is trampled under foot by all her companions. "I was bruised all over," she says. The mistresses send her to bed and do not bother themselves further.* In the most foolish quarrels, "when the *reds* (the bigger girls) met the *blues* (the smaller) they beat them to mummies." They were also much freer in their speech than would be tolerated to-day. Their minds felt the effect of the country-house life they led, which is, on the whole, a rustic life. Sometimes coarse expressions escaped from their lips. Hélène relates that there was in the *red* class a mistress whom they could not endure, whose name was Madame de Saint

* "Histoire d'une Grande Dame au xviii^e Siècle," p. 42.

Jérôme. "As her skin was very dark and so was that of Dom Rigoley (her confessor), some took it into their heads to say that if they married one another, there would come moles and little negroes. This joke, although it was very silly, became so fashionable that all through the class nothing was spoken of except moles and little negroes."

Firmness and intrepidity, not without some coarseness, these were the qualities which in 1780 swelled the young breasts of those who were soon destined to see, without turning pale, their houses crumble to dust and their world come to an end.

But, upon the whole, between our girls and theirs, there are, in this respect, only slight shades of distinction. Quite another feature marks the real difference. Our young middle-class girls are more restless and agitated than were the aristocratic girls of former days. There does not seem to have been much vagueness in the souls of these latter. Our girls have sometimes too much. Look at M. Robert de Bonnières' Jeanne Avril:

"She had confused aspirations towards great things, without knowing what they were. There was within her an impatience which bore her into elevated regions above sober practices and vulgar cares." ("Jeanne Avril.")

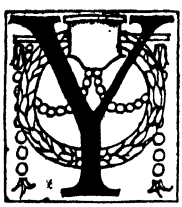
If our young middle-class girls dream a great deal, it is also true that their lives give them a great deal to dream about. Owing to the confusion of the old ranks, and the clash of differing worlds which come into collision with one another, they may one day be raised, by marriage, to titles and crowns.

This is Mademoiselle Catherine Duval's ambition in 1885. Her father, as we have said, is a large paper merchant of the Marais. She wants to be a great

lady. That is the cause of her dreams. She admits it frankly. "A single desire stirs me," she says, "a single ambition seizes me and completely possesses me . . . that I, too, should some day be one of those women upon whom Paris has its eyes always fixed. And that I, too, on the day after a ball, delightfully tired, still hearing the murmur of tender and endearing declarations, still feeling upon my shoulders the caress and fire of a thousand admiring glances, that I, too, should read in the 'Carnet d'une Mondaine' or in 'Notes d'une Parisienne' that the prettiest woman at the ball, and the most courted, and the most sought after, and the best dressed, and the most envied was me, me, me, Catherine Duval, transformed into the Marchioness or Countess of I-don't-know-where." ("Princesse.") Modern life leaves a large margin open to desire. It allows Jeanne Avril or Catherine Duval vast hopes; it brings to them new "perhapses." It excites ambitions by multiplying chances. It is a lottery. This is how it enervates and depraves. This is how it makes neuropaths, outcasts, and morphomaniacs.

However, I am not yet very sure that this is an infallible sign of the times, and I return to my first doubts. To do so is the wiser course. The truth is that nature is always more diverse than we suspect. There are young girls to-day who think vigorously and who hardly ever dream. There were neuropaths in all times. Only they were given another name, and less heed was taken of them. If habits change there is in woman a nature which scarcely changes. She is always the same and always different. We can no more characterise her than life itself, life, of which she is the source.

M. GUY DE MAUPASSANT AND THE FRENCH STORY-TELLERS



ES, I will summon them all! Tellers of Fabliaux, of Lays, and of Moralities, makers of farces, of devil-plays, and of joyous devices, jongleurs and old Gallic story-tellers, I will summon and defy them all! Let them come and confess that their gay science is not so good as the skilful and unbridled art of our modern story-tellers! Let them admit themselves conquered by the Alphonse Daudets, the Paul Arènes, and the Guy de Maupassants! I will first of all summon the minstrels who in the time of Queen Blanche went from castle to castle repeating their lay, like the creatures of whom Dante speaks in the sixth canto of his "Inferno." These, indeed, told their stories in verse, but their verses had less charm than the prose of our own Jean des Vignes. For them, metre and rhyme were but a prompt-book and a set of rules. They employed both in order that they might easily remember their little stories and recite them without difficulty. Verse, being then useful, could dispense with beauty. In the thirteenth century, one of these minstrels would recite "The Horse-cloth Cut in Two Pieces," in which we see a lord who drives his poor and infirm old father out

of the house but brings him back again from fear of being treated in the same way by his own son. Another would tell how William, the money-changer, had not only a hundred pounds from the monk who thought to "deceive" his wife, but also a pig to boot.

In these times, form was uncouth in the hands of story-tellers, and matter was on no higher level. Sometimes, here and there, a pretty Complaint arose—for instance, that of the Little Bird, in which a nightingale instructs a rustic in the precepts of the purest wisdom, or the "Graélent" of Marie of France. But even the "Graélent" is more likely to surprise than to please. You may judge of it from the following:

"There was," says the poetess, Marie of France, "there was near the town a thick forest through which a river ran. The knight, Graélent, was walking in it, pensive and sad. After having wandered for some time in the forest he saw in a thicket a white hind which fled at his approach. He pursued it, though without thinking he could catch it, and in this way he reached a glade in which a limpid fountain was playing. In this fountain a young damsel was sporting, quite naked. As he saw her, slender, smiling, beauteous, and white, Graélent forgot the hind."

The good Marie relates the sequel with perfect simplicity. Graélent finds the damsel to his liking and "beseeches her in love." But soon, seeing that his prayers are vain, "he drags her by force to the depth of the wood, does with her as he wishes, and entreats her very gently not to be angry, promising to love her faithfully and never to leave her. The damsel saw that he was a worthy knight, courteous

and discreet.—'Graélent,' said she, 'although you have taken me by surprise I will love you none the less on that account; but I forbid you to say anything that can disclose our love. I will give you much money and beautiful clothes. You are loyal, valiant, and handsome.'" The poetess, Marie, adds that henceforth Graélent lived in great joy. He was an excellent lover.

Truly, the story-tellers of the thirteenth century told things with an incomparable simplicity. I find an example of it in the celebrated story of "Amis and Amile."

"Arderi swore that Amile had dishonoured the king's daughter; Amis swore that Arderi lied. They darted against one another and fought from the hour of terce until nones. Arderi was vanquished and Amis cut off his head. The king was both sad at having lost Arderi and pleased to see his daughter cleansed from all reproach. He gave her in marriage to Amis with a great sum of gold and silver. Amis became a leper through the will of God. His wife, whose name was Obias, detested him. She tried several times to strangle him. . . ."

There is a narrator whom nothing surprises! It is only from the fifteenth century onwards that we find, no longer wandering singers, but real writers, capable of constructing a good narrative. Such is the author of "Petit Jehan de Saintré." He had no love for the monks: that is a habit of mind common among all the old story-tellers: but he knew how to write. Such also are the noblemen of Dauphin Louis, who composed at Genappe, in Brabant, the collection known under the title of the "Cent Nouvelles nouvelles du roi Louis XI." Their

invention seems a little thin, but their style is vivid, sober, and vigorous. It is good old French. These tales do not lack wit; they are short; and there are ten in a hundred of them that make us smile even to-day. Do you not think, for example, this a very pleasing story of the good parish priest who loved his dog so tenderly? The poor animal being dead, the worthy man, without a thought of evil, buried it in consecrated ground, in the cemetery where the Christians of the place were peaceably waiting for the last judgment and the resurrection of the body. Unluckily, the bishop got wind of it. He was a stern and miserly man. He sent for the priest and poured reproaches on his head. He was going to put him in prison when the latter "spoke according to his manual" as follows

"In truth, my lord, if you knew my dog, whom God forgive as I have done, you would not be so amazed at the burial I have given him."

And then he went on to praise his dog:

"As he was intelligent during his lifetime, he was even more so at his death, for he made an excellent will, and because he knew your need and your indigence, he left you fifty golden crowns which I have brought."

The bishop, adds the story-teller, approved at once both of the will and of the burial. I do not summon these story-tellers, nor above all those who followed them, to make them confess their defeat, but to form a friendly and glorious retinue for the latest arrivals.

In the sixteenth century, the short story flourishes, climbs, and expands over the whole field of letters. It fills numerous collections. It slips into the most

learned works in the midst of scholarly and even somewhat pedantic dissertations.

Béroald de Verville, Guillaume Boucher, Henri Estienne, Noël du Fail, the most varied and the richest of the "novelists" of that time, vie with one another in story-telling. The Queen of Navarre makes her "Heptaméron" a collection of "all the ill tricks that women have played upon unlucky men." I do not speak of Rabelais nor of Montaigne, though both have told stories, and told them better than anybody else. In the seventeenth century, the short story assumed a Spanish garb, put on a cape and a sword, and became tragi-comic. The luckless Scarron showed us several, tricked out in this way. Among others of his there are two, "Les Hypocrites" and "Le Chatiment de l'Avarice," in which Molière found some touches that do not disfigure either his "Avare" or his "Tartufe." The great man did the cripple much honour by pillaging from him. Yet the Spanish miser of the short story has a rather amusing picaresque air. "Never was a candle-end lit in his room unless he had stolen it, and for economy he always began to undress in the street at the place where he lit it, and as soon as he entered his room he put it out and went to bed. But finding that it was possible to go to bed in even less expensive style, his inventive mind caused him to make a hole in the wall which separated his room from that of a neighbour, who had no sooner lighted his candle than Marcos [that was the miser's name] opened the hole and received through it light enough to do what he wanted. Not being able to leave off wearing a sword, as one of a noble family, he carried it one day on the right and another on the left side so

that his breeches might wear out symmetrically." I agree with Racine that Scarron writes like a hack. But he knows how to paint. Here, for example, is an excellent stroke. Our miser has fallen in love. He is returning to his lodging very agitated, but still careful to lose nothing. "He draws the end of a taper out of his pocket, pricks it on the point of his sword and, having lit it before a public crucifix in a neighbouring square, not without an ejaculatory prayer for the success of his marriage, he opens with a skeleton key the door of the house where he sleeps and lies down on his wretched bed, rather to think of his love than to sleep." It seems to me that this is a good subject for a drawing from the pen of M. Henri Pille. I will not linger over the "Caquets de l'accouchée" nor Charles Sorel's stories of lackeys, nor over Furetière's accounts of the middle classes, nor over the fairy-tales. As for the eighteenth century, it is the golden age of the short story. The pen runs and laughs in the fingers of Antoine Hamilton, of the Abbé de Voisenon, of Diderot, of Voltaire. "Candide" is put together for immortality in three days. It was a time when everybody told stories with both philosophy and wit. Have you read Caylus's short stories, and do you know Galichet? Galichet was a wizard. "It is he who caused a girl dressed in white, who came every night to visit the Father Purveyor, to pass for the soul of a Jacobin friar. It is he who caused bats to rain upon the convent of the nuns of Montereau the day that the musketeers reached it. It is he who caused a white rabbit to appear every night in the Abbess's room. . . ." But I think Galichet is making me talk nonsense.

What attractive people, and how intelligent and

gay they were! Yes, gay. And do you know what the gaiety of thinking people is called? It is called the courage of the mind. That is why I have an infinite esteem for those marquises and philosophers who smilingly disclosed the emptiness of things and wrote tales about the universal woe. The Chevalier de Boufflers, a hussar and a poet, has for his part written a little story which is so pleasing, so philosophical, so grave and so light, so impertinent and, at the same time, so indulgent, that one cannot read it without a smile moistened with a tear. It is "Aline, reine de Golconde." Aline was a shepherdess. One day she lost her milk-pail and her innocence, and threw herself into the midst of pleasures. But she became virtuous when she grew old. Then she found happiness. "Happiness," she says, "is settled pleasure. Pleasure is like a drop of water; happiness is like a diamond." But here we are in the nineteenth century. You show me Stendhal, Charles Nodier, Balzac, Gérard de Nerval, Mérimée, and so many others whose names make such a large company that I have not time to write them.

Some among these have sweetness, and others have vigour. None has gaiety. The French Revolution guillotined the lighter graces, and proscribed the easy smile. For nearly a century literature has ceased to laugh.

We have given M. Guy de Maupassant a fine enough retinue of story-tellers, ancient and modern. And it was but just. M. de Maupassant is one of the most whole-hearted story-tellers of this country in which so many and such good stories have been told. His strong, simple, and natural language has a flavour of the soil that makes us love him dearly. He possesses the three great qualities of the French

writer, first, clearness, then again, clearness, and lastly, clearness. He has the feeling of proportion and order which is the feeling of our race. He writes as a good Norman landowner lives, with economy and joy. Sly, pawky, a good fellow, something of a boaster, a little foppish ashamed of nothing but his large native kindliness, careful to hide what is most exquisite in his soul, full of sound sense, no dreamer, little curious of the things beyond the tomb, believing only what he sees, and reckoning only on what he touches, the man belongs to us, he is a fellow countryman. Hence the friendship which he inspires in everybody throughout France who can read. And in spite of this Norman flavour, in spite of this cornflower perfume which we inhale in all his work, he is more varied in his types, richer in his subjects, than any other story-teller of our time. There hardly exists an imbecile or a vagabond who is not to his purpose and whom he does not put, as he passes, into his bag. He is the great painter of the human grimace. He paints without hate and without love, without anger and without pity, the miserly peasants, drunken sailors, lost women, cheap clerks dazed by their toil, and all those humble beings whose humility is as devoid of beauty as of virtue. He shows us all these grotesques and all these unfortunates so distinctly that we believe we see them before our eyes and find them more real than reality itself. He makes them live, but he does not judge them. We do not know what he thinks of those scoundrels, rogues, and blackguards whom he has created and who haunt us. He is a skilful artist, and he knows that he has done all that is needed when he has given life. His indifference is equal to that of nature; it astonishes

me, it irritates me. I would like to know what is the inner belief and feeling of this pitiless, robust, and good-natured man. Does he like fools for their stupidity? Does he like evil for its ugliness? Is he jovial? Is he sad? Does he amuse himself while he amuses us? What does he believe about man? What does he think of life? What does he think of Mademoiselle Perle's chaste grief, of Miss Harriett's foolish and fatal love, and of the tears shed in the Church of Virville by Rosa when she remembers her first communion? Does he say to himself: Perhaps life after all is good? At least he appears here and there to be very pleased with the way in which it is given. Perhaps he says to himself that the world is well made since it is full of ill-made and ill-behaving beings about whom stories may be written. That would be, all things considered, a good philosophy for a story-teller. Nevertheless, we are, on the contrary, free to think that M. de Maupassant is at heart melancholy and compassionate, lacerated by profound pity, and that he inwardly laments the miseries which he exposes before our gaze with so superb a tranquillity.

He is unrivalled, as you know, for the way in which he depicts villagers as Adam's curse has made and unmade them. Among others, he shows us one, in an admirable tale, all nose, without cheeks, his eyes round, fixed, anxious, and wild, with a head like a cock's, beneath an old high-crowned hat, its nap scorched and shaggy. In a word, the peasant whom we all see and whom we are astonished to see beside us, so different does he seem from ourselves. About fifteen years ago, M. François Coppée and I were walking along a little half-deserted, wild, and depressing Norman strand, where

blue sand-thistles were pining amidst the gravel. On our walk we met a man of the district, bent, crooked, and ill-shaped, though strong, with a bare neck like a vulture's, and the round glance of a bird. As he walked, he made, at every step, a huge grimace which expressed absolutely nothing. I could not help laughing, but, having questioned my companion by a look, I read on his face such an expression of pity that I was ashamed of mirth that he was so far from sharing.

"He looks like Brasseur," said I, somewhat awkwardly, to excuse myself.

"Yes," answered the poet, "and Brasseur makes one laugh. But that man is not ugly to be amusing. That is why I don't laugh."

This meeting had given a sort of discomfort to my companion. Does not M. de Maupassant, who is also a poet, suffer when he sees men as his eyes and his brain show them to him, so ugly, so evil, and so cowardly, bounded in their joys, their griefs, and even in their crimes, by an irremediable misery? I do not know. I only know that he is practical, that he does not cry for the moon, and that he is not a man to seek remedies for incurable ills.

I am inclined to believe that his whole philosophy is contained in that wise song which nurses sing to their charges, and which so marvellously sums up all that we know about the destiny of men upon the earth:

"All the little dolls
Run, run, run,
Three times round,
And then they're gone."

BENJAMIN CONSTANT'S JOURNAL

ESTERDAY I had the honour of conversing with a politician strongly attached to the moderate Republican party, a party which he honours by his correct attitude and his melancholy. He spoke to me of Benjamin Constant with respect and veneration as of a father. Listening to him, one would have said that Benjamin Constant was a Solon, almost a Lycurgus. It was not for me to argue with such a speaker. Besides, Benjamin Constant's authority in matters of constitutional law cannot be denied. But I was tempted to smile inwardly as I thought of the source of these political ideas, so imposing in their wisdom and gravity, and as I figured to myself the weaknesses of the Solon of 1828.

Born at Lausanne, of a family originally belonging to Artois, Benjamin Constant mingled in his veins the blood of the Huguenot captains with that of the pastors who during their battles used to sing psalms for the soldiers of the Lord. His mother, gentle and delicate, died in giving him birth. His father, of a character ironical and timid, never inspired him with any confidence. Up to the age of fourteen he was subjected to a severe education which contracted his heart and magnified his self-love. He passed two years of his boyhood in a German university,

abandoned to himself, amidst successes that turned his head. He admits that he committed amazing follies. From sixteen to eighteen, he studied at Edinburgh. Then he came to Paris.

At eighteen years of age, ambitious, a gambler, and a lover, he heaped fuel upon the three flames that were destined slowly and miserably to consume his life. It was at Coppet on September 19th, 1794, that he saw Madame de Staël for the first time. This meeting, as everybody knows, decided his destiny and threw him into politics in that illustrious woman's train. His writings won him a reputation, and he was summoned to the Tribunate after the 18th Brumaire. But his opposition to the First Consul, in the Legislature, and in Madame de Staël's salon, soon brought about his expulsion and exile. Then he betook himself to Weimar, where the Grand-Duchess gave him a warm welcome.

I find it rather embarrassing to relate the remainder of a career so familiar to all. Everybody knows that Benjamin Constant married a second time in Germany, and that he found this second union, though more stormy than the first, also more tolerable. Having returned to France in 1814, he rallied to the support of the constitutional monarchy. On March 19th, 1815, when Napoleon, back from Elba, was already at Fontainebleau, Benjamin Constant, acting upon a suggestion whose origin has only recently been disclosed, wrote for the "Débats" a vehement article which ends with the celebrated phrase: "I shall not, like a wretched turncoat, crawl from one power to another, covering infamy with sophism, and stammering profaned words in order to redeem a shameful life." A month had hardly passed before Benjamin Constant, a member

of the Emperor's Council of State, was drawing up the "Additional Act." Banished as a traitor at the second Restoration, he was able to come back to France after 1816. In 1819 he was returned for the Chamber of Deputies, where to the end of his life he remained the eloquent leader of the constitutional Opposition. The Revolution of 1830, his grateful daughter, summoned him to the Presidency of the Council of State. He died on December 8th, 1830, and he was given a public funeral.

These are the main lines of his career. They are broken and contradictory. If we penetrate to the details of his actions, if we enter into his soul, we discover contradictions that astonish us, internal struggles whose violence amazes us, and we say to ourselves: There were in this man several men who might have done great and fine things had they not been forced to prey upon one another by an intolerable and indissoluble union.

The man whose lot it was to draw up the "Additional Act," to contribute to the "Mercure" of 1816, and, at critical periods, to defend liberty from his place in the Chamber, this man was not born with a generous love for mankind. He was bound to them by no sympathy. When he knew them he despised them.

"I treat other people with consideration, but I do not like them. Hence it is that I am little hated and hardly liked at all.—I am not much more interested in myself than in others." Sismondi reproaches him for never speaking seriously. "It is true," he says, "my disposition is such that I take too little interest in persons and things to seek to persuade. I limit myself, therefore, to silence and to flippancy. The best quality Heaven has given me

is that of amusing myself with myself." With this frame of mind it was difficult to cherish any illusions about the benefits of liberty. He had shown himself favourable to the Revolution at its beginning, but without ardour and without much hope. He wrote in 1790: "The human race is born foolish and is guided by knaves. That is the rule; but, having to choose among knaves, I give my vote for the Mirabeaus and the Barnaves rather than the Sartines and the Breteuils."

These are certainly not the tones of the Liberal tribune. His brow has not yet been warmed. Six years later a glowing breath proceeding from a woman's lips will inflame it. Benjamin Constant drew all his inspirations from lips that he loved; women determined his opinions, his speeches, and his acts. Madame de Staël is for ten years his conscience and his illumination. Afterwards, with tears in his eyes, he vainly asks of Madame Récamier what he must do and what he must believe.

He did not borrow his ideas from women; he was too intelligent for that. But, as he loved them, he thought for them, and in the way they wished. Alone, he was incapable of taking any side. Never was there a more undecided man. Ideas rose up too numerous and too nimble in his brain. They shaped themselves, not, like an army, into solid battalions, but into light companies like the bees of the Attic poets and philosophers, or like the dancers in a ballet whose groups are incessantly composed and decomposed harmoniously. He had an imaginative and inquiring spirit. With reflection everything becomes difficult. Politicians are like horses, they cannot go properly without blinkers. Benjamin

Constant's misfortune was that he had none. He knew it, and he proffered himself to be blindfolded.

I have said that he loved women. It is almost true. He would have loved them if he could, and if he had not been as incapable of love as of belief. At least he knew that it is they alone who give life whatever value it has, and that this world, which is merely bad, would, without them, be quite uninhabitable. This feeling, which filled three-quarters of his life, caused him to commit glaring faults, dictated his happiest pages, and now, moreover, assures for his memory a sort of attraction which we cannot resist. I will not say that Benjamin Constant loved himself in the persons of women, for he had no more predilection for himself than for others. But he dispelled his boredom with them, and by dint of seeking passion he on one occasion very nearly attained it. He began well. At eighteen, he fell in love with a witty and intelligent woman of forty-five. He remained her friend. Another affair would have ended in the same gentle fashion had Madame de Staël been willing. But, this time, Benjamin had the unhappiness to be loved even when he himself had ceased to love. That is the commonest result of those affairs that bring people together without uniting their interests. For the man has gained his end by possession, whilst the woman expects an infinite gratitude for the gift she has made. She complains that she has been deceived, as if a man could fall in love without first of all deceiving himself! The guest of Coppet had to suffer the most violent storms that have ever broken upon a perjured man's head. It is an episode upon which nothing remains to be said. We know only too much about those feminine transports, those outbursts, that long and cruel rupture. We have heard

the bitter laments of our luckless hero, and in the autobiographical novel, "Adolphe," we have found again the softened echo of those laments. Adolphe sympathises with the grief-stricken wonder of the soul he has deceived; he understands that there is something sacred in this soul which suffers because it loves. Where at first he had perceived nothing but tiresome effusions, he now perceives the august fervour of a living and wounded heart.

When he was thirty-five, and no longer in love, he used to say: "My heart is too old to open itself to fresh ties." But fifteen years later he felt himself still young and he plunged into the whirlwind. In this he was like other men. For my own part, I have heard many people exclaim at forty, or even at thirty, that they felt themselves old and touched by a moral decay which they knew to be without remedy. I have found them again, ten and twenty years later, boasting of their inexhaustible youth.

I have said that Benjamin Constant nearly fell completely in love. It is Madame Récamier, with "her face of an angel and a school-girl," who performed that half-miracle. She made him crazy by merely taking off her gloves:

> "Facie tenerisque lacertis
> Devovet . . ."*

Did she do this unintentionally? Benjamin Constant did not believe it, and it is very probable he was right. He wrote letters to her in which one feels the fire of his love. He said to her: "To love is to suffer, but it is also to live. And, for such a long time past I have not been alive." For her

* "By her face and tender arms
She casts a spell upon him."

he wrote the famous article in the "Débats" of March 19th, 1815. But the divine Juliet had secrets which enabled her to transform the most violent loves into peaceful friendships. Following Saint Cecilia's example, she knew how to make a pulpit of abstinence out of the sofa on which the painter David has shown her half-reclining form to us, and to transform into timid lambs those whom she received as ramping lions. Benjamin, after ten months of roaring, ended as a lamb.

Having for the last time tried in vain to mask the frightful realities of life under the images of love, he entered, with death in his heart, upon his frozen old age.

"When the age of passion has passed," he says, "what can one desire except to escape from life with the least possible pain?"

We may judge this man severely, but there is one greatness which we cannot deny him: he was very unhappy, and that is not the lot of a mean soul. Yes, he was very unhappy. He suffered cruelly through himself and through others. And he was not one of those true lovers who love their misery when it is a woman or a god who causes it. For sixty years he dragged through this world of sorrows the most wearied and the most restless spirit that a refined civilisation ever fashioned for tedium and disenchantment. He could not live with other men, and he could not live alone. "The world tires my eyes and brain," he used to say. "I am ruined by having been too long in the world. What an extinguisher for every form of talent!" He would exclaim: "Solitude! Solitude! more necessary still for my talent than for my happiness. I cannot describe my joy at being alone." And the

next day he would throw himself again into the world, where his pride, the barrenness of his heart, and the fastidiousness of his mind were preparing exquisite tortures for him. One day, seeing clearly into the depths of his soul, he exclaimed: "In reality, I can dispense with nothing." Everything was necessary to him, and everything failed him. Joy, virtue, happiness, dignity, content, all withered up between his arid fingers. And he had strange outbursts of impatience at his fate: "It is too bad not to have either the pleasure to which one sacrifices one's dignity nor the dignity to which one sacrifices one's pleasure." What is there which he did not desire? Of what enchantment has not this disenchanted man dreamed? He calls at once upon both fame and love. He wants to fill the world with his name and his thought, and suddenly, in a little German town, meeting an old monk who had been employed for thirty years in ranging some specimens on the shelves of a cupboard, he envies the serenity, the calm and gentleness of the good man. He wants to have all joys, those of the great and those of the humble, those of the foolish and those of the wise. Goethe's "Faust" seems commonplace to him. It is because Faust had only simple and natural wishes when contrasted with his own, and seemed reasonable compared with himself. He believes in nothing, and yet he strives to taste the delights with which pious souls are filled by the divine love.

Having conceived the idea of a book against all religions, he writes, in perfect sincerity, a book in favour of all religions. He confesses himself to the Duc de Broglie regarding the matter. "I had collected," he says, "three or four thousand facts in

support of my first thesis; they turned right-about-face at the word of command and now charge in the opposite direction! Is not that an example of passive obedience?"

He has no faith, and yet he believes in all mysteries, even in those which Madame de Krudener taught during her penitent, restless, and devout old age. In 1815 he spent whole nights in that lady's drawing-room, now on his knees in prayer, now stretched upon the carpet in ecstasy, beseeching God for Madame Récamier!

Never was there a man who asked more from life than he, and never was there a man who had a greater spite against it for deceiving him. The feeling of human uncertainty filled him with grief. "Everything," he says, "seems to me precarious and ready to escape from me. An impression that life has made upon me and one which does not leave me is a sort of terror of destiny. I never end the account of a day by writing down the date of the day following without a feeling of disquiet regarding what that day following may bring me." At thirty-seven he is in despair. "I would not be sorry to be at an end with it all at once. What have I to expect from life?"

He had no love for his misery, but he had a pride in it. "If I were happy in the vulgar manner I should despise myself." And, as if it were necessary that everything in his life should be ironical, he derived his last happiness from roulette. People thought him malicious. He was not. He was capable of sympathy and of a sort of deliberate pity. Better still, he preserved a solid friendship for Julie Talma as long as she lived, and when she was dead he wrote some exquisite pages about her.

The last of these is grave and touching. Here it is:

"The death of Julie's youngest son was the cause of her own, and the signal for a decline as manifest as it was rapid. . . . Her health, often wavering, had appeared to struggle against nature as long as hope had sustained her, or the cares which she lavished on her dying son had buoyed her up. When she saw that there was no more good to be done, her strength abandoned her. She went back to Paris ill, and, on the very day of her arrival, all the doctors gave her up. Her illness lasted about three months. . . . When symptoms which she recognised only too well, for she had seen them in the long illness of her youngest son, suddenly enlightened her about her state, her face at first clouded over; but she drove away this impression, she spoke of it only in such a manner as in an indirect way to beg of friendship to join with her in removing it. At last the terrible moment came. . . . Her illness, which sometimes had appeared to modify her character, had not had the same empire over her intellect. Two hours before she died, she spoke with interest of the objects that had engaged her all her life, and her weighty and profound reflections on the degradation of the human race when crushed down by despotism were mixed with pungent witticisms upon the individuals who have signalised themselves most in this career of degradation. Death came to put an end to the exercise of so many faculties which physical suffering had not been able to weaken. Even in her last moments Julie retained all her reason. Not being able to speak, she indicated by signs the assistance which she thought it still possible to give her. She squeezed my hand as a sign of gratitude. It was thus that she died." *

Human suffering wounded the fastidiousness of his senses and the purity of his intelligence. He had a sterile but sincere hatred for it. Bringing ill-fortune to others as well as to himself, he never wished to cause the evil he wrought. I read in an unpublished letter which he wrote in 1815 to the Baroness de Gérando: "A singularity of my life is that I have always been regarded as the most

* "Lettre sur Julie," in the sequel to "Adolphe." Lévy's edition, p. 214.

heartless and the coldest of men, while I have continually been governed and tormented by feelings independent of all calculation and even destructive of the interests of my rank, my reputation, or my fortune."

Most assuredly, he did not govern himself either by self-interest or by calculation. He did not govern himself at all, and that is what he has been blamed for. A public man, he gained popularity without ever winning regard. At the end of his troubled life, sometimes so brilliant and always so sad, he asked for a place in the Academy. The Academy refused it, and, to aggravate its refusal, gave the place to M. Viennet, who was a blockhead, but who did not lack esteem. It was thus that Benjamin Constant accomplished his destiny to the end, and suffered from not being able to inspire the confidence which he unceasingly solicited. But how could confidence be placed in a man who distractedly pursues passion when passion flees from him, who despises men and labours to make them free, whose speech is but the brilliant jingle of sharp-edged contradictions which lacerate his intelligence and his heart?

I kept for a long time in my study a portrait of this great tribune whose eloquence, we are told, was cold and, like his heart, permeated by the breath of death. It was a simple sketch made during the last years of the Restoration by a relative of mine, the painter, Gabriel Guérin, of Strasburg. It was included five years ago in a division of family property, and I do not know what became of it. I regret it. I had caught a feeling of sympathy for that long and pale face, stamped with so much sadness and irony, whose features had more subtlety

than those of the greater number of men. Its expression was neither very simple nor very clear. But it was entirely strange. It had something exquisite and miserable, something infinitely accomplished and infinitely painful, doubtless because the spirit and the life of Benjamin Constant were reflected in it.

And, for a thinking being, there is no unmoving spectacle in the portrait of this man who longed for storms,* and who, led by passion, by boredom, by ambition, and by chance into public life, professed liberty without believing in it.

* This is his special characteristic, but it is also one of the signs of the time. Compare Chateaubriand: "Arise quickly, ye longed-for storms which are destined to bear René away!"

A NOVEL AND A GENERAL ORDER: "LE CAVALIER MISEREY"*

" E CAVALIER MISEREY, 21e Chasseurs," has made some noise in these days. It is a naturalist novel, and this naturalist novel is a military novel. "I have been the first," says the author in his preface, "to apply an artist's vision and the methods of the analytical novel to a study of the nature of the Soldier. . . . An entire world brought upon the stage in all the confusion of a crowd, and two essential personages placed alone in the full light: the Man and the Regiment,—beneath the complication of details, a very simple drama, arising from their antagonism, from their reciprocal action, from their concubinage, and from their brutal rupture, that is the whole book; upon the whole, nothing but literature built upon the truth."

So far so good, but it remains to be seen what the truth is, and whether M. Abel Hermant's truth is valid. We know already that this truth is not the truth of the colonel of the 12th regiment of cavalry. If lions could write, if the colonel of the 12th regiment were to write a novel about his regiment, it cannot be doubted that it would be something quite different from "Le Cavalier Miserey." I do not

* One vol., Charpentier.

hesitate to affirm that it would not be a naturalist novel. I have said that "Le Cavalier Miserey" is. It is out-and-out naturalist. We must not understand by this that it is brutal. On the contrary, it seems rather mealy-mouthed. The author has avoided scurrility in a subject where it would be met at every turn, for troopers are not young ladies, and the language of the barracks is not like that of drawing-rooms. M. Abel Hermant only gives us a softened echo of the troopers' slang. But his book is entirely cast in the mould of the new novel. Each portion of it is taken minutely by itself and treated according to the formula. Descriptions, interspersed with bits of dialogue, succeed one another with a monotony from which, I am afraid, the reader may experience some fatigue. They are precise and without much brilliancy. There are little landscapes in the places where novelists are accustomed to put them. These, although but short, are too long, for Miserey and his companions do not see them. In brief, we are conscious of the composition everywhere, and I am right in saying that it is a naturalist novel. I know better ones and I know worse, but I see none more typical. This example is as cold and correct as a model for school exercises.

M. Émile Zola too, will, sooner or later, give us a military novel. He has promised us one. But I will wager that his novel will be less naturalist than "Le Cavalier Miserey." There are many reasons why I should win my bet. The first is that if M. Zola has invented naturalism, others have perfected it. The machines that inventors construct are always rudimentary.

It is also necessary to bear in mind that M. Zola is

less faithful to his doctrines than he says and believes. He has not succeeded in overpowering his vigorous imagination. He is a poet in his own way, a poet without refinement and without grace, but not without audacity and energy. He sees things massively, sometimes he even sees them grandly. He presses forward to the type and aims at the symbol. Though he labours to copy, he is so clumsy that he invents and creates! His conception of the "Rougon-Maquart," which is to show every physiological state and all social conditions in a single family, has in it something huge and symmetrical which reveals that its author is possessed by the most ardent idealism. His starting-point, heredity, has nothing scientific about it save its appearance. Now, the laws of heredity are not known, and for this reason he has founded his work upon fiction. If we look at the essence of things we see that he is as much a descendant of the author of the "Wandering Jew" as of the author of "Cousine Bette," and even the latter was not a realist. M. Zola's instincts are repugnant to direct observation. Of all worlds, it is his own which he seems to know least. He divines, and it is in divination that he takes pleasure. He has the visions, the hallucinations of a hermit. He animates inert matter, he invests things with thought. In the depths of his retreat he evokes the soul of crowds. Médan provides a hiding-place for the last of the romantics.

Add to this that the army which M. Zola will depict for us is that of Sebastopol, of Magenta, and of Reichshoffen. It is an historical army of which nothing but the memory remains, dear indeed to the nation, but already distant. The immense frame

in which M. Zola has been so ready to place himself fastens him to an epoch which is not ours. His heroes belong to history. M. Zola, confined within the Second Empire, is a sort of Walter Scott. It is not I, but M. Jules Lemaître, who made this remark, and it is true. The naturalism of the author of the "Rougon-Maquart" is complicated by archaism. He will soon have to collect his human documents in the museums. When the time comes for him to prepare his military novel he will examine the old rifles of the conquerors of Solferino just as the romantic Scotsman used to look at an old claymore dug out of a battlefield by the coulter of a plough.

It is possible then that M. Abel Hermant may be the last as well as the first naturalist of the army. We must hope so, for the idea of examining a regiment through a microscope is not a good one.

M. Hermant has desired to place "the army very high," and to speak "of the regiment with that species of passionate religion which it inspires in all those who have had the honour of wearing the uniform." It is he himself who says this, and I believe him, but it is certain that he has not come near to success. And how could he reach so noble an end with the aid of the wretched plot he has invented? How can one teach the religion of the flag by telling the story of a trooper who deserts to follow a harlot, and then steals a comrade's watch? I shall place on the stage, he tells us, the man and the regiment. And this is the man he gives us as the type of the soldier! As for the regiment, I admit that here and there he has had the feeling of this "simple and powerful organism" (p. 19), of "this enormous body, living with the

diffused personality of the ocean, where individuals are dissolved and count for no more than the unity of a drop of water" (p. 18). His hero, who, however, is only a vicious peasant, feels, "as they all feel, the necessity of the law which despatches conscripts from one end of France to the other, and by a single stroke makes them orphans whom the army adopts" (p. 199). He even experiences "the humble pride of obscure men who have for a moment a clear consciousness of their useful and unknown part in a great work" (p. 222). But what becomes of the majesty of the regiment in those long and painful scenes that monotonously disclose to us the awkward timidity of Captain Weber, the silliness and humiliation of Captain du Simard, and the bewildered enthusiasm of Captain Ratelot, who, after six years in Africa, still knows how to read, but to his amazement cannot understand anything of what he reads? It has been said that these officers are maliciously drawn after nature from the staff of a regiment in which the author served as a volunteer. I do not believe this. They are invented: I insist upon it. Even then they are regrettable inventions.

The fault is the author's. The fault is also that of a type of literature which the public has imposed upon him. These perpetual analyses, these minute recitals that are given us as so full of truth, are, on the contrary, injurious to truth as well as to justice and to modesty. It is claimed that naturalist fiction is literature founded on science. In reality it is disowned by science, which only knows the true, and by art, which only knows the beautiful. In vain does it drag its dull deformity from the one to the other. Both reject it. It is not useful and it is

ugly. It is a monstrosity, and soon we shall be astonished at it.

To say everything is to say nothing. To show everything is to make us see nothing. The duty of literature is to note what counts, and to light up what is suited to the light. If it ceases to choose and to love, it becomes like a woman who gives herself without preference. There is a literary truth as well as a scientific truth, and do you know the name of that literary truth? It is called poetry. In art everything is false which is not beautiful. Were each detail of M. Abel Hermant's book exact, I would still say that the whole is without truth, because it is without poetry. It is never, do not forget, by exactness of detail that the artist obtains the resemblance of the whole. It is, on the contrary, by a just and superior view of the whole that he arrives at an exact understanding of the parts. The reason of this is easy to conceive. It is that, whoever we be, we are so formed that we truly understand and feel only the general form and, so to speak, the spirit of things, and that, on the contrary, the elements which constitute these things escape our observation and our intelligence owing to their infinite complexity. A glimpse of some of the outlines of a form are sometimes enough to give us a great love. All the revelations of the microscope would add nothing to it, or, rather, they would be impertinent. Art is love. This is why it needs no microscope.

I should doubtless flatter myself if I believed that the honourable colonel of the 12th regiment of cavalry was inspired by these ideas when he issued the general order by which he forbade his men to read "Le Cavalier Miserey." In ordering that every copy seized in quarters should be "burned on

the dung-heap," the head of the regiment had other reasons than mine, and I hasten to say that his reasons were infinitely better than mine. I regard them as excellent reasons because they were military reasons. People desire independence in art. I desire it too; I am jealous for it. The writer must be able to say everything, but he cannot be permitted to say it in every fashion, in all circumstances, and about all sorts of persons. He does not move in the absolute. He is in relation with men. That implies duties. In his mission of enlightening and of beautifying life, he is independent; he is not when he wishes to disturb and to injure it. He is bound to touch sacred things with respect. And if there is, by the consent of all, a sacred thing in human society, it is the army.

Besides its greatness, it has, of course, like all human things, its wretched pettinesses. It is a suffering thing since it is an heroic thing. Pity may be mingled with the respect which it inspires. The poet, Alfred de Vigny, has done this at a time which now seems distant, and has done it with all the gentleness and all the dignity of his genius. Like M. Abel Hermant he had served in the army, though not, it is true, for one year as a private, but for several years as an officer. He had left his regiment with a captain's epaulets. Some years afterwards, in 1836, he published his noble book, "Servitude et Grandeur militaires." I do not know that any colonel of cavalry has had copies of that work burned upon the dung-heap of his barracks. I have nowhere seen that the noble writer had the pain of wounding any old brigand of the Loire, annoyed by the uselessness of his old age and by the memory of his glory. However, in those grave and sad pages there are intellectual

audacities to which M. Abel Hermant has not risen. In them we find reproaches against the army, and an ideal which is often revolutionary and sometimes chimerical. The author deplores the passive obedience of the soldier and the subjection of the will of all to a rule whose imperious necessity he does not sufficiently recognise. But nothing bitter or vile is mingled with his complaint. He never ceases to honour those whom he pities. He can say everything, because in all he says he retains the love of men and respect for their virtues as well as for their sufferings. From the very beginning, he shows the peaceful gravity of his heart and a nobility of soul which in our day seems to be lost. "I shall say little of the warrior," he says, "having seen little of war; but I have a right to speak of the virile customs of the army, in which fatigue and tedium were not spared me, and which steeped my soul in a patience that is proof against everything, for they made me throw my strength into solitary recollection and study." Afterwards he depicts the army as at once a slave and a queen, and he salutes it twice, in its misery and in its glory. He would like it to think more. I believe he is wrong, and that the army ought not to think, since it ought to have no will of its own. But with what delicacy he speaks of the somewhat idle and belated spirit of that army as he had known it! "It is," he says, "a body separated from the great body of the nation, and it seems the body of a child." Again, how he celebrates everywhere both in officers and soldiers the virtue of virtues, sacrifice, which is the greatest beauty of the world, and which must be admired even when it is involuntary! In a word, how well he can see the greatness of little things!

That is the way in which the ark must be touched, the way in which the army must be spoken of! M. Abel Hermant will one day recognise that, without intending it, he has wounded feelings that lie closest to our hearts. He will recognise that it is unjust to show only the lesser sides of great things, and to see in the army only the ugly humiliations of garrison life. In a letter addressed to the Minister of War, in which nothing but the occasion can be blamed, the author of "Le Cavalier Miserey" has made a declaration which honours him. "I have enough military spirit," he has said, "to approve absolutely of the measure taken by the colonel of the 12th regiment if he believed he saw in my book a single phrase that was of a sort to have diminished the prestige of their superiors in the eyes of the men."

For my own part I know only a single line of the famous order which the colonel caused to be read in the Chartreux barracks at Rouen.

It is this: "Every copy of 'Le Cavalier Miserey' seized in the barracks will be burned on the dung-heap, and every soldier who is found with it in his possession will be punished with imprisonment."

It is not a very elegant phrase, I agree. But I should be better pleased to have written it than to have written the four hundred pages of "Le Cavalier Miserey." For I am sure that it is of infinitely greater value to my country.

THE JOURNAL OF THE GONCOURTS

PEOPLE are sometimes blamed for speaking of themselves. Yet it is the subject which they treat of best. They are interested in it themselves, and they often make us share in that interest. There are, I know, wearisome confidences, but the bores who plague us by telling us their own histories completely overpower us when they relate those of other people. A writer is rarely so well inspired as when he talks about himself. The poet's pigeon is right when he says :

> " Mon voyage dépeint
> Vous sera d'un plaisir extrême.
> Je dirai : ' J'étais là ; telle chose m'advint : '
> Vous y croirez être vous-même." *

It is true that he says this to a friend, whilst the authors of memoirs write for strangers; but men have an affection for each other even when they are not acquainted. Every reader is willing to be a friend. There is not a single journal or volume of memoirs, confessions, or confidences, nor an auto-

* "The account of my journey will give you the greatest pleasure. I shall say : ' I was there ; such and such an incident befell me.' You will believe that it happened to yourself."

biographical romance, which has not gained for its author posthumous sympathies. Marmontel does not interest us at all when he speaks of Belisarius, or of the Incas ; but he interests us intensely as soon as he begins to tell us about a little Limousin boy who read the " Georgics " in a garden where the bees were murmuring. He can touch and move us then, because he himself was that little child, because the bees are those whose honey he ate, those which his aunt warmed in the hollow of her hand, and refreshed with a drop of wine when she found them benumbed with the cold. His imagination, excited by such vivid memories, takes warmth, colour, and animation. How well he depicts for us the young village lad he was when, nurtured upon Latin, and glowing with health, he paid visits to the boudoirs of the young ladies of the theatre after he had left school ! Then he makes us see and feel everything, he who is usually the coldest of writers. What a thing it is, then, if a great genius, a Jean-Jacques Rousseau, or a Chateaubriand, deigns to depict himself !

I do not speak of St. Augustine's " Confessions " ; the great doctor does not confess enough in them. His is a spiritual book, which satisfies divine love better than human curiosity. Augustine confesses to God and not to man ; he hates his sins, and it is only those who still love their faults who make delightful confessions. He repents, and nothing spoils a confession like repentance. He says, for instance, in two charming phrases, that when quite tiny he was seen to smile in his cradle ; and immediately he endeavours to demonstrate " that there is corruption and malignity even in children who are still at the breast." The saint spoils the man to my

mind. He relates that in his childhood there was a pear-tree loaded with pears close beside his father's vineyard, and that one day he went with a crowd of young vagabonds to shake the tree and to steal the fruit which fell from it. Does he make of this one of those familiar pictures such as delight us in the first pages of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "Confessions"? or if that is asking too much, some elegant and sober narrative in the style of the minor Greek story-tellers? No! "That," he exclaims, "is the state in which, oh my Lord! was the miserable heart which it has pleased Thy mercy to drag out of the depths of the abyss!" As if an urchin who stole some wretched pears had fallen into the depths of the abyss!

He confesses his love-affairs, but he does not do it with grace, because he does it with shame. He speaks only of "pestilences," and of "infernal vapours which arose out of the corrupt depth of his concupiscence." Nothing could be more moral, but, at the same time, nothing less graceful. He does not write for the curious; he writes against the Manicheans. That annoys me doubly, for I am curious, and a little of a Manichean. But such as they are, free of the horror of the flesh, and of disgust at our terrestrial existence, Augustine's "Confessions" have contributed more than all the other books of the saint to make him known and loved throughout the ages.

As for Rousseau, whose soul held so many miseries and grandeurs, one cannot charge him with having made a half-hearted confession. He confesses both his own faults and those of others with marvellous readiness. To tell the truth costs him nothing. He knows that, however ignoble and vile it be, he can render it touching and beautiful. He

has secrets for that, the secrets of genius, which, like fire, purifies everything. Poor, great Jean-Jacques! He moved the world. He said to mothers: "Nurse your children yourselves." And young women became nurses, and painters represented the most beautiful ladies with a child at the breast. He said to men: "Men are born good and happy; Society has made them unhappy and wicked. They will recover happiness by returning to Nature." Then queens became shepherdesses and ministers became philosophers, legislators proclaimed the rights of man, and the people, naturally good, massacred the prisoners for three days in the prisons. But if Jean-Jacques has readers to-day it is not because, with enchanting eloquence, he brought into the world a new feeling of love and pity, mingled with the falsest and most fatal ideas that ever man has held concerning Nature and Society. It is not because he wrote the finest of love stories. It is not because he made new sources of poetry flow. It is because he has painted his own pitiful existence, because he has related what happened to him in this sad world, from the time when he was but a young vagabond, vicious, thieving, ungrateful, yet alive to the beauty of things, and filled with the sacred love of Nature, to the day when his restless soul sank into the blackest gloom. The "Émile" and the "New Heloïse" are hardly opened any longer; the "Confessions" will be read for ever.

Of Chateaubriand also we scarcely read more than a single book; it is the "Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe," in which he has told us of himself. He has painted himself in all his books, in the René of the "Natchez" and of "Amélie," in the Eudore of

the "Martyrs," and even in "Le Dernier des Abencérages." From the depths of the magnificent solitude of his genius he never saw anything in this world except himself and his train of women. However, we prefer the book in which he depicts himself, I do not say without preparation, but without disguise, with a pride tempered by irony, and with a sort of haughty good-fellowship and a profound boredom, which is nevertheless enlivened by a brilliant play of words—in a word, the "Mémoires." For him, as for Jean-Jacques, the posthumous book is the book that has lived.

Yes, we love all confessions and all memoirs. No, writers do not bore us when they speak of their own lives and of their hates, their joys, and their griefs. There are several reasons for this. Here are two of them. The first is that a journal, a memorial, a volume of reminiscences, escapes all the fashions, all the conventions that are imposed on the works of the mind.

A poem or a novel, however beautiful it may be, becomes old-fashioned when the literary form in which it was conceived grows old. Works of art cannot please for long, since novelty forms a great part of the pleasure they give. Now, memoirs are not works of art. An autobiography owes nothing to fashion. We look in these simply for human truth. This remark will become clearer if I extend it to the chronicles. Gregory of Tours has painted his soul and his world in a crude and affected narrative. Yet that narrative still lives and still moves us. The verses of his contemporary, Fortunatus, exist no longer as far as we are concerned. They have perished with the Latin barbarism of which they were the ornament.

In the second place, we ought to consider that there is in each of us a desire for truth, which causes us at certain moments to reject the most beautiful fictions. This is a deep-rooted instinct. It is born with us. When I tell the story of "The Goose Girl" to my little girl, she does not fail to ask me if it is true that the princess's ring was really in the cake, if it all happened, and if fairies still exist.

These, I believe, are the two principal reasons why we like the letters and the little diaries of great men so much, and even those of men who are not great if they have loved something, or believed something, or hoped for something, and if they have left a part of themselves at the end of their pens. Indeed, if one thinks of it, the mind of a commonplace man is in itself a wonder.

There is much to admire in an ordinary person even if we do not reckon the fact that what we admire in him is also to be found in ourselves—and that is pleasant to us. I should certainly discourage some of my friends from writing a drama or an epic poem, but I would discourage nobody from dictating his memoirs, nobody, not even my Breton cook, who can only read the printed letters of her Mass-book, and who firmly believes that my house is haunted by the soul of a shoemaker who comes every night to ask for her prayers. That would be an interesting book in which one of these poor, obscure souls would explain itself and would explain the world with a foolishness whose depth would almost become poetry.

Such a book would move us. We should be forced, in spite of the pride of our intellect, to recognise the relationship which links that humble intelligence to ours, and to greet it as one of our own

ancestors. For we have all had a grandmother who believed in the shoemaker's ghost. Our science, our philosophy, spring from old wives' fables. But what will spring from our philosophy?

M. Lorédan Larchey, a learned man whose mind is full of ironical curiosities, published some time ago a small collection of memoirs composed by obscure and simple people. I have a confused recollection of the diary of a sergeant, and of one of an old lady, and there lingers in my mind the notion that they were very interesting. We cannot read too many memoirs and diaries, because we can never study men too much. I do not at all agree with those who think that too many intimate and personal works of this type have been published in our time.

I do not believe that a person must be extraordinary in order to have the right of saying what he is. On the contrary, I believe that the confidences of ordinary people are good to hear.

As for those of men of talent, they have a special charm, and that is why I, for my part, am delighted at the anticipated publication of the "Journal of the Goncourts." This journal, begun by the two brothers on December 2nd, 1851, the day of the publication of their first book, was continued, after the death of the younger, by the survivor, although he had no thought of publishing it. He read some pages of it in the country last year to M. Alphonse Daudet, his friend, who was rightly struck by the interest of those brief and sincere notes, those immediate impressions. He urged M. de Goncourt to make them public at once, and his gentle violence prevailed over the author's scruples. We already know the first part of this journal. It covers ten years, and reaches up to 1861. The publication

did not, it seems to me, give rise to any grave inconvenience. In the first place, little is said in it of any except the dead. Affairs of thirty years ago are now, alas! ancient history.

All the personages we see in this first volume are personages of the past. Gavarni, Gautier, Flaubert, Paul de Saint-Victor—we can speak of them with all the freedom that their fleeting shades permit. Some are becoming forgotten, others are becoming greater. Gavarni appears in the "Journal" almost as the equal of the great artists of the Renaissance. Painter, philosopher, mathematician, all that he says is rare and profound. He thinks, and that is a cause of wonder in the midst of all this world of artists who are content with seeing and feeling.

It is also to be noted that this perfectly private journal is at the same time perfectly literary. The two authors, who form but one, are so entirely devoted to their art, they are to such an extent its sacrifice and its victim, they have so entirely offered themselves to it, that their most secret thoughts belong to letters. They have taken pen and paper as one takes the veil and the scapular. Their life is a perpetual work of observation and expression. Everywhere they are in the workshop—I was going to say at the altar and in the cloister.

One is seized with respect for this persistent labour, which even sleep scarcely interrupted, for they observed and noted their very dreams. So, although day by day they put in writing what they saw and heard, one cannot suspect them for a single moment of frivolous curiosity and indiscretion. They neither heard nor saw except in art and for art. One would not, I think, easily find a second example of that perpetual tension of two intelligences.

For one of them it was a torture. All their feelings, all their ideas, all their sensations have a book as their aim. They lived in order to write. In that, as in their talent, they are essentially of their age. Formerly, people wrote by hazard. Some people, such as the Abbé Prévost, lived by their pens and wrote a great deal, but without an excessive and constant expenditure of nervous force. Ordinarily, with the assistance of pensions, the trade of a man of letters was an extremely agreeable trade.

The nineteenth century changed all that. It was then that men of letters organised their whole existence in view of literary production. Balzac, Gautier, Flaubert instinctively took heroic measures and went through the world like incomprehensible strangers. But the Goncourts did better still. Without distinguishing themselves by any external mark from the society in which they were born, without affectation, simply and resolutely, they lived a particular, special life, made up of religious observances, of harsh privations, of painful practices, like those pious persons who, mingling with the crowd and dressed like it, yet observe the monastic rules of the congregation to which they are secretly affiliated. In this respect the "Journal of the Goncourts" is a unique document. I do not want to examine here whether, from the point of view of the conception and execution of books, this literary asceticism has not its serious inconveniences. But, when one has read the "Journal" of the years from 1851 to 1861, one understands better how an excessive cultivation of the nervous organism, a constant tension of eye and brain, produced "that artistic writing" which M. Edmond de Goncourt justly recognises as his own, and that minute notation

of sensations which is the most salient feature of the work of the two brothers. Their thought and their style, created in a special atmosphere, have not the gaiety of the open air and the easy joy of those forms which are ripened by the sun. But it is a rare thing, and it is a thing to be reverenced; for one of them died of finding it. The "Journal" explains to us how.

M. LECONTE DE LISLE AT THE FRENCH ACADEMY

DO not know, it is impossible for me to know, the speech which M. Leconte de Lisle will deliver on Thursday next at the French Academy. But I imagine that it will be something noble, a grave pronouncement, in a spacious and elevated style, an eloquent and æsthetic production. I shall be greatly surprised if we find in it any anecdotes, digressions, peculiarities, or free-and-easy expressions, or if it shows want of care in the very slightest degree. We shall be made to gaze upon an ideal portrait of the poet, or rather a portrait of the ideal poet. M. Victor Hugo will be praised worthily and generously, with a dogmatic inflexibility that will call to mind those lives of the saints written in Latin by the great abbots of the eleventh century, in a spirit of absolute contempt for temporal and transitory things, and with a single-minded regard for orthodoxy. For M. Leconte de Lisle is a priest of art, a crosiered and mitred abbot of the monasteries of poetry. Or, better still, he is what M. Paul Bourget has called him, a pope in exile.

His address at the Academy will be full of certainty and infallibility. We shall be forced to admire the imposing spaciousness of its liturgical

forms and the authority which faith confers when it is united with the example of an entire life. That is the horoscope which I draw. You may trust to its accuracy, for I am an astrologer. I know the heavens, and I have observed in them M. Leconte de Lisle.

I am not afraid of predicting, moreover, that in the poet's address there will be a bit about the Middle Ages. I divine that that portion will be brief and violent. At a pinch, I could construct it myself and omit nothing but the talent. M. Leconte de Lisle hates the Middle Ages. And his hatred, being a poet's, is very great and very simple. It resembles love. Like love it is fruitful; poems have sprung from it ("Le Corbeau," "Un Acte de Charité," "Les Deux Glaives," "L'Agonie d'un saint," "Les Paraboles de Don Guy," "Hieronymus," "Le Lévrier de Magnus"). But I think this hatred, although good for writing verses, would be bad for writing history. M. Leconte de Lisle sees nothing in the Middle Ages but famines, ignorance, leprosy, and burnings at the stake. That is enough to enable you to write admirable verses if you are a poet like him. But, in reality, there were in those times quite other things, and they would seem to us less gloomy if we knew them better. There doubtless were men who did a great deal of evil—for we cannot exist without injuring something—but who did still more good, since they prepared the better world which we enjoy to-day. They suffered greatly and they loved greatly. They began, under conditions rendered very difficult by invasions and the mixture of races, a new organisation of human society which represents an amount of toil and endeavour that leaves one amazed. They carried to its highest degree the heroism of the military

virtues, and these are the fundamental virtues on which the whole human order still rests to-day. They brought into the world the thing which, perhaps, honours it most—the spirit of chivalry. I know, indeed, that they were violent; but I admire violent men when they labour with simple hearts at the task of founding justice upon earth, and when they are vehement in the service of great causes.

There existed also in those times, besides the knights, jurists full of knowledge and equity. The legislative achievement of the thirteenth century is admirable. We have excellent reasons for believing that at the beginning of the Hundred Years War the condition of the peasants was, in general, good throughout France. Feudalism produced admirable results before it produced bad ones. In this respect its history is that of all great human institutions. I shall take care to refrain from attempting to sketch a picture of the Middle Ages in a few lines. If M. Leconte de Lisle has done so in thirty-six verses ("Siècles maudits," in the "Poèmes tragiques"), it is one of those daring abridgments permitted to poets alone. But, whilst I write, thousands of scattered images of the life of our fathers glitter and toss themselves hither and thither before my imagination. I see some that are terrible and some that are charming. I see sublime artisans who build cathedrals without even handing down their names; I see monks who are also sages, for they live in retirement, book in hand, *in angello cum libello;* I see theologians who, amid the subtleties of scholasticism, follow after a superior ideal; I see a king and his knighthood guided by a shepherd girl. In a word, I see everywhere the holy things of labour and of love, I see the hive full of bees and honeycombs. I see France

and I say: "Be ye blessed, my fathers; be ye blessed in your works which have prepared ours; be ye blessed in your sufferings which have not been fruitless, be ye blessed even in the errors of your courage and of your simplicity." If it be true, as I believe it is, that you were better than we are, I shall only praise you the more on that account. The tree is judged by its fruits. May we deserve the same praise! May it some day be said that our children are better than we!

It may be that, in his speech, M. Leconte de Lisle will show some disdain for the poetry of these ancient times. If this, which I dare to predict, should happen, I shall respectfully point out to him that that poetry was beautiful in its new-born freshness, that, in its own day, it had the pleasing form and colour of youth, that it helped men to endure the tedium of life, that it gave to each of them the small portion of beauty of which all had need, and lastly, that these old *chansons de geste* are barbaric "Iliads." After which I shall make no difficulty about admitting that, to the poetry of the Trouvères and of the singers of lays and *fabliaux*, I prefer modern poetry, that of Lamartine, for instance, and also that of M. Leconte de Lisle.

You will doubtless be surprised that I couple these two names. For, in truth, it is not usual to do so. And, in truth also, nothing is less like the poems of Lamartine than the poems of M. Leconte de Lisle. In the latter, we admire their incomparable art. Of the former, it has been justly said, that they are written we know not how. Leconte de Lisle desires to owe everything to talent. Lamartine asked for nothing, except what he asked from genius. In a word, the contrasts are such that it would be superfluous and ridiculous to lay more

stress upon them. However, I admire both very sincerely. I do so in spite of myself, from enjoyment, and, as La Fontaine says, "because it amuses me." But even were I not led to it by a natural inclination I would still do so as an intellectual tonic.

For such an admiration seems to me to be an excellent exercise for the mind. It seems to me that one has less chance of going entirely wrong in one's admiration when one admires things that are very different. I can confess this fearlessly after having concealed it so slightly: there are very few things in this world of which I am sure. I speak only of this world, having good reasons for saying nothing of the others. Now, one of the things that seems to me most to elude human certainty on this earth is the quality of a line of poetry. I look upon it as an affair of taste and feeling. I shall never believe that there is anything absolute in regard to this matter. M. Leconte de Lisle does.

In other matters he is a sceptic. He has very definite ideas about the world and about life. His philosophy, which has inspired his verses so often and with so magnificent a sadness, is a Pyrrhonist philosophy in which there is no room for a single affirmation. I do not know if I exist, since I do not know what being is, is what he says continually. Illusion envelops me on all sides. Life is a dream, diverted by images which have no possible signification.

> "Éclair, rêve sinistre, éternité qui ment,
> La Vie antique est faite inépuisablement
> Du tourbillon sans fin des apparences vaines." *

* "Lightning flash, sinister dream, eternity which deludes, Old Life is unceasingly made up out of the endless whirlwind of vain appearances."

Yet this philosopher who is so vehement in his denial of the absolute, who believes that everything is relative, that what is good for one is bad for another, and that things are not what they seem, this same intellect suddenly changes its method of looking at things when it is a question of art. M. Leconte de Lisle does not know whether he exists himself, but he knows without the shadow of doubt that his verses exist absolutely.

He teaches that the qualities of things are appearances just as the things themselves are illusions, but he has no doubt that such and such a rhyme is good with an absolute goodness. Of poetry, he has a dogmatic, religious, autocratic conception. He declares that a fine line will remain fine when the sun is extinct and when there are no longer men in whom its beauty can come to a knowledge of itself. He judges the oldest poems according to rules which he looks upon as immutable and divine. In a word, this incredulous philosopher becomes, when it is a question of his art, a faithful and zealous believer, the high abbot, the pope, whom I have just shown you in the attitude of an eloquent and fanatical defender of the orthodoxy of verse.

And if you believe I blame him for it, if you believe that when I make this remark I take a pleasure in pointing out the contradictions of a superior mind, you do me little justice and form a wrong opinion of my thought. On the contrary, I regard this inconsistency as the happiest and best of things. It would be enough to prove that the author of the "Poèmes Barbares" is more poet than philosopher, that he is an instinctive, natural poet, a poet in the full meaning of the word, and that he is a poet throughout his whole being. He forgets everything, even

his reasons and even his reason, when it is a question of his art. That is excellent and propitious, and I shall add that it is natural. Whatever our philosophic doubts may be, we are yet forced to act in life as if we did not doubt. If Pyrrho saw a beam falling upon his head, he would have turned aside, although he held the beam to be a vain and unintelligible appearance. He would have naturally feared to take the appearance of a crushed man. Well, in M. Leconte de Lisle's case, poetry is action. When he thinks, he doubts. The moment he acts, he believes. He does not then ask himself whether a fine verse is an illusion in the eternal illusion of things, or whether the images that he makes by means of words and their sounds return to the eternal bosom of Māyā even before they have left it. He no longer reasons; he believes, he sees, he knows. He possesses faith, and with it the intolerance which follows it so closely.

We never go outside of ourselves. That is a truth applicable to everybody, but one which is seen more clearly in certain natures of a marked originality and definite character. The remark is interesting when applied to M. Leconte de Lisle's work. This impersonal poet, who has striven with an heroic obstinacy to keep, like the God of creation, aloof from his work, who has never uttered a syllable about himself and his surroundings, who has desired to silence his soul, and who, while hiding his own secret, dreamed of expressing that of the world, who has put words in the mouths of gods, virgins, and heroes of all epochs and all times, who, rejoicing and glorying in the strangeness of their forms and souls, has shown us one after another, Bhagavat, Çunacépa, Hypatia, Niobe, Tiphaine and Komor, Naboth,

Qaïn,* Neferou-ra, the bard of Temrah, Angantyr, Hialmar, Sigurd, Gudrun, Velléda, Nurmahal, Djihan-Arâ, Dom Guy, Mouça-al-Kébyr, Kenwarc'h, Mohhâmed-ben-Amer-al-Mançour, the Abbot Hieronymus, Ximena, the Malay pirates and the condor of the Cordilleras, the jaguar of the pampas and the humming-bird of the hills, Cape dogs and Atlantic sharks, this poet, in the final issue, paints only himself, shows only his own thought, and, as he alone is present in his work, he reveals under all these forms but one thing: the soul of Leconte de Lisle.

But it is enough. The greatest have done no more. They have only spoken of themselves. Under false names they have shown us nothing but themselves. The historian of Israel, the latest translator of the Bible, M. E. Ledrain, once said in the "Positivist Review" that M. Renan drew his own portrait in all his histories, and that he had especially shown himself, in the "Antichrist," under the features of Nero. Nevertheless, M. Renan remains the most sober-minded of men. We must understand M. Ledrain's proposition in an entirely philosophic and æsthetic sense. In this sense, I repeat that M. Leconte de Lisle has painted himself in all his characters, and above all in his Qaïn. And what in truth is the Qaïn of the "Poèmes Barbares" but a wild, solitary, timid, exasperated, weak man, sometimes melted into rapture yet hiding his tears behind a proud misgiving, a violent spirit who conceives of life and men in broad, simple lines, who reasons with a narrow though accurate logic, a pessi-

* This is the orthography given in the last edition of the "Poèmes Barbares." The earlier give "Kaïn."

mistic philosopher to whom God is the principle of evil since He is the principle of life and life is entirely bad, an artist contemptuous of fine shades, abounding in sonorous and dazzling images, —a poet?

But why then, you will say, does our poet seek his forms and colours so far away, in northern Scandinavia and in ancient Asia? Why? Doubtless because these forms and these colours were the necessary clothing of his thought and the true body of his poetic soul. Is it then a bad thing to clothe oneself and incarnate oneself in this fashion? Is it not rather a happy instinct that drives the poet into distant countries and long-past ages? In them he finds the mystery and the strangeness which he needs so much, for there is no poetry except in things we do not know. There is no poetry except in desire for the impossible or in regret for the irreparable.

M. Leconte de Lisle has in the highest degree the gift of rhythm and imagery. As for emotion, he possesses it in its noblest and highest form: he is rich in intellectual emotions. He moves us by pure thought. But there are for the human heart emotions more intimate and more sweet, and these, whatever we may say and whatever he himself may say, are not absent from his work. I should have no great difficulty in proving that M. Leconte de Lisle is sometimes an elegiac poet. To do that I would remind you of "Manchy."

"Tu t'en venais ainsi, par ces matins si doux,
De la montagne à la grand'messe,
Dans ta grâce naïve et ta rose jeunesse,
Au pas rhythmé de tes Hindous.

"Maintenant, dans le sable aride de nos grèves,
Sous les chiendents, au bruit des mers,
Tu reposes parmi les morts qui me sont chers,
O charme de mes premiers rêves." *

These verses are close to the poet's youth. A pure and clear echo of them is found in a recent poem, "L'Illusion Suprême."

"O chère vision, toi qui répands encore,
De la plage lointaine où tu dors à jamais,
Comme un mélancolique et doux reflet d'aurore
Au fond d'un cœur obscur et glacé désormais !

"Les ans n'ont pas pesé sur ta grâce immortelle,
La tombe bienheureuse a sauvé ta beauté ;
Il te revoit avec tes yeux divins, et telle
Que tu lui souriais en un monde enchanté." †

The soul and the tones of the poet have, after so many years, retained their first purity. If M. Leconte de Lisle shows himself pre-eminently as an heroic and descriptive poet, some of his verses, and these perhaps the finest, reveal him to be a timid and reserved elegiast, a heroic, a descriptive, and a meditative poet.

* "Thus on fragrant mornings thou usedst to come from the mountain to High Mass, in thy candid grace and rosy youth, at the rhythmic pace of thy Hindoos—Now, in the arid sand of our shores, beneath the couch-grass, where the noise of the seas is heard, thou liest among the dead who are dear to me, O charm of my earliest dreams."

† "O beloved vision which still appears upon the distant shore where thou ever sleepest like the sad and sweet reflection of the dawn upon a gloomy and, henceforth, a frozen heart! The years have not weighed on thy immortal loveliness, the happy tomb has preserved thy beauty ; *he* sees thee still with thy divine eyes and such as thou once smiled upon an enchanted world."

ON THE QUAI MALAQUAIS: M. ALEXANDRE DUMAS AND HIS ADDRESS

N Thursday, at four o'clock, as we were leaving the Institute, a gay spring sun lit up the quays and their noble horizon of stone. Some clouds, gliding through the sky, imparted to the light the charming mobility of a smile. That smile rested joyously upon the women's dazzling hats, their jewelled necks, and fresh complexions. But it became derisive as it passed over the dusty books displayed along the parapets. Oh! how ironically that smile, in which shone the eternal youth of nature, revealed the miserable old age of these books! Then, while the crowd of men of letters and fashionable ladies was dispersing, I abandoned myself to vague and pleasant reveries. Let me tell you that I never pass along these quays without experiencing an emotion full of joy and sadness, for I was born and passed my childhood there, and the familiar figures which I once used to see upon them have now vanished for ever. I tell you this in spite of myself, and from a habit of saying only what I think and am thinking of. One cannot be entirely sincere without being a bit of a bore. But I have a hope that, if I speak of

myself, those who listen to me will think only of themselves. In this way I shall satisfy them by satisfying myself. I was brought up on this quay, in the midst of books, by humble and simple people whose memory I am the only person to retain. When I shall exist no longer they will be as if they had never been. My mind is filled with relics of them. Those pious remains by which it is sanctified can perform miracles. By that sign I recognise that those whom I have lost were saintly people. Their lives were obscure, their souls were candid. Their memory inspires me with the joy of renunciation and with the love of peace. One alone of these old witnesses of my childhood still lives his poor life upon the quay. He was not one of the most intimate or the dearest of them. Yet it is always a pleasure to me to see him. He is this poor second-hand bookseller who is now warming himself in the bright spring sunshine in front of his boxes. He has become quite little with age. Every year he grows smaller, and every year his poor stock of books becomes scantier and more slender. If death forgets my old friend for much longer, a breath of wind will one day carry him off, together with the last pages of his old books and the grains of oats which the horses of the stand, who feed beside him, let fall out of their grey nose-bags. Whilst he awaits this event he is almost happy. Though he is poor he does not think of it. He does not sell his books, but he reads them. He is an artist and a philosopher.

When the weather is fine he enjoys the pleasure of living in the open air. He instals himself on the end of a bench, with a pot of paste and a brush, and, as he repairs his damaged books, he meditates upon

the immortality of the soul. He interests himself in politics, and when he meets a safe customer he hardly ever fails to criticise the present administration. He is an aristocrat, even an oligarch. The habit of seeing the palace of the Tuileries in front of him, on the other side of the Seine, has given him a sort of familiarity with sovereigns. Under the Empire, he judged Napoleon with the severity of a neighbour whom nothing escapes. Even now he explains the vicissitudes of his business by the conduct of the Government. I do not hide from myself that my old friend is a bit of a fault-finder.

He approaches me and says with the air of a man who has read his morning paper:

"You have just come from the Academy. Have those youngsters spoken well about M. Hugo?"

Then, winking an eye, he slips this word into my ear:

"A bit of a demagogue was Monsieur Hugo!"

It was thus that my friend, the second-hand bookseller, led my thoughts back to the sitting of the Academy, at which both M. Leconte de Lisle and M. Alexandre Dumas predicted immortality for Victor Hugo. But, whilst the author of the "Poèmes Barbares" despatched the complete works of the master in the lump to future ages the philosopher of the theatre let it be understood that posterity would make a rigid selection.

M. Alexandre Dumas delivered an excellent address, and I am not surprised. He is a man fitted to speak to the world. He thinks, and he says what he thinks. In that, he is almost unique, at least among men of letters. One finds in his reply to M. Leconte de Lisle that absolute sincerity and that experience of things which give so much

authority to his utterance. He gave to Victor Hugo, to Lamartine, and to Musset what was due to them. And, towards the end of his sincere and powerful speech, he asked himself what is now going to happen to the work of the most diligent of these three poets.

"What will happen to it," he said, in answer to his own question, "is what happens to all works of the human mind. Time will no more make an exception for it than for others. It will respect and affirm what is solid; it will reduce to dust what is not solid. All that is purely sonorous will vanish into air; what is made for sound is made for wind. But it is not for me to anticipate here the work of posterity. It is impossible, besides, to influence it one way or another. Posterity knows its own business. It has the mysterious and implacable sense of infallible and final conclusions."

It is on this point that I shall permit myself to place some humble but confident observations before an author for whom I have an infinite admiration. I believe that posterity is not infallible in its conclusions. And the reason I have for believing it is that I myself, that all of us, that we human beings, are posterity. We are posterity in regard to a long procession of works with which we are but ill acquainted. Posterity has lost three-quarters of the works of antiquity, and has allowed those that remain to become frightfully corrupted. M. Leconte de Lisle spoke to us on Thursday of Æschylus with a noble admiration, but there are not two hundred lines which are not corrupt in the text of the "Prometheus," as it has reached us. The posterity of the Greeks and Latins has preserved little, and in the little that it has preserved there are some execrable

works which are none the less immortal. Varius was, we are told, the equal of Virgil. He has perished. Ælian was a fool; he survives. There is posterity for you! I shall be told that posterity was barbarous in those times, and that it is the fault of the monks. But who can assure us that we also may not have a barbarous posterity? Do we know into what hands the intellectual heritage which we are bequeathing to the future will pass? Moreover, if we suppose that those who will come after us will be more intelligent than ourselves—not an impossible supposition—is that a reason for proclaiming in advance their infallibility? We know by experience that, even in ages of advanced culture, posterity is not always just. It is certain that it has no fixed rules, no sure methods for judging of actions. How then should it have any for judging art and thought? Madame Roland, who was a bad politician but who had the heart of a heroine, wrote memoirs in the prison which she—as she knew—would leave only to ascend the scaffold. With her virile hand she traced on the first page of her manuscript these words: "Appeal to impartial posterity." Posterity still answers her, after a century, only by a contradictory murmur of praise and reprobation. It was very simple-minded on the part of the Muse of the Girondins to believe in our wisdom and in our equity. I do not know whether King Macbeth had, in his time, any such illusion. If so, he would have been thoroughly mistaken. He was, in reality, an excellent king, able and upright. He enriched Scotland by favouring her commerce and industry. The chronicler depicts him as a pacific prince, the king of the towns, the friend of the citizens. The clans hated

him because he administered justice well. He assassinated nobody. We know what legend and genius have made of his memory.

Far from being infallible, there is every likelihood that posterity may make a mistake. It is ignorant and it is indifferent. I am gazing this moment at the posterity of Corneille and Voltaire as it passes along the Quai Malaquais. It walks along, cheered by the April sun. It passes, with a veil over its nose or a cigar between its lips, and I can assure you that it cares infinitely little about Voltaire and Corneille. Hunger and love occupy it enough. It thinks of its own business, its own pleasure, and leaves to scholars the task of judging of the great dead. I notice, in particular, among this posterity which is leaving the Institute, a pretty face covered with a hat of a colour that accords with the weather. It is that of a young woman who, one day this winter, asked me what poets were good for. I answered her that they helped us to love, but she assured me that people could love very well without them. The truth is that the professors and scholars by themselves form all posterity. Is it the scholars then whom you believe infallible? No, for you know well that poetry and art only spring from feeling, that science is ignorant of beauty, and that a verse which has fallen into the hands of a philologist is like a flower in the fingers of a botanist.

Ah! beyond question the conclusions of posterity are not infallible; they depend a great deal upon chance. And I will add that they are never final, whatever M. Alexandre Dumas may have said.

And how should they, when posterity is never ended, and new generations continually question what has been decided by their predecessors?

The seventeenth century condemned Ronsard; the eighteenth century confirmed that verdict; the nineteenth has reversed it. Who knows what the judgment of the twentieth will be? Dante and Shakespeare were held in contempt for a long time before they were admired as they are to-day. Racine was insulted after a century of fame. He is insulted no longer. But language quickly changes; it is already necessary to be a scholar in order fully to understand the verses of "Phèdre" and of "Athalie."

I have heard an excellent poet blame Racine for his faults of expression. He would not acknowledge that the language has changed during the last two centuries, perhaps because he did not wish to admit that it would change again, and this time to his own prejudice. Corneille, and even Molière himself, are badly understood. The actors who play them are continually putting wrong constructions upon them. We frequently speak of Rabelais, but as we do of Queen Bertha, without knowing the least in the world of what we speak. There are reputations that become extinct. That of Tasso is dying. Du Bartas was, during his lifetime, more celebrated than Ronsard. Who can assure us that his fame will not return? Goethe regarded him as the greatest of French poets, and our young symbolists admire him. Twenty years ago, Lamartine had already been given up, while Musset remained the object of a fervour which has since grown a little cold. Both of them find admirers again to-day. Thus does posterity toss about the waifs of genius.

Will Victor Hugo, after his death, keep the place he occupied during his lifetime? M. Alexandre Dumas is prudent in doubting it. He is prudent

also in not anticipating the work of destruction. What judgment will the future pass upon Victor Hugo? That is what no one is in a position to say. We cannot know what posterity will think, for we do not know what posterity will be. It is vain for us to devote contemporary reputations either to immortality or to oblivion.

We can only say that the fame of the poet whose last funeral rites were observed yesterday is passing through a difficult and critical time. Enthusiasm, fatigued by an excessive effort of fifteen years, is dying down. Certain illusions are being dissipated. It was, for instance, believed that so great a poet had been more of a thinker.

It must be admitted that he produced more words than ideas. It is grievous to discover that what he gave out as the loftiest philosophy is but a mass of commonplace and incoherent dreams. Lastly, it is saddening as well as alarming not to meet in his enormous work, amidst so many monsters, a single human figure.

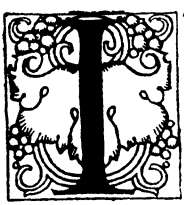
The Greeks have said: Man is the measure of all things. Victor Hugo is out of proportion because he is not human. The secret of souls was never entirely revealed to him. He was not fashioned to understand and to love. He felt this instinctively. And it is why he wanted to astonish. He was able to do so for a long time. But can one astonish for ever? He lived intoxicated with sounds and colours, and he satiated the world with them. All his genius is in that: he is a great visionary and an incomparable artist. It is a great deal, but it is not everything.

As for posterity, it will be what it can, it will love as it wishes. To work for it is the greatest folly. It keeps little of all that is sent it, and it often

prefers a casual piece of work to one specially intended for it. Far from blaming it for this, I praise it with all my heart. Perhaps, after all, it will, in the long run, know its own business as well as M. Alexandre Dumas says. But, if no catastrophe arrives to destroy the libraries, a day will come when it will be terribly encumbered, and it is not impossible that on that day it may take a dislike to all the blackened paper that we are preparing for it. To tell the truth, I myself experience some presentiment of that dislike when I see my old friend's book-boxes gathering dust in the sun.

HYPNOTISM IN LITERATURE

MARFA *



T is all very well to be reasonable and to care only for the truth, but there are hours when trite reality satisfies us no longer and when we would like to go outside of nature. We know well that it is impossible, but we desire it none the less. Are not our most unrealisable desires the most ardent? Doubtless—and it is our greatest misfortune—we cannot get outside ourselves. We are irrevocably condemned to see things reflect themselves in us with a dull and desolating monotony. For that very reason we have a thirst for the unknown and we aspire to what is beyond. We must have novelty. Some one says to us: "What do you want?" And we answer: "I want something else." What we touch, what we see, no longer counts for anything. We are attracted by the intangible and the invisible. Why deny it? Is it not a natural and legitimate feeling? The sensible universe is but a trifle, yes, a trifle since each of us contains it in himself. Without being wanting in our respect for physics and chemistry, we can divine that they are nothing by the side of the ultra-physics and the ultra-chemistry, which we do not know. Oh! how

* "Marfa: Le Palimpseste." Par Gilbert-Augustin Thièrry.

much I admire Sir William Crookes and how much I envy him! He is a scholar and he is a poet. He has studied the properties of the solar spectrum and of the terrestrial spectrum, he has imagined ingenious contrivances to measure, and, I dare say, to weigh light. He photographed the moon, he discovered a new metal, he even discovered a new appearance of things, a fourth state of matter, which he has called the radiant state. Yet he was sad; he felt grievously all that is mean and piteous in being only a man. He suffered from that boredom, common, as we have been told, to every creature of good birth. He sighed after a nameless ideal. He pursued a dream. That dream was impossible to realise. And he realised it. He saw a spirit, he touched it, he named it Katie King, and he loved it. Yes, Sir William Crookes, Fellow of the Royal Society of London, lived for six months in the closest intimacy with a delightful phantom. He maintained intimate though most respectful relations with a young person of a mysterious essence, who joined to feminine charm the majesty of death. He loved a demon who, appearing at his summons, shook out for him her blonde hair with all its perfumes, and allowed him to feel her angelical heart beating beneath her warm breast. The gentle demon consented to be photographed by her terrestrial and learned friend, who obtained forty-four plates. Judging by the portrait which I have before me, the spirit of Katie King could envelop itself in a charming form. We cannot help admiring the intelligent and sad expression of her young face, the grace of her round and pure cheek, the chastity of her white draperies. But Sir William Crookes tells us that this is nothing to what he has seen, heard, and touched,

and that Katie King was incomparably more beautiful than the image of her that remains to us. "Photography," he says, "can give an outline of her pose; but how could it reproduce the brilliant purity of her complexion or the constantly changing expression of her mobile features, now veiled in sadness as she related some unhappy event in her past life, now smiling with all the innocence of a young girl as she gathered my children round her and told them stories of her adventures in India? She created an atmosphere of life around her. Her eyes seemed to render the air itself more brilliant, they were so sweet, so beautiful, and so full of all that we can imagine about heaven. Her presence mastered one to such a degree that you would not have thought it idolatry to kneel before her." People have ridiculed the generous Crookes; they have pitied him as the dupe of some little hussy. For my part, I proclaim him fortunate, and I admire him less for having discovered thallium and invented the radiometer than for having been able to see Katie King.

Every one of us would like to evoke Katie King too. I confess that I am dying of envy to do so. But we cannot. And by way of consolation we tell ourselves that, if we do not see her, the reason is that we have too much good sense. But we flatter ourselves. It is in reality because we have not enough imagination. It is from want of hope and faith; it is from want of virtue. I am, accordingly, infinitely grateful to the fascinating artists, to the beneficent liars who, by the magic of their art, persuade me that I have caught a glimpse of a fold of the robe, of a fragment of the smile, of a glance from the eye of the eternal Katie King

whom I pursue unceasingly and who always flies from me.

There are spirits who dwell naturally on the mysterious confines of nature. They have as their mission to show us marvels. Their task has become very difficult to-day. It was easy in the Roman world in the time of the first Cæsars. Then the prodigies of India, the enchantments of Thessaly, the marvels of Africa, fruitful mother of monsters, the Italic practices of neo-Pythagorism were mingled and confused together. There detached itself from them a sort of strange vapour which, stretched over the world, veiled and transformed all nature. Men's minds were still subject to a learned culture. But varied knowledge and a subtle intelligence served only to imagine impossibilities and to multiply superstitions. On all sides mysteries, oracles, and works of magic manifested themselves to agitated eyes and ears. The sophists and rhetoricians, eagerly listened to, fed the infatuation. All their words, as has been said of those of Dio, sent forth a perfume like the odour which the temples exhale.

"The Golden Ass" of Apuleius has reached us as a witness of this infatuation. The misfortune is that it has lost its magic power. It no longer touches anything but our curiosity. It was marvellous, it has become absurd, and we do not believe in it. We do not believe, either, in the devildoms of which the Middle Ages were full. Up to the fifteenth century, the monks lived in a perpetual state of witchcraft. They were beholders of miracles, simple and ingenuous indeed, but which at least broke the dull monotony of their existence. They saw sanctuary lamps lighting of their own accord, and branches of eglantine encircling in a single night the

tombs of married persons who had remained virgins. The seventeenth century in France, with its Cartesian philosophy, is the only age I know of which willingly and easily dispensed with the marvellous. Reason then dominated men's minds. It dominated them still in Voltaire's time. But soon its dryness appeared, and the years that preceded the Revolution saw prodigies spring up on all sides. Religion no longer produced them; it was science that then gave them birth.

It is a great error to believe that superstition is exclusively religious. There are times when it becomes secularised. If science should one day become sole ruler, credulous men will have only scientific credulities. Let us not forget that it was philosophers who made the fortunes of Saint-Germain and Cagliostro. One of their adepts, the Baron de Gleichen, confesses very prettily in his "Souvenirs" the pleasure he had in being deceived by these purveyors of dreams, and the regret he experienced when it was impossible for him to be deceived any longer. "The inclination for the marvellous," he says, "innate in all men in general, my special taste for impossibilities, the restlessness of my habitual scepticism, my contempt for what we know, and my respect for what we do not know, these are the motives that induced me to travel for a great part of my life through the tracts of the imagination. None of my travels has given me so much pleasure; I have been away for years, and I am very sorry now to be compelled to remain at home."

Whilst the good Gleichen, grown old and sad, with his feet on the fender, recalled his old dreams for want of being able to form new ones, poor humanity was running after other chimeras, and spiritualism was being born. I am like Baron de

Gleichen : I want to be amused, and I believe that there is no happiness without illusion. But spiritualism puts, in truth, too little art into the work of beguiling us. It makes us hold conversations with the dead, but they are so inane that we leave them even more dissatisfied with the other world than we are with this. I can indeed forgive St. Louis, who, installed in a table, answered the medium's questions as if he knew nothing at all. He did not know Queen Blanche, nor the bridge of Taillebourg, nor Damietta, nor the Hospital of the Three Hundred, nor the Sainte-Chapelle, nor Étienne Boileau, nor Charles of Anjou, nor Joinville, nor Tunis, nor anything. Never did the leg of a table display such a depth of ignorance. The medium was astounded. At last, striking his forehead: "All is explained," he cried; "it is St. Louis de Gonzague!" * It was St. Louis de Gonzague. I admit the explanation. But I have read things dictated by the spirit of Bossuet which were also in the spirit of St. Louis de Gonzague. As for Katie King, I am still waiting for her. People will not fail to tell you that spiritualism has been replaced by occultism, and that an invisible bell rings on Madame Blavatsky's head, which is, I know, truly marvellous, that Madame Blavatsky's cigarettes perform miracles, and that Madame Blavatsky is in correspondence with a magus called Kout-Houmi who possesses supernatural knowledge and restores to ladies the brooches that they have lost. It is precisely this sage, Kout-Houmi, who spoils occultism for me. Did he not take it into his head to copy, without acknowledgment, in one of his magic letters, a lecture given at Lake Pleasant, on August 15th, 1880, by an American journalist called Kiddle?

* St. Aloysius Gonzaga is, in French, St. Louis de Gonzague.

Kiddle complained of it bitterly, and Kout-Houmi replied to his complaints that a sage may easily forget to put in inverted commas. I admire the serenity of this reply, but doubt has insinuated itself in spite of my efforts, and it is no longer possible for me to believe in Kout-Houmi. The truth is that it is not from magicians and spirits but from novelists and poets that we must ask the way to the unknown world. They alone possess the magnetic needle that turns towards the enchanted pole. They alone have the golden key of the palace of dreams. And since we have need of incantations and dreams, it is from new Apuleiuses, it is from Hoffmanns and Edgar Poes that we shall ask initiation to the mysteries. The poets, at least, do not deceive, since we know they are lying, and since they lie only out of generosity.

M. Gilbert-Augustin Thierry ought to be counted in the first rank among the minds endowed with the sense of strange and mysterious things. The nephew of that blind and illustrious man who, like Homer and Milton, was able to see so many things, and the son of Amédée Thierry, who in his "Récits de l'Histoire Romaine" brought the art of historical composition to so high a finish, the writer who has inspired me with the lengthy reflections you have just read, received from his earliest years a thorough education which would have made him a historian had not his imagination carried him into other paths. He began authoritatively with a novel which presents the study of a mental malady in an historical environment, "L'Aventure d'une ame en peine." More recently M. Gilbert-Augustin Thierry gave us in "Le Capitaine sans façon" a vigorous picture of the insurrection of the peasants in southern

Maine in 1813. But already he had composed two stories "of the living and the dead," "la Rédemption de Larmor" and "Rediviva." He had already been carried into that mysterious world where the good Gleichen passed the best part of his life. "Marfa," which appears to-day, marks the third step in this path. This novel, or, more precisely, this short story, which by itself makes a volume, was recently published in the "Revue des Deux Mondes" under a title which, in the book, remains only as the subtitle, "le Palimpseste." The publisher was afraid, not without reason, that this word, palimpsest, would not speak to the imagination of reading ladies as forcibly as to that of men of letters and scholars; for in the latter this term calls up, if I may say so, intellectual emotions of an almost dramatic vividness. Palimpsest, as everybody knows, is the name given to those manuscripts of ancient authors which the scribes of the Middle Ages have effaced and then covered with a second writing beneath which we can sometimes discern the original characters. A palimpsest has thus in itself the attraction of mystery; it hides a secret. It was the chemists of the beginning of the century who found the reagents that revive the primitive text on those parchments which the monks had washed with lime-water. But the humanists of the Renaissance had already attempted to read the effaced writing of the palimpsests. They employed, in default of science and method, a loving zeal. Michelet has painted with much poetry the emotion and the sadness of these attempts at deciphering, inspired by so much piety and so vainly undertaken.

"Each time," he says, "that a word of one of these great lost authors was discovered beneath some

insipid anthem, they cursed a hundred times this crime, this theft against the human mind, this irreparable diminution of its patrimony. Often, the beginning of a line put them on the path to a discovery, inspired them with an idea that seemed fruitful. They thought they might catch a glimpse of the flying nymph's profile; they fixed their eyes upon it, but in vain; the desired object stubbornly withdrew into the shadow; the restored Eurydice fell back again into the sombre tomb, and was lost in it for ever."

To-day, the nymph, the Eurydice, lives again under the action of powerful reagents, or at least we recover some fragments of her body. For the monks not only scratched upon the manuscripts, but tore them up and scattered the pages. The palimpsest with which M. Gilbert-Augustin Thierry makes us acquainted is a psalter of the tenth century, written in Carlovingian minuscules, incomplete and mutilated, containing only Psalms 114, 119, 120, 129, 137, and 145, which are those of the Office for the Dead. M. Stéphane Cheraval, a palæographer and archivist, has been entrusted by the French Government with a mission to discover it and acquire it for the State. And what text is it that is hidden under those Carlovingian characters which M. Léopold Delisle would behold with delight? A text, in characters of the best period, of "The Milesian Woman," by Lucius of Patræ, "that vanished masterpiece of which Apuleius's 'Golden Ass,' was but a wretched copy . . . that strange and marvellous work—the book of the dead—which delighted and terrified the Oriental world of the second century." ("Marfa," pp. 29 and 189.) It is in the Castle of Doremont (Haute-Saône), in the library of the late Prince

Volkine, that M. Stéphane Cheraval discovers this venerable codex, this unparalleled gem of the palæographical casket, this treasure that must at once be confided to the great Hellenist, Henri Weil. If M. Gilbert-Augustin Thierry's novel contained as its only drama the unexpected discovery and final loss of "The Milesian Woman" of Patræ, the public would doubtless be less pleased than I should. But M. Stéphane Cheraval not only finds a manuscript at Doremont; he also meets there the Princess Volkine, a young Serb whom the old prince, a bibliophile and a Nihilist, had married in his old age and made heiress of his name and his wealth. "A frail little woman, with very fair hair, very dark eyes, and a very white skin, she was, however, not pretty. A bulging forehead, thick lips, and too short a nose made her almost ugly. But her ugliness shone with beauty, with that beauty with which God illumines every creature here below when it loves and feels itself loved" (p. 37). Marfa, in fact, loves, and she is loved. Lucien de Hurecourt, the son of a magistrate of Franche-Comté, has loved her even to crime. When he was French Consul at Kherson, he killed her husband, the old prince, one snowy night, in a sledge, and threw him to the wolves that followed the vehicle. It is out of this situation that arises a strange and powerful drama, so new that it would have been impossible to conceive of it only five years ago. Volkine, wounded by Lucien with a revolver bullet, did not die without speaking. Covered with blood, he clutched at the murderer, seized him with both his hands, and gripping his forehead with one, and the back of his neck with the other, he said: "You will not marry Marfa. On your wedding-day you yourself will tell everything to the

judges of your country. I will . . ." Then he fell. Now, this dying man who spoke thus, this energetic, learned, strange, mysterious old man, was a disciple of Doctor Charcot and the Nancy school of physiology. He practised hypnotism, and knew his own power of suggestion. He knew that his murderer was, on the other hand, nervous, sensitive, and weak, a subject easy to hypnotise. He was sure, in consequence, that what he had *willed* would be accomplished, and that he would be avenged.

He left, moreover, in Marfa's company, an extraordinary being, capable of unconsciously aiding his suggestive action. This was a pope, of the sect of the Silipovetz, "voluntary expiators of the crimes of the world, unceasingly bleeding disciples of the slain Lamb" (p. 65), who teach that Jesus, by willing to die on the cross, gave a salutary example of suicide. This man, Popof by name, followed the young Princess Volkine everywhere, and she regarded him as a saint. With his pope's robe all in rags he used to wallow in the dust, and to tear his face with the stones of the roads.

The suggestion implanted by old Volkine had its effect, beneath the eyes of M. Stéphane Cheraval, on the very day that Lucien and Marfa had fixed for their marriage. Lucien sought out the magistrate of the district, led him before an altar which the priest of expiation and voluntary death had erected on the preceding evening, and there, under the influence of hypnotism, made confession of his crime. When he had ended, Popof, with a religious joy, gave poison to Lucien, and to Marfa for whom Lucien had sinned. Sure then of their felicity, he thought of his own salvation and hanged himself. The palimpsest disappeared in this catastrophe.

I have not analysed M. Gilbert-Augustin Thierry's novel; I have only indicated its bearing, without giving a sufficient impression of the solidity with which it is constructed, or the feeling of terror which it produces. I regard it as an original and powerful work.

It is of an extra-natural order, and answers to the feeling of the marvellous which is innate in us, and which neither the scientific temper nor metaphysical speculations entirely destroy. Moreover, it clashes with none of our modern ideas, and is not in absolute contradiction to any of our doctrines. Far from being in disagreement with science, it seems to base itself upon it. The author has, in order to establish his work, gone boldly to the most advanced results of physiology. I do not know whether these strategical points will one day be abandoned or definitely conquered. Bold neurologists defend them now. That is enough for the probability, and therefore for the interest, of M. Gilbert-Augustin Thierry's narrative. I do not conclude that all the facts he brings forward are possible. Far from it. Dr. Brouardel has written a preface for Dr. Gilles de la Tourette's excellent book on "Hypnotism," in which I read some lines that might well be applied to "Marfa, le Palimpseste." "Encouraged by men of letters," says M. Brouardel, "some medical men have been too unmindful of the essential rules of scientific criticism. They have permitted themselves to be induced to recount, before incompetent judges, the phenomena of hypnotism, of catalepsy, of somnambulism, the most extraordinary examples of suggestion. Men of letters, invited to such spectacles, have accepted for truth whatever was told them or shown to them in good faith by a medical man whom

they could trust, and, embellishing these by their imaginations, they have made use in their writings of all the singularities of which they had been witnesses." That may well be the case with the author of "Marfa." After all, what does it matter? What M. Gilbert-Augustin Thierry asked of science was not truths, but appearances, shadows, phantoms of truths. If he had written a scientific story he would not have written a marvellous story, and that would be a pity.

There is another question raised by the reading of "Marfa." It is a very important one and cannot be adequately treated in a few lines. I shall content myself with indicating it. The new doctrines of moral heredity and of suggestion by hypnotism have not left the old dogma of human liberty intact. In this they have struck against traditional morality, and caused some uneasiness to the philosopher as well as to the jurist. Is it possible, on the other hand, to extract from the new science a new morality? M. Gilbert-Augustin Thierry believes it is, but he does not prove this. He has aimed high, and desired to approach great scientific and moral problems. He has at least succeeded in constructing a fine tale, a work of art of a superior order. That was the essential thing. The rest will perhaps be given him in addition. For in a fine tale there is first of all what the author has put into it, and afterwards what the reader adds to it.

PRINCE BISMARCK *

HIS morning at six o'clock the sky is gloomy. Whilst the heavy rain, driven by the wind, rattles against the window-panes, the storm moans in the chimneys as if they were huge, melancholy flutes, and on the avenue a great poplar is bent downwards until it looks like Nimrod's bow. The young leaves of the limes are cold and do not dare to open. The birds are silent. To tell the truth it is weather that suits my thoughts. Yesterday, I devoured a biography of Prince Bismarck, written with great talent by Madame Marie Dronsart. I am still oppressed by it, and that is why I have in my soul as many clouds and tempests as the restless sky now drives before my eyes. Otto von Bismarck! What a man! what a destiny!

He was born, as every one knows, in the heart of Prussia, on that vast sandy plain where hard and lengthy winters reign, and which supports gloomy forests. He is a junker—that is to say, a country gentleman—descended from a long line of gallants, mighty hunters, deep drinkers, and headstrong folk. One of them, Rulo, was excommunicated in 1309 for opening a lay school. His son was a great

* "Le Prince de Bismarck, sa Vie et son Œuvre." Par Madame Marie Dronsart.

politician. On his tombstone was engraved this simple epitaph: *Nicolaus de Bismarck, miles.* Soldiers they all are. They are cuirassiers, dragoons, carabineers. Further, they are as well fitted to negotiate as to fight. With an iron hand they have a shrewd mind. They are violent and cunning. This double character is found in most of them. Otto von Bismarck from his youth up showed an indomitable spirit. Sent by his father in 1832 to the University of Göttingen, he had not been there twenty-four hours before he had committed a thousand mad pranks. Cited before the rector, he appeared in a disordered costume, accompanied by a fierce, unmuzzled dog. At Berlin, where he afterwards went, he listened to none of the professors, and did not even attend the law course of the illustrious Savigny. He passed his time in drinking, smoking, and duelling with the sabre. In three terms he fought twenty-eight times. On each occasion he wounded his opponent, and he received but a single wound himself, the scar of which he still bears on his cheek. It was at this kind of sport that he acquired an insolent confidence in himself. He is a soldier like his ancestors; but like them he is formed to command, not to obey. Having entered the Cuirassiers of the Guard in 1838, he could not endure the discipline. One of his chiefs kept him waiting in his ante-chamber: "I came," said Bismarck to him, "to ask you for leave of absence. But I have reflected during the past hour, and I now offer you my resignation." He brought the same impatience into public life, and age has not calmed it. In 1863, in the Chamber, being called to order by the President, he answers: "I have not the honour to be a member of this Assembly. I have had nothing to do with your regulations.

I have taken no part in the election of your President. I am not therefore subject to the disciplinary rules of your Chamber. The power of the President does not extend to the position I occupy here. I recognise no authority as superior to mine but that of His Majesty the King. . . . I speak here not by right of your regulations, but of the authority that His Majesty has conferred upon me and that of the paragraph in the Constitution which prescribes that Ministers ought at all times to obtain a hearing, and be listened to, if they demand it."

At this, murmurs arise in the Assembly. He dominates them :

"You have no right to interrupt me."

In 1865, when a Minister, he retains the bellicose temper of a student. In the open Chamber he proposes to a worthy professor, von Virchow, that they should go out together to a field and cut one another's throats.

Even age does not overcome his violence. If the only master he recognises, the Sovereign, resists him, he hardly contains his anger. One day, as he goes out of the Emperor's study, he bangs the door behind him with such violence that the door-knob remains in his hand. He hurls it into the adjoining room against a porcelain vase, which breaks with a crash. Then he gives a sigh of relief and murmurs :

"Now I am better!"

Turn by turn, the savage violence of his disposition retains him among men to lead and to oppose them, and drives him into the solitude of the woods and of his ancestral fields which his unchecked soul completely fills. At Varzin he enjoys leading a country life. He needs air and space. His powerful muscles long required vigorous exercise. As a

horseman he is worthy of the old centaurs of the Elbe from whom he is descended. His father, when he saw him on horseback, used to say:

"He is exactly like Pluvinel."

But, in truth, the classic master who taught the French style of riding to Louis XIII. would never have acknowledged as his pupil this furious galloper who kills his animal and rushes through plantations, copses, and bogs, like the phantom horseman.

Like his fathers, Prince Bismarck is a great huntsman. For forty years he has chased red-deer, elks, wild sheep, fallow-deer, bears, chamois, foxes, and wolves. More than any other country gentleman he has tasted that joy in destroying, which adds, we are told, to the joy of living, and which keeps robust huntsmen in good health. A short time ago, moved by a sense of his own decline and the vanity of effort, a familiar image came into his mind. His political work appeared to him like a prolonged hunting-whoop, and he compared himself to "a huntsman worn out by fatigue." He swims as he hunts. He plunges into rivers, lakes, and oceans with delight. It seems that the sea is the great mistress of this chaste giant. He calls it beautiful and charming. "I am waiting impatiently," he once wrote, "for the moment when I shall press its moving bosom against my heart." He loves his estate with all the love of a country landed proprietor.

In 1870, at Versailles, he said one morning: "I had last night, for the first time for a long period, two hours of good refreshing sleep. Ordinarily, I remain awake, my mind full of all sorts of thoughts and anxieties. Then Varzin suddenly appears before me, perfectly distinct, even in its least details, with all its colours like a great picture. The green trees,

the rays of sunlight on the smooth bark, the blue sky overhead. It is impossible, in spite of all my efforts, for me to escape from this obsession. . . ." To-day, we are told, the Prince of the Empire is never so happy as when he goes over his country estate, "wearing huge, well-greased boots." He enjoys the country like a practical man, occupying himself with frosts, diseased cattle, dead or badly fed sheep, bad roads, scarcity of pasture, straw, potatoes, dung. He also loves nature for the infinite mystery that is in her. He has the feeling of the beauty of things. In 1862, during the for ever fatal stay that he made in France, he visited Touraine. Returning from Chambord he wrote to Princess Bismarck: "You can form no idea from the specimens of heather that I send you of the rosy violet tint with which my favourite flower covers this country. It is the only flower that blooms in the royal garden, as the swallow is the only living creature that inhabits the castle. It is too lonely for the sparrow." In his case, the animal mechanism is of an amazing strength; it is also of an unusual capacity, and so are the demands made upon it. Prince Bismarck is one of the greatest drinkers of his time. Beer, champagne, Burgundy, Bordeaux, all are good to him. He astonished the Brandenburg cuirassiers by emptying at one draught the regimental cup, which held a bottle. One day, while hunting, he swallowed in a mouthful as much champagne as could be held in an enormous stag's horn pierced at both ends. At Bordeaux in 1862, he did great honour to the Médoc wines, and then boasted of it with good reason. "I have drunk," he wrote, "Lafitte, Pichon, Mouton, Latour, Margaux, Saint-Julien, Brame, Laroze, Armaillac, and other wines. The temperature is 30 degrees

in the shade and 55 degrees in the sun, but one does not think of that when one has good wine in one's body." If he drinks a great deal he eats in a corresponding fashion. During the war of 1870–71 his table was always abundantly furnished with pies, venison, and the breasts of smoked geese. "We have always been great eaters in my family," he used to say as he sat down to these victuals. "If I have to work hard I must be well fed. I cannot make a satisfactory peace unless I am given plenty to eat and drink."

By a contrast which gives him his strength, this violent man, with his imperious appetites, is able, when he wishes, to restrain himself and to pretend. If he can drink, he is quite as well able to make others drink. He was fond of cards in his youth, but he stopped playing after his marriage. "It does not suit a father of a family." Play was for him only a means of throwing dust in people's eyes. M. Busch has preserved for us an interesting bit of table-talk on this subject: "In the summer of 1865, while I was arranging the treaty of Gastein with Blome, the Austrian diplomatist, I gave myself up to 'Quinze' with an apparent craziness that astounded the onlookers. But I knew very well what I was doing. Blome had heard that play gave the best opportunity for discovering the real nature of a man, and he wanted to experiment on me. 'Ah! that is it,' thought I. 'Very well. Here is for you.' And I lost some hundreds of thalers which I might well have claimed as spent in His Majesty's service. I had put Blome on a wrong scent. He took me for a dare-devil, and he made a great mistake."

His power of work is prodigious, and can only be

compared with Napoleon's. Prince Bismarck finds time to read, even in the midst of great affairs. In 1866, on July 2nd, the eve of Sadowa, he visited the battlefield of Sichrow, then covered with corpses, disembowelled horses, weapons, and ammunition-waggons. When he returned, he wrote to the Countess: "Send me a horse-pistol and a French novel." He knows Shakespeare and Goethe by heart. He has a profound knowledge of general history. He appreciates music, above all that of Beethoven. He once borrowed from the poem of "Freyschütz" one of his happiest oratorical effects. It was in 1848. The Liberals were offering the Imperial Crown to Frederic William IV. The haughty junker, their enemy, exclaimed: "Radicalism brings this present to the king. Sooner or later radicalism will appear before the king, will demand its reward, and, pointing to the emblem of the eagle on the imperial flag, it will say to him: 'Did you think that this eagle was a gratuitous gift?'" These are the exact words which the devil utters when he claims Max's soul as the price of his magic balls.

His speech is forcible and pithy. It abounds in picturesque images and freshly minted expressions. One day, speaking of an honest debate in Parliament, "It is," he says, "politics in bathing drawers." He exalts Lassalle, whose temper pleases him. "I should have liked to have had him as a country neighbour." He talks with an eloquent and infatuated Socialist: "I found him a water-plug of phrases."

For my own part, I share the pleasure that M. J. J. Weiss finds in the Chancellor's pithy eloquence. He is not, if you like, a great orator. He is completely lacking in rhetorical force. But he has, what is better, striking similes and vivid expressions. Here

is an example, taken from thousands, of this picturesque speech which is natural to him.

It was at the beginning of the session of 1884–1885. Several deputies had brought forward a proposition allocating a pecuniary allowance to the members of the Reichstag, after the example of France, where, as everybody knows, the deputies, as well as the senators, receive a stipend. It was a democratic proposition, and as such was bound to displease Prince Bismarck, who gave it the coldest of welcomes. He regarded it as inspired by the Socialist members of Parliament, and, not content with opposing it, he gave himself the satisfaction of opposing those from whom it seemed to emanate.

He reproached them with attacking all systems of government without having themselves a system to propose. "There were six of them before the elections," he said. "There are twelve to-day. I hope that there will be eighteen in the next Parliament, and that they will then consider themselves numerous enough to place their scheme for an Eldorado upon the table of the House. Then we shall know the inanity of what they desire, and they will lose their supporters. In the meantime they have still the veil of the prophet—of that prophet whose face was so hideous that he showed it to nobody. Like him, they take care not to lift the veil." This image of the veiled prophet, which he has employed on several occasions, is a striking one. It is true that it does not belong to him. It is taken from a poem by Thomas Moore ("The Veiled Prophet"). It has been borrowed. But such quotations, applied so naturally, elevate the thought of a speech and give it an unexpected force.

What Prince Bismarck is, we see. What he has

said, we have heard. What he has done, we know only too well. But what does he think? What does he believe? What idea does he form in his own mind of man's life and destiny? Possibly no one knows. And to know Prince Bismarck's philosophy would be full of interest.

It has been said that this powerful mind accepted the religious creed of the multitude, and that he even mingled with it ancient and gross superstitions: that, for example, he regarded certain days and certain dates as unlucky. He has denied this. "I will sit down," he has said, "at a table where there are thirteen as often as you like, and I will engage upon the most important affairs on a Friday or on the 13th of the month if it is necessary." Be it so! In this respect he is free from superstition. On the other hand, he admits that he was struck by superstitious terror when the king conferred upon him the title of Count. It is an old belief in Pomerania that all families who receive this title promptly become extinct. "I could mention ten or twelve of them," said Prince Bismarck, long afterwards. "I did all I could to avoid it, though at last I had to submit. But I am not without uneasiness even now."

This does not seem to be a mere jest. It is also said that he saw ghosts in an old castle in Brandenburg. As for his belief in God, it seems profound. The Christian faith has even drawn accents of humility from this proud and arrogant man. Has he not publicly written: "I am one of that great number of sinners who lack the grace of God. Nevertheless, I hope, like them, that in His mercy He will not take away from me the staff of humble faith by the aid of which I seek my way through the doubts and dangers of my condition"? I am not

inclined to be too suspicious of the sincerity of the feeling that these pious words express. It is not surprising that Prince Bismarck should be of a religious temperament, for he unites a great deal of imagination with an instinctive distaste for the natural and positive sciences. At all times he has readily consulted "the Bible and the starry Heavens," and, like others, he makes his own idealist romance.

He is said to be melancholy, and I congratulate him upon it. He despises men, yet their hostility weighs upon him. He exclaims bitterly: "I have been hated by many and liked by few" (1866). "There is not a man from the Garonne to the Neva so thoroughly detested as I am" (1874). He knows that, even in Prussia, he would have been execrated had not victory crowned his schemes. "Let us be conquered," said he before Sadowa, "and the women of Berlin will pelt me with wet dish-clouts."

To heap up his misery, this man who has done so much, no longer finds, upon reflection, reasons for doing anything whatever in this world. He does not even find a possible meaning for life. "Let the will of God be done!" he writes in 1856. "Everything here below is only a question of time; races and individuals, folly and wisdom, peace and war, come and go like waves, and the sea remains. There is nothing on earth but hypocrisy and jugglery! Whether this mask of flesh be torn from us by a fever or by a bullet, it must fall sooner or later; then there will appear a resemblance between a Prussian and an Austrian that will make it very difficult to distinguish the one from the other."

Twenty years later, in an intimate and solemn hour, he felt alarm and horror for his whole work swelling within his heart. It was at Varzin. The

sun was setting. The prince, according to his usual habit, was sitting after dinner near the stove in the great drawing-room where Rauch's statue of "Victory distributing the crowns" is placed. After a long silence, during which he from time to time kept throwing fir-cones into the fire and looking straight before him, he suddenly began to complain that his political activity had gained for him little satisfaction and still less friendship. Nobody liked him for what he had accomplished. He had not achieved by it the happiness of any one, neither of himself, nor of his family, nor of anybody else.

Some one suggested to him that he had made that of a great nation.

"Yes; but the misfortune of how many?" he replied. "But for me three great wars would not have taken place, eighty thousand men would not have perished, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, widows, would not have been plunged into mourning. I have settled all that with my Creator; but I have gained little or no joy from all my work."

Never was Prince Bismarck so great as upon that evening.

BALZAC *

NE day as I was hunting for old books in a second-hand bookshop in the Latin Quarter, I noticed in a corner of the shop a long-haired young man whose whole appearance indicated an expansive disposition. I knew his face although I could not remember his name. He was turning over the pages of a book, and his look, his smile, the mobile wrinkles on his forehead, his unrestrained gestures, all spoke even before he had found any one to speak to. It did not need much instinct to see how loquacious he was, and I felt that I must either fly or become his prey. However, I remained. Sophocles was right when he said that no man can avoid his destiny. I have made a long proof of that throughout my life. I can resist neither good nor bad fortunes. But the bad are naturally the more frequent. To tell the truth, this book-hunter was not antipathetic to me, for he had that happy countenance, that easy air of the poor who do not feel their poverty, and of those idlers who are continually dreaming. His clothes, rather neglected than slovenly, seemed to be

* "Répertoire de la Comédie humaine de H. de Balzac." Par Anatole Cerfberr et Jules Christophe, avec une introduction de Paul Bourget. "Histoire des œuvres de M. H. Balzac." Par le Vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul; 2e édition.

dusty, though with the noble dust of libraries. He wore them carelessly and without affectation. His hat alone, the brim of which was extraordinarily large, and the silk rough, betrayed a taste, a will, perhaps even an æsthetic. Living only by his brain, it seemed that this man bothered himself only about the clothing of his head. The other garments were nothing to him. I regret to say that his hands were dirty. But we know from tradition that the prince of librarians, old Weiss of Besançon, betrayed a like negligence. His hands were in the same case with those of Lady Macbeth. They remained black even after his bath, and M. Weiss explained it by saying that he read in his tub.

The man with the book, as soon as he saw me, advanced towards me, and clapping his hand on my book :

"Read," said he, "it is the holy law, the law of the Lord." He held in his hand an old copy of Sacy's translation of the Bible, open at the twentieth chapter of Exodus, and with his finger he pointed me to verse four: "Thou shalt not make any graven image."

"Humanity," he added, "will perish in a state of madness because it has transgressed this commandment."

I saw that I had to do with a madman, but I was not disturbed by this, for madmen are sometimes entertaining. I do not claim that they reason better than other men, but they reason differently, and that is why we ought to be thankful to them. I was not afraid to make some show of opposition to this one.

"Excuse me," said I to him, "I am an idolater, and I adore images."

"And I," he answered, "have loved them to distraction. I have suffered a thousand deaths from them. That is why I detest them, and hold them to be diabolical. Have you not read the true history of the man whom Leonardo da Vinci's Gioconda drove mad, and who, one day, as he came out from the picture-gallery, threw himself into the Seine? Do you not remember what Lucian of Samosata says of a young Greek in whom the Venus of Cnidos inspired a sacrilegious and fatal passion? Are you not aware that the marble Hermaphrodite in the Louvre has been worn away by the caresses of visitors, and that the authorities have had to employ a barrier to protect that monstrous and charming figure? Does it escape your notice that Christs on the Cross and painted Virgins are throughout all Christendom objects of the grossest idolatry? It must be admitted that, without any exception, pictures and statues trouble the senses, mislead the mind, inspire a distaste and horror of the real, and render man a thousand times more unhappy than he was in his primitive barbarism. They are impious and abominable works."

I timidly objected that the share of sculpture and painting is very small, upon the whole, in the troubles of the flesh and blood which agitate mankind; and that art, on the contrary, carries its lovers into serene regions where they taste only peaceful pleasures.

My interlocutor shut his little old Bible, and, without deigning to answer me, went on:

"There are images a thousand times more fatal than the graven and painted images from which Jehovah wished to preserve Israel; there are the images above all, the ideal images which poets

and novelists conceive. There are the types and characters, there are the personages of fiction. Those figures live an active life ; they have souls, and it is but truth to say that their malignant authors send them forth among us like demons, to tempt us and to ruin us. And how can we escape them since they live in us and possess us? Goethe sends forth Werther into the world, and immediately suicides become common. All poets and all novelists trouble the peace of the earth. Homer's 'Iliad' and M. Zola's 'Germinal' have alike given rise to crimes. 'Émile' made terrorists and cut-throats of those whom Rousseau wished to lead back to nature. The more innocent, such as Dickens, are still very guilty; they divert towards imaginary personages the tenderness and pity which would be better directed to the real beings by whom we are surrounded. One novelist produces hysterical persons, another coquettes, a third gamblers and assassins. But the most diabolical of all, the Lucifer of literature, is Balzac. He has imagined a whole infernal world, which we are realising to-day. It is in accordance with his schemes that we are jealous, greedy, violent, or abusive, and that we fall upon each other with a homicidal and ridiculous fury in our struggle for gold and honours. Balzac is the prince of evil and his kingdom has come. For every sculptor, every painter, every poet, every novelist who, from the beginning of the world until this moment, did evil to humanity, may Balzac be accursed!"

He stopped a moment to take breath.

"Alas! sir," said I to him, "what you say is not altogether without reason" (it seemed advisable to humour him); "but men have not waited until the coming of the artists to be violent and dissolute.

Attila and Gengis-Khan, although they had not read Homer, were more destructive than Alexander. The Terra-del-Fuegans and the Bushmen are depraved, and they can neither read nor draw. Peasants, haunted by no romantic reminiscences, murder their old relations. The struggle for life was murderous before Balzac's time. There had been strikes before 'Germinal' was written. The arts inspire you with too much hatred, and I fear, sir, that you are a biassed moralist."

He took off his huge hat to me, and said :

"Sir, I am not a moralist. I am a sculptor, a poet, and a novelist."

"He is a man of great ability," said the second-hand bookseller, after he had left the shop, "but he is not happy. Balzac has driven him crazy."

I have not again seen the man with the large hat, but the remembrance of that conversation came into my mind when I glanced through the "Répertoire de la Comédie Humaine," which M. Calmann-Lévy has just sent me. This repertory has been carefully compiled by two enthusiastic Balzacians, MM. Anatole Cerfberr and Jules Christophe. It contains a short biography of each of the two thousand personages whom Balzac has conceived, brought to birth, and delineated in his enormous work. Turning over this new sort of "Who's Who," I have been amazed by Balzac's creative power, and I have been almost tempted to call him impious, as did the man with the hat. I am stupefied, and I admire. What a world it is! It is inconceivable how one man could have followed the threads of so many separate existences without ever entangling them. I do not want to make myself out to be more of a Balzacian than I am. I have a secret preference for

little books. It is to them that I return continually. But even though Balzac frightens me a little, and though his thought sometimes seems heavy, and his style dull, one must acknowledge his power. He is a god. Reproach him with being sometimes coarse, and his adherents will reply to you that one must not be too squeamish if one wants to create a world, and that those who are over-fastidious succeed in nothing.

One of this great man's qualities strikes me with especial force. When he is at his best, when he avoids the visionary and the romantic, he is a clear-sighted historian of the society of his time. He reveals all its secrets. He enables us, better than any one else, to understand the passage from the old régime to the new; he alone shows us the two great stems of our new social tree—the purchaser of confiscated property and the soldier of the Empire. He never found, and, doubtless in the endeavour to give more force to his powerful studies, he never sought, a narrow and charming frame, such, for instance, as Jules Sandeau did in "Mdlle. de la Seiglière," where he painted portraits and scenes of the epoch which Balzac understood so well. Sandeau had a taste and an orderliness that Balzac never possessed. As a frame-maker, Sandeau is infinitely the superior; as a painter, he is quite the reverse. For depth and for relief Balzac can be compared with no one. He has, more than any other, the instinct of life, the perception of the inmost passions, the understanding of domestic interests.

Balzac's novels are all the better history because they do not contain, so to speak, either historical fact or historical personages. Both men and things are sure to be altered and made unnatural in the

passage from history into fiction. The novelist who is well inspired takes as his heroes persons unknown to and disdained by history, characters who are nobody and yet everybody, the stuff from which the poet creates immortal types. It is thus that a poem or a novel can make us see the people, the nation, and the race so often hidden in history behind a curtain of personages. Obeying a very true perception of the laws of his art, Balzac refused to draw historical personages into the circle of his creations and to attribute imaginary actions to them. For this reason Napoleon, the man who dominates the age, appears only six times in the whole "Comédie Humaine," and then in the distance, and under quite accessory circumstances (*cf.* MM. Cerfberr and Christophe's volume, p. 47). Balzac mingles a very small number of real persons with his two thousand characters. MM. Cerfberr and Christophe indicate both classes without any distinction. I should have preferred them to have marked real names by an asterisk or some other sign. Such a distinction is not of much use, I agree, in the case of Napoleon, Louis XVIII., Madame de Staël, or even in the case of Madame Falcon, Hyde de Neuville, or Madame de Mirbel, whose names I notice in the book before me. I was going to add Marchangy, who is also known both as a servile magistrate and as a ridiculous writer, but I perceive he has been omitted from the repertory though he figures in the fine scene of Cæsar Birotteau's rehabilitation.*

* I have received the following letter:

"Paris, June 3rd.

"DEAR COLLEAGUE AND SIR,—What a world there is in Balzac, as the delightful notice you devoted to our 'Répertoire de la Comédie humaine,' and for which we give you many thanks,

Everybody, on the contrary, does not perhaps know that Barchon de Penhoen, to mention him alone, really existed, and composed lengthy volumes. But, judging from this minute criticism, I am myself becoming a perfect Balzacian. Nay, I feel for the moment in the mood to outdo in Balzacism MM. Cerfberr and Christophe themselves. I very much wish that they would add some statistics to their repertory. Statistics is a fine science, and, applied to the society created by Balzac, would not fail to give interesting results. I have said that the personages of this society number two thousand. It is an approximate number, and I should prefer it to be exact. People would be interested, I imagine, in knowing the number of grown-up people and of children, of men and of women, of bachelors and of married persons among them. We should like to know their nationality. Tables of mortality would not be out of place. It would not be useless also to join to the book a plan of Paris and a map of France, for a complete understanding of the works of Honoré de Balzac. The geography of "La Comédie

brings out so well! With his ocean of details he dazzles, stupefies, and misleads even the most cautious reader. Would you like a proof of this? Here it is:

"You are both right and wrong to blame us for the absence of Marchangy in 'Birotteau.' Undoubtedly, he appears in Houssiaux's edition, dated 1853; but all the later editions substitute Granville for him, and we use these later texts as the sole basis of our work. This principle also obliges us to neglect Victor Hugo, who was originally mentioned (*cf.* 'La Peau de Chagrin,' Charpentier's edition), and afterwards replaced by Cazalis.

"Please accept, dear colleague and sir, our sincerest compliments.

"ANATOLE CERFBERR—JULES CHRISTOPHE."

Humaine" would afford as much interest as its statistics.

MM. Cerfberr and Christophe do not give us all this, but they give what is still better, a fine critical introduction in which Paul Bourget shows himself once again what he has been so often, an able and elegant historian of the things of the mind.

THREE POETS

SULLY-PRUDHOMME—FRANÇOIS COPPÉE —FRÉDÉRIC PLESSIS

HANKS be to Heaven, we have poets; we shall have them for a long time yet, we shall always have them. It is, indeed, doubtful whether heroic poets will come among us in the immediate future. The epic cycle seems, in my view, to be closed for a long time. But elegiac poets and philosophical poets are still far from being driven into silence by indifference. We shall listen to them willingly as long as love and doubt agitate our souls. M. Gaston Paris, a scholar who has preserved his pure freshness of feeling and who unites a taste for the new poetry with a knowledge of the old literary forms, once at a banquet said to his friend M. Sully-Prudhomme: "You have earned the sympathy and gratitude of all those who read your verses in their youth: you have helped them to love." This is what poets are good for. And it is for this reason that they are dear to me. They give light as well as speech to our confused joys and our obscure sorrows; they tell us what we ourselves vaguely feel; they are the voice of our souls. It is through them that we become fully conscious of our

pleasures and our griefs. M. Sully-Prudhomme has accomplished this delicate mission with deserved success. He had, in his favour, not only the mysterious gifts of the poet, but, in addition, an absolute sincerity, an inflexible gentleness, a pity without weakness, and a candour, a simplicity that lift his philosophical scepticism, as if on wings, into the lofty regions whither formerly the mystics were exalted by faith. One would seek in vain for a nobler and gentler confidant for our faults of heart and mind, a consoler at once tenderer and more austere, or a better friend. His atheism is so pious that to some believers it has seemed Christian. His despair is so virtuous that it resembles hope to those who look on hope as a virtue. The illusion of those simple souls who believe this poet to be religious, is a happy one, for has he not retained the only thing essential to religion, love and respect for mankind?

His thought, following its natural course, has passed from sentiment to reflection, from love to philosophy, from elegiac to didactic poetry; and the poet of the "Vase brisé" has become the poet of "la Justice." He cannot boast that he has been followed to the end by all who at first joined themselves to his company. Many of those whom he helped to love did not ask him to help them to think. But why should we be surprised at this, since all of us are so well fashioned for feeling, so badly for understanding? Philosophical poetry is not for the greater number. Three-quarters of us are like the prince in Shakespeare's comedy, who required all the books in his library to be well bound and to speak of love. That is why "la Justice" is not, like the "Stances et Poèmes," in every generous heart and upon every lover's lips.

Yet what a fine manual of philosophy it is! Never has universal woe been envisaged by so pure a heart, taught by so gentle a voice. M. Sully-Prudhomme leaves blasphemy to children. He never declaims. His melancholy is as infinite and serene as the nature that causes it. It seems that the poet submits himself to the harmonies of universal sorrow with a sort of joy, because they are still harmonies. Has he not written the most succinct and the most noble of idylls in the following ten lines:

"La nymphe bat le vieux Silène
Avec un sceptre d'églantier
Qu'un zéphir bat de son haleine,
Et dont la fleur bat le sentier.

"Et Silène à trotter condamne
Son baudet tardif et têtu;
Il le bat, et, du pied de l'âne,
Le gazon naissant est battu.

"Et personne, églantiers, zéphirs,
Bêtes ni gens, n'en est surpris." *

I believe that "le Bonheur," will enter more speedily and deeply than "la Justice" into the mind of the thinking world. The poet, judging by the fragments already published, shows himself here with a new ease and in all his opulence. And then the subject is a happy one and touches us closely. We care, on the whole, little enough about justice. In the philosophic sense of the word, it is nothing.

* "The nymph beats old Silenus with a brier-rose sceptre which the West-wind beats with its breath and the flower of which beats the pathway. And Silenus orders his lazy and stubborn donkey to trot; he beats him, and the young grass is beaten by the hoofs of the ass. But none of them, brier-rose, West-wind, beast or man, is surprised at being beaten."

In the vulgar sense it is the most melancholy of virtues. Nobody desires it. Faith opposes it by grace and nature by love. It is enough for a man to call himself just for him to inspire a genuine repulsion. Justice is held in horror by things animate and inanimate. In the social order it is only a machine, indispensable doubtless, and for that reason respectable, but beyond question cruel, since it has no other function than to punish, and because it sets jailers and executioners to work. The poet, I need not say, did not trouble himself at all about it. He sought that most illustrious of unknown things, the justice of God. It is this that he pursued through the generations of men, animals, and plants, piercing even beyond the protoplasmic cell to the original nebula. Vain pursuit which wearied more than one of his readers! Weary of the struggle, we give up hope of seizing this fugitive which is more rapid than the light, we proclaim everywhere that we find it nowhere, not even in the heavens, that eternal theatre of carnage and death, in which astronomy shows us the pitiless action of those same laws of life by which evil is perpetuated on the earth. For my own part, I have seen eternal justice nowhere except in Prud'hon's famous picture. She has the features of a woman. Her robe, nobly draped, reveals a breast and mighty sides; she might be lover or mother—that is to say, twice human, twice unjust. It is the image of sublime injustice, thrown upon canvas by the poetic brush of the most urbane of artists. . . . But, if we readily resign ourselves to be for ever ignorant of justice, we wish to know happiness. The one flies from us like the other; yet at certain hours we catch a glimpse of its shadow and it seems so beautiful that we cannot prevent

ourselves from pursuing it with open arms. Whatever people may say, it is something to embrace a charming shadow. Accordingly, M. Sully-Prudhomme's new poem will be very welcome. Even if it has, as I believe it has, the nullity of happiness as its conclusion, even if it teaches us that the art of being happy is the art of suffering, and that there is no true pleasure save in sacrifice, we shall still eagerly enjoy its serious and profound beauty.

"Le Bonheur" will come to us next winter. In the meantime, to enliven this rainy spring, we have the love poems of M. François Coppée. He, too, has done a great deal to help us to love. It is not from any feeling of contempt that people have admitted him into the intimacy of their hearts. He is a true poet. He is natural. Therefore he is almost unique, for to be natural in art is the rarest of qualities—I had almost said it is a species of marvel. And when the artist is, like M. François Coppée, a singularly skilled workman, a consummate craftsman who possesses all the secrets of the craft, it is not too much, when we see so perfect a simplicity, to exclaim that it is a prodigy. What he likes best to paint are the most ordinary feelings and the simplest manners. This requires great dexterity, a sure tact, and a just understanding. The models being obvious to all eyes, the least fault against taste and exactness is immediately perceived. M. François Coppée preserves an almost perfect sense of proportion. And he is as touching as he is true. That is why he is dearly loved. This, I assure you, is the only sorcery he employs to charm so many women and so many men. If but little culture is needed to understand him, it requires a subtle mind to enjoy him fully. Thus his audience is very

extensive. As he has tact, he is able to speak very agreeably about himself, which is a singular advantage to a poet; for by uttering his own confessions he utters ours, and that flatters us. While the poets gracefully relate the affairs of their hearts we believe that we are listening to those of our own, and we are delighted. They are thinking only of themselves, we are thinking only of ourselves, and the arrangement is an excellent one for both of us.

At one time, when I used to enjoy taking a daily walk, I often used to listen to the conversations of the worthy people on the benches of the public parks. I have sometimes overheard interchanges of a very gentle and even of a slightly tender nature. The latter consisted of alternate confidences of which the speaker only heard a murmur, for he was thinking of what he was going to say next. All the replies began with these words: "Exactly so, that is just like me . . ." They did not bore one another. That is why the gentle murmur of sympathetic poets does not bore us either. That is why more than one young woman as she finishes reading "Olivier" or "l'Exilée" murmurs: "That is just like me . . ." and remains pensive. If her reverie has been deep and pleasant she will say: "M. François Coppée is a good poet."

To-day he gives us his autumnal leaves in fifty pages, a thin book of verse which he entitles "Arrière-saison." Here, with his gentle melancholy, he depicts for us his hair just turning white upon his temples. He is still young, for he says he is growing old. I do not suspect him of any affectation. On the contrary, I am convinced that he feels age coming upon him, and that he is saddened by it.

What more natural? Old age is only felt keenly in anticipation. We taste its dread and its terrors before we enter upon it. The twilight of youth is the most melancholy hour of life. It needs either courage or stupidity to pass through it without becoming rather morose. M. Coppée is not a fool, yet he is not morose, and if an occasional complaint escapes him one feels that there is in it as much resignation as sadness. It is an unpleasant moment to pass. It is probable that when we are really old we do not notice it. At least we do not draw other people's attention to it. M. Coppée will later on see whether this is true. I am afraid it will not console him if I say that we shall see it together.

"Arrière-saison" is, like Parny's "Élégies" and Heine's "Intermezzo," a sort of love romance, very simple and the more interesting on that account. The heroine is a young work-girl, put to apprenticeship at the age of sixteen,

> "Qui rentrait à la hâte et voulait rester sage." *

But, a daughter of the people, without mother or home, she did not avoid what cannot be avoided.

> "En mai, sous le maigre feuillage,
> Chantaient les moineaux des faubourgs.
> N'est-ce pas? le vague ennui, l'âge? . . ." †

What matters the past? She is "gentle, sad, and pretty." He is "tender and gracious." They love

* "Who came home early and wished to remain good."

† "In May, beneath the scanty leaves, the sparrows of the squares kept twittering. And the vague dissatisfaction and youth—does it not . . .?"

one another. In summer, they go together to the country. She takes

"Sa robe la plus claire et sa plus fraîche ombrelle." *

They walk in the woods. They dine at the village inn, where on the coarse table-cloth they find earthenware plates and tin dish-covers,

"Et des cerneaux tout frais dans une assiette à fleurs." †

In winter he abandons for her the world that now wearies him. All his plans are settled. They will never separate, it is she who will close his eyes. The poet's verses will be half forgotten. It is he who says this, and he adds :

"Oh ! si par bonheur doit survivre
Un humble poème de moi,
Qu'il soit donc choisi dans ce livre
Que j'ai, mignonne, écrit pour toi." ‡

This is neither the pompous pride with which Ronsard announced his posthumous glory to the ungrateful Cassandre, nor the jolly good-nature of Béranger saying to Lisette :

"Vous vieillirez, ô ma belle maîtresse ! " §

It is a new feeling, simpler, more delicate, more affectionate.

This love of "Arriére-saison " is almost summed up in what I have just said. It is enough to make it charming. When the poet compares the desires of autumn to a last flight of swallows, we say to

* "Her brightest dress and her coolest sunshade."

† "And fresh-pluckt green walnuts in a flower-deckt plate."

‡ "Oh ! if haply a single poem of mine survives, may it be chosen, dearest, from the volume which I have written for thee."

§ "You will grow old, O my fair mistress ! "

ourselves: "So it is!" and we are filled with a certain calm and gentle emotion. It is the real Coppée, at his best.

To-day I am only addressing those who love poetry, and, in particular, those who love it well rather than those who love it much. I promise the former a pleasure worthy of them if they read "la Lampe d'Argile," by M. Frédéric Plessis. I understand by loving poetry well, loving few poems and these exquisite ones, and being penetrated by their spirit and that feeling of fate which they contain; for the most beautiful forms are of worth only from the spirit that animates them. Let those who love verses in this way read M. Frédéric Plessis' book. They will capture the happiest part of a life, the flower of fifteen years of study, of dreams, and of love.

The author, who is to-day a Director of Studies in our University, revealed himself as a poet at the age of seventeen. He had left a little Breton village where he had been brought up with a solicitous tenderness, and appeared, when still almost a child, in the circle of our Parnassian poets at the house of Alphonse Lemerre, the publisher. He was the youngest of us. But, toilsome and a dreamer, he already showed that gentle persistence and that sincere idealism which characterise his race, and constitute the very essence of his nature. To tell the truth, he is, like M. Renan, only half a Breton, and, through his mother, numbers Provençals among his ancestors. "This is why," he has himself said:

"Né parmi les barbares du Nord,
Sous leur ciel gris hanté par le dieu de la mort,
J'aime de tant d'amour la vie et la lumière!
Et je retiens en moi, d'une souche première,

Une sève inconnue aux lieux où j'ai grandi,
La sève qui fermente au soleil du Midi.
Je suis resté ton fils, ô province romaine,
Et le vieux sang latin bleuit encor ma veine." *

We can believe that it is through this double origin he unites, according to an expression of his own which I like to apply to him,

"La kymrique rudesse aux grâces d'Ausonie." †

He early felt the double attraction of the love for nature which troubled his pensive soul, and the study of letters which gave a precise end to his active mind.

His taste was early fixed upon the ancient poets, and particularly the Latins, whose sobriety, gravity, and what I will call their sublime probity, he at once discerned. It was in the company of Virgil, Ovid, and Lucan that he pursued his law studies in Paris. Later on, he pretended that he had need of a guide, an initiator, and that half-voluntary illusion inspired him with some delightful verses:

"O poète, c'est toi, c'est ta mémoire agile
Qui, se jouant aux vers relus et médités,
D'abord me fit connaître Euripide et Virgile,
Et m'ouvrit le trésor des deux antiquités.

"C'est toi qui me menas vers le docte Racine
Formé, dès son enfance, à la langue des dieux.
Je marchais altéré . . . la source était voisine . . .
A peine un clair rideau la voilait à mes yeux.

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* "Born among the barbarians of the North, beneath their grey skies haunted by the god of death, I love life and the light with so great a love! And I retain within me from an earlier breed, a sap, unknown to the places where I have grown up, the sap which ferments beneath the Southern sun. I have remained thy child, O Roman province, and the old Latin blood still runs red in my veins."

† "The Cymric strength and the Ausonian grace."

"Mais il fallut ta main pour m'écarter les branches
Et, prolongeant sous bois un facile sentier,
Pour me faire entrevoir le chœur des formes blanches,
Amours du vieux Ronsard et du jeune Chénier." *

The truth is that secret affinities and an irresistible instinct drew him towards the antique Muse. He had for her all the minute curiosities of love. He did not stop at erudition ; he pressed on to philology. His thesis on "Propertius," in which the Latin elegiac poet is interpreted by the aid of all the resources of learning combined with the intuitions of the heart, and his edition of that poet, which ought to take its place by the side of the lamented Benoist's "Virgil" in a scholarly collection of books, are the fruits of his labours. We must not be surprised if we meet with numerous studies from the antique in "la Lampe d'Argile." Those who love André Chénier's little pictures will doubtless take pleasure in visiting this museum, so full of the figures of heroes and nymphs. But what gives the book its greatest value, what places it among the best, is the eleven poems of "la Muse nouvelle." That is the true flame of "la Lampe d'argile" ; it is a flame of love, and how vehement, how peaceable, how sweet ! All the gravity of the Breton poet is to be found united with an irresistible

* "O poet, it is thou, it is thy nimble memory which, sporting amid verses it had often read and pondered, first made me know Euripides and Virgil, and opened for me the treasure of both antiquities. It is thou who ledst me towards the learned Racine, skilled from his childhood in the tongue of the gods. I walked with altered gait . . . the spring was near at hand. . . . An almost transparent curtain barely veiled it from my eyes. But thy hand was needed to turn aside the branches and, opening out an easy pathway beneath the trees, to give me glimpses of the choir of fair forms beloved of old Ronsard and youthful Chénier."

grace in those verses to her "all of whose days are flower-strewn,"

"Qui près de *lui* le soir travaille sous la lampe."*

By these noble elegies the annotator of Propertius shows himself to be new a Propertius, less majestic, less ample, but perhaps more sincere and purer than the first.

* "Who beside *him* each evening labours beneath the lamp."

MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF*

MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF, whose journal has just been published, died at the age of twenty-four, on October 31st, 1884, leaving several canvases and some pastels which show a sincere feeling for nature and an ardent love of art. Granddaughter of General Paul Gregorievitch Bashkirtseff, one of the defenders of Sebastopol, she used to boast of having, through her mother, old Tartar blood in her veins. She had a fair complexion, magnificent red hair, prominent cheek-bones, a short nose, a piercing look, and infantile lips. She was small and perfectly formed —a reason, doubtless, why she loved to look at statues. At Rome, when she was sixteen years old, she used to pass long hours before the marbles of the Capitoline Museum. We need not wonder, either, that at the same time she was also delighted with a riding-habit "in black cloth, made in one piece, by Laferrière . . . a dress in the Princess style, fitting closely everywhere."

Her hands, though slender and very white, were not of a perfect shape, but a painter has said that there was a beauty in the way in which she rested them on anything. Marie Bashkirtseff worshipped them. She knew that she was pretty, yet she seldom

* Her "Journal," 2 vols.

describes herself in her private diary. I have noted only, under the date of July 17th, 1874, this portrait, very prettily arranged: "My hair, knotted in Psyche fashion, is redder than ever. With a thin woollen dress of a particular shade of white, graceful and becoming, and a fichu of lace around my neck, I have the appearance of one of those portraits of the first Empire. To complete the picture, I ought to be under a tree, and holding a book in my hand." And she adds that she loves solitude in front of a mirror.

She was vainer of her voice than of her beauty. That voice was of a compass of three octaves, all but two notes. One of Marie Bashkirtseff's first dreams was to become a great singer.

She wished to show herself in her journal such as she was, with her faults and her merits, her continual restlessness, and her perpetual contradictions. M. Edmond de Goncourt, at the time he was writing the story of Chérie, used to ask young girls and women for confidences and confessions. Marie Bashkirtseff has given hers. She has, if we are to believe her, told us everything; but she was not of a disposition to address herself to a single confessor, however distinguished he might be. Her vanity could only be satisfied with a public confession, and it is before the world that she has opened her soul.

Who would not take pity and compassion on this poor child, whose misfortune it was to have had no childhood? That, doubtless, was nobody's fault, but Marie Bashkirtseff was never like those whom the God to whom she prayed every day designated as alone worthy of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven. She never knew the ineffable sweetness of being small and humble. At fifteen years of age,

she had wings, but not the remembrance of the nest. Naïve gladness and simplicity she never possessed.

The first confidences that she makes us are those of a little love affair which she had at Rome during the Carnival, and which had no other result than a kiss on the eyelids. The young girl showed in it a considerable amount of coquetry and skill.

"You do not love me," sighed, one day, the young nephew of a Cardinal whom she allowed to be her patient admirer, "Alas! you do not love me."

"No."

"I must not hope?"

"Good Heavens! Yes! hope always. Hope is in the nature of man; but as for me, I will not give you any."

The priest's nephew displayed marked inclination, but Marie Bashkirtseff did not allow herself to be caught by it. "I should be at the pinnacle of joy if I believed him," she says, "but I doubt, in spite of his genuine, courteous, and even naïve manner. *That is what comes of being vulgar oneself.*"

And she adds:

"Besides, it is the better way."

She had not the least desire to marry poor Pietro.

"If I were his wife," she thought, "the riches, the villas, the museums of the Ruspoli, of the Dorias, of the Torlonias, of the Borghese, of the Chiaras, would crush me. I am ambitious and vain above everything. And to say that he loves such a creature simply because he does not know her! If he knew her, this creature . . . Ah! pshaw! he would love her all the same."

To show herself, to be in evidence, to shine, that

is her perpetual dream. Pride devours her. She repeats incessantly : " If I were a queen ! " She exclaims as she walks in Rome : " I want to be Cæsar, Augustus, Marcus Aurelius, Nero, Caracalla, the Devil, the Pope ! " She finds beauty only in the princes, in the Duke of H——, in the Grand Duke Wladimir, in Don Carlos. The rest are not worth a look.

The most incoherent ideas mingle together in her head. It is a strange chaos. She is very pious ; she prays to God morning and evening. She asks from Him a duke for a husband, a beautiful voice, and her mother's recovery. She exclaims, like Shakspeare's Claudius : " There is nothing more awful than not to be able to pray." She has a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin ; she practises the orthodox religion, and she reads the future in a broken mirror, in which she sees a multitude of little figures, the floor of a church in black and white marble, and perhaps a shroud. She consults Alexis the diviner, who in his trance sees Cardinal Antonelli ; she has her fortune told for a louis by Mother Jacob. She has every superstition. She is persuaded that Pope Pius IX. has the evil eye. She fears a misfortune because she has seen the new moon with her left eye. Her ideas change every moment. At Naples she suddenly asks herself what sort of thing an immortal soul can be since it must retire before an indigestion caused by eating lobster. She does not see how a stomach-ache can put the celestial Psyche to flight, and she concludes that there is no soul, that it is " a pure invention." Some days later she puts a rosary round her neck, in order to look like Beatrix, she says, and also because " God in His simple grandeur does not suffice.

We must have images to look at and crosses to kiss." She is coquettish, she is scatter-brained, but her linnet's head is furnished like that of an old librarian. At seventeen years of age, Marie Bashkirtseff has read Aristotle, Plato, Dante, and Shakespeare. Amedée Thierry's stories of Roman history captivate her. She recalls with pleasure "an interesting work on Confucius." She knows Horace, Tibullus, and the maxims of Publius Syrus by heart. She feels Homer's poetry deeply. "Nobody, it seems to me," she says, "can escape this adoration for the ancients. . . . No modern drama, no romance, no sensational comedy of Dumas or of George Sand, has left in me as clear a remembrance and as profound and natural an impression as the description of the taking of Troy. I seem to have been present at those horrors, to have heard the cries, seen the fire, been with Priam's family, with those wretches who hid themselves behind the altars of their gods, where the sinister blaze of the fire which was devouring their town, was going to search them out and betray them . . . and who can escape a shudder whilst reading of the apparition of the phantom of Creusa?" Her mind is a storehouse into which she thrusts pell-mell Madame de Staël's "Corinne," the "Homme-Femme" of M. Alexandre Dumas fils, "Orlando Furioso," the novels of M. Zola, and those of George Sand. She travels incessantly, going from Nice to Rome, from Rome to Paris, from Paris to St. Petersburg, to Vienna, and to Berlin. Continually wandering, she is continually bored. Her life seems bitter and empty to her. "In this world," she says, "everything that is not sad is stupid, and everything that is not stupid is sad." She is without anything, because she wishes to have everything. She

is in frightful distress, she utters cries of anguish, and yet she loves life. "I find it good," she says; "would one believe it? I find everything good and agreeable, even tears, even pain. I love to weep, I love to be in despair. I love to be grieved and sad . . . and I love life in spite of everything. I want to live. It would be cruel to make me die when I am so easy to please." At certain hours she has an obscure and terrible consciousness of the evil that broods over her. From the spring of 1876 onwards she feels herself stricken. "Just now," she wrote, under the date of June 3rd, "as I went out of my dressing-room I was superstitiously frightened. I saw beside me a woman dressed in a long white robe, a light in her hand, with her head a little bent, and plaintive-looking like those phantoms of the German legends. Reassure yourself, it was only I myself reflected in a mirror. Oh! I am afraid that a physical evil may proceed from all these moral tortures."

In 1877 a single passion took possession of this troubled soul. Marie Bashkirtseff devoted herself entirely to painting. At last she collected the scattered treasures of her intellect. All her dreams of fame melted into a single one, and henceforth she lived only to become a great artist. She studied with ardour in Julien's Academy, and she soon became one of its best pupils. It was, if I dare say so, one of those sudden conversions of which the lives of the saints offer so many examples, and which reveal a sincere, unrestrained, unstable nature. Henceforth princes were nothing to her. She became a Republican, a Socialist, and even a bit of a revolutionary. She put on no more of Laferrière's riding-habits, and gaily wore the black smock-frock of the woman-artist. She discovered the beauty of those

who are wretched. She was a new creature. At the end of six months she was, along with Mademoiselle Breslau, at the head of the class. She has drawn a portrait of her rival which is certainly not a flattering one; "Breslau is thin, outlandish, wasted, although with an interesting head, no charm, like a boy, and—all alone!" She flatters herself that if she had Mademoiselle Breslau's talent, she would make use of it in a more feminine fashion. She would then be unique in Paris. In the meantime she works furiously. It is on January 21st, 1882, that for the first time she sees Bastien Lepage, whose painting she admired and imitated. "He is quite small," she says, "quite fair, wears his hair in the Breton style, has a turned-up nose, and the beard of a young man." He was already smitten with the disease of which he was soon to die. She herself felt that it had overtaken her. For two years she had been a prey to a racking cough. She grew thin. She became deaf. This infirmity drove her to despair. "Why," said she, "why does God make us suffer? If it is He who created the world, why has He created evil, suffering, wickedness? . . . I shall never get better. . . . There will be a veil between me and the rest of the world. The wind in the branches, the murmur of water, the rain dropping on the window-panes, words pronounced in a low voice, I shall hear nothing of all that!" Soon she learns that she is in consumption, and that her right lung is attacked. She exclaims: "Let me have ten years more, and fame and love during those ten years! and I shall die content at thirty. If there were any one with whom to come to terms I would make it a bargain—to die at thirty, after having known what it is to live." The

consumption follows its fatal course. Marie Bashkirtseff writes on August 29th, 1883: "I cough all the time in spite of the heat, and this afternoon, during the model's rest, as I was half asleep on the divan, I *saw* myself stretched out, and a great taper lighted by my side. . . .

"To die? I am very frightened of it."

Now that life is escaping her, she loves it to distraction. Arts, music, painting, books, society, dresses, luxury, noise, quiet, laughter, sadness, melancholy, love, cold, sunshine, all the seasons, the calm plains of Russia, and the mountains of Naples, the snow, the rain, the spring and its intoxications, the tranquil days of summer and its beautiful starlit nights, she adores, she admires them all! And she must die. "To die, it is a word that one says, and that one writes easily, but to think, *to believe* that one is going to die soon? Do I believe it? No, but I *fear* it."

And some days later, brushing aside those illusions that plant themselves so obstinately at the bedside of consumptives, she sees death distinctly:

"Here is then the end of all our troubles! So many aspirations, so many desires, so many projects, so many . . . to die at twenty-four on the threshold of everything."

While she was dying, Bastien Lepage, also dying, had himself carried to her almost every day. The journal stops at Monday, October 20th. Even on that day, Bastien Lepage had come, supported by his brother, to the bedside of the dying woman. Marie Bashkirtseff expired eleven days afterwards, "on a foggy day," says M. André Theuriet, "like that which she had painted in one of her last pictures, 'L'Allée.'"

It is always a touching spectacle, when nature shows us Love and Death, the one beside the other, in a terrible epitome. But there is in Marie Bashkirtseff's all too short life something bitter, something which contracts the heart. We think as we read her "Journal" that she must have died still unsatisfied, and that her shade yet wanders somewhere, laden with heavy desires.

As I reflect on the agitations of that troubled spirit, and follow the course of that life, uprooted and flung to all the winds of Europe, I murmur with the fervour of a prayer this verse of Sainte-Beuve :

"To be born to live and to die in the same house!"

MAD FOLK IN LITERATURE*

FRENCHMAN who made the journey to London went one day to see the great Charles Dickens. He was admitted and expressed his admiration as an excuse for thus trespassing on the precious time of such a being. "Your fame," he added, "and the universal sympathy you inspire, doubtless expose you to innumerable intrusions. Your door is always besieged. You must be visited every day by princes, statesmen, scholars, writers, artists, and even madmen."

"Yes! madmen, madmen," cried Dickens, carried away by the agitation which, towards the end of his life, often moved him. "Madmen! They alone amuse me."

And he pushed his astonished visitor out by the shoulders.

Charles Dickens always liked madmen, he who described with such tender grace the innocence of the good Mr. Dick. Everybody knows Mr. Dick, for everybody has read "David Copperfield." Everybody in France at least, for to-day it is the fashion in England to neglect the best of English story-tellers. A young æsthete lately informed me that "Dombey

* "L'Inconnu." Par Paul Hervieu. "Le Horla." Par Guy de Maupassant.

and Son" can only be read in translations. He also told me that Lord Byron was a rather dull poet, something like our own Ponsard. I do not believe it. I believe that Byron is one of the greatest poets of the century, and I believe that Dickens had more feeling than any other writer. I believe that his novels are as beautiful as the love and the pity that inspired them. I believe that "David Copperfield" is a new gospel. I believe, lastly, that Mr. Dick, with whom alone I have to do here, is a sensible madman, for the only reason left him is the reason of the heart, and that is hardly ever deceived. What matter if he flies kites on which he has written some reflections regarding the death of King Charles I.? He is benevolent; he wishes ill to no one, and that is a piece of wisdom to which many sane men do not attain as easily as he does. It was a piece of good luck for Mr. Dick to be born in England. Individual liberty is greater there than in France. Originality is more favourably regarded there, more respected, than it is with us. And what is madness, after all, but a sort of mental originality? I say madness, and not insanity. Insanity is the loss of the intellectual faculties. Madness is only a strange and singular use of those faculties.

In my childhood I knew an old man who became mad through hearing of the death of an only son, buried at twenty years of age beneath an avalanche on the Rigi. His madness took the form of always dressing himself in mattress-ticking. With that exception he was almost perfectly sane. All the little ragamuffins of the district used to follow him in the street, uttering wild cries. But, as he joined the gentleness of a child to the strength of a colossus, he inspired them with respect, frightening them sufficiently

without doing them any harm. In this he gave an example of an excellent system of police. When he entered the house of a friend his first business was to take off the sort of chess-board smock that made him look ridiculous. He placed it on an arm-chair in such a way that, as far as was possible, it seemed to cover a human body. He fixed his cane as a sort of vertebral column, then on the top of the cane he put his large felt hat, the brim of which he turned down, and which, in his hands, assumed a fantastic shape. When that was done he gazed for a moment at the clothes he had taken off, just as one looks at an old friend who is ill and is now sleeping, and immediately he became the sanest man in the world, as if, in truth, it was his own madness which had dressed itself up for a carnival and was now asleep. He still had on a very decent under-garment, a sort of black waist-coat with sleeves, not unlike what, in the time of Louis XVI., they used to call a vest. Many a time I have enjoyed seeing him and hearing him. He spoke on all sorts of subjects, and with much judgment and intelligence. He was a scholar, nurtured upon all that could give a knowledge of men and of the world. In particular, he had in his head a rich library of travels, and he had no equal in relating the ship-wreck of the "Medusa," or some other adventure of sailors in Oceania.

It would be unpardonable for me to omit that he was an excellent humanist; for, out of pure good-will, he gave me several Greek and Latin lessons that helped me greatly in my studies. His zeal in rendering services showed itself at every turn. I have seen him interrupt some complicated calculations, with which an astronomer had entrusted him, and chop up wood to oblige an old servant-maid.

His memory was retentive. He remembered every event in his life except the one that had deranged him. The death of his son seemed to have entirely departed from his memory; at least no one ever heard him utter a single word that could lead to the belief that he remembered what his terrible misfortune had been. He was of an equable, almost of a gay, disposition, and his mind naturally settled upon gentle, affectionate, cheerful images. He sought the company of young people. By being among them, his mind had taken a very pronounced pedagogical turn. I have since thought of him when I read Rollin's "Traité des études." I ought to say that he scarcely participated in the thoughts of his young friends; he followed the course of his own with an obstinacy that nothing could overcome. But I have remarked a like disposition in the case of all the really superior people with whom I have been permitted to associate. After having for twenty years clothed himself in an overcoat made of mattress-ticking, he appeared one day in a small check coat that was in no way ridiculous. His disposition had changed like his costume, but this change was far from being equally advantageous. The poor man was melancholy, silent, taciturn. The few, hardly intelligible words that escaped him bore witness to agitation and terror. His face, which had always been very red, was covered with violet patches. His lips were black and sunken. He refused all food. One day he spoke of the son whom he had lost. The following morning he was found hanging in his room. The memory of that old man inspires in me a true sympathy for all those who are like him. But I think they are few in number. It is with madmen as with other men: the good are rare, and we might visit

many an asylum before we found a second old man wearing mattress-ticking, or another Mr. Dick. M. Paul Hervieu is not far from thinking, like Dickens, that madmen are the only interesting people. He tells us in "L'Inconnu" a terrible story of madness, which is at last found to be only a dream, but by far the most terrifying and coherent of dreams, the dream of a madman. There is no one like a madman to ride a nightmare to perfection. This is what M. Paul Hervieu, with his rare talent, has shown us. By a reversal of the Cartesian philosophy, he has shown us the reasoning of madness. He has followed the thinking machine through its successive derangements with the interest that a perverted watchmaker might be expected to take in examining an extraordinarily bad watch. His book is very curious and quite original. It produces two effects: it terrifies and it moves to reflection. I will spare you the fear, and not without good reasons. I should need to have all M. Paul Hervieu's talent and to employ it as he has done in order to communicate to you the shudder which he has given me. As for the reflections that his book inspires, they are numerous. I may at the least allow one of them to slip from me. It is so agreeable to philosophise!

While I am writing, an acacia sways its light and flowery branches beneath my window, and I repeat to myself this distich from a poet in the "Anthology": "Let us seat ourselves beneath this fine tree: it will be pleasant to converse in its shade." A fine tree and calm thoughts, what is there better in the world? My acacia, which is gently shaken by the wind, scatters the perfumed snow of its flowers even over my table. Under this agreeable influence it is impossible for me to prevent

myself from feeling a real sympathy with the madmen who do little harm. As for doing none at all, that, indeed, is forbidden to men, whether mad or sane. There exists no possible way of living without doing harm to something. We should not hate madmen. Are they not like the rest of us? Who can boast that he is mad in no respect? I have just looked in Littré and Robin's Dictionary for the definition of madness and I could not find it. At least the one which we read there is nearly devoid of sense. I almost expected this; for madness, when it is not characterised by some anatomical lesion, remains indefinable. We say that a man is mad when he does not think as we do. That is all. Philosophically the ideas of madmen are as legitimate as our own. They figure to themselves the exterior world according to the impressions they receive from it. That is exactly what we, who are regarded as sane, do also. In them and in us the world is reflected differently. We say that the image we receive is true, and that those which they receive are false. In reality, neither is absolutely false and neither is absolutely true. Theirs is true for them, and ours is true for us. Listen to this fable: One day a mirror with a perfectly flat surface met a convex mirror in a garden.

"I think you are very silly," it said, "to represent nature in the way you do. You must be mad, or you would not give every figure a large belly and a small head and feet, and change all the straight lines into curved lines."

"It is you who distort nature," tartly replied the convex mirror; "your flat shape imagines that the trees are quite straight because it makes them so, and that everything is flat outside you as well as inside

you. The trunks of the trees are curved. That is the truth. You are but a deceptive mirror."

"I do not deceive anybody," said the other. "It is you, friend Convex, who caricature men and things."

The quarrel began to grow heated when a mathematician passed that way. He was, so the story runs, the great d'Alembert.

"My friends, you are both right and both wrong," said he to the mirrors. "You both reflect objects according to the laws of optics. The figures that you receive are, both of them, of geometrical exactness. They are both perfect. A concave mirror would produce a third reflection, very different, but also perfect. As for nature herself, nobody knows her true figure, and it is even probable that she has no figure at all save in the mirrors that reflect her. Learn then, gentlemen, not to call each other madmen because you do not receive the same reflections of things."

That, I think, is an excellent fable, and I dedicate it to the mad doctors who lock people up because their passions and feelings are widely removed from their own. They regard a spendthrift man or an amorous woman as deprived of reason, just as if there was not as much reason in prodigality and in love as in avarice and egoism.

They think that a man is mad when he hears what others do not hear and sees what others do not see. Yet Socrates consulted his demon and Joan of Arc heard voices. And, besides, are we not all visionaries and victims of hallucination? Do we know what the external world is, or do we perceive anything else all our life long except the luminous or sonorous vibrations of our sensory nerves? It is true that

our hallucinations are constant and habitual, of a general and common order. The perceptions of madmen are rare, exceptional, distinguished. It is by this, above all, that they are recognised.

It is a madman, also, to whom M. Guy de Maupassant, the prince of story-tellers, introduces us in "Le Horla." The poor man is haunted by a vampire who disturbs his sleep and drinks the milk off his night-table. He is furious and in despair because of this, and not without reason, for there is nothing more frightful than to feel oneself fighting against an invisible enemy.

But shall I tell you my whole thought upon the matter? For a madman, this man seems to me to be lacking in subtlety. In his place I would let the vampire gorge itself at leisure on the milk, and I would say to myself: "Things are going on excellently; by absorbing the alkaline liquid, this animal cannot fail to assimilate some opaque elements, and he will become visible. In the meantime, he cannot continue invisible without remaining transparent, therefore if I do not see him I shall at least see in his body the milk he has drunk." If you wish, I would not keep to the milk. I would try and make him swallow madder to colour him red from head to foot.

So much being granted, and provided that they drink neither milk nor water, invisible beings can indeed exist. And pray why not? What is there absurd in assuming their existence? It is the contrary hypothesis, little as people imagine it, which is repugnant to reason. For the chances are that all the forms of life do not come within our senses, and that we are not constituted in such a way as to be able to comprehend the whole scale of beings. In

order to come within our view, life must manifest itself in very special conditions of temperature. If it exists in the gases, which, after all, is not impossible, we can know nothing about it. But that is no reason for denying its existence. Matter, in the gaseous state, has not less energy than in the solid state. Why should the suns, which seem to perform royal and paternal functions at the centre of every system in the universe—why should they be the abode of eternal silence? Why should they not bear within their mighty bosoms life and intelligence at the same time as heat and light? And why should not the atmosphere of the planets, why should not the atmosphere of the earth, be in like manner inhabited? Can we not imagine very light and extremely diaphanous beings, imbibing their nutriment upon the higher atmospheric levels?

Nothing prevents the existence of children of the air just as there are children of the waters and sons of the earth.

THE CHEVALIER DE FLORIAN

HE Provençals of Paris, following their custom, celebrated Florian's anniversary on Sunday last. Florian, born in fair Occitania, is their compatriot. It is true that he wrote in the tongue of the barbarians, in the idiom of La Fontaine and Voltaire; it is true that he lived and died in a foreign land. But the Provençals are indulgent. They are full of joy and forgetfulness. They have forgiven him for everything. Their tolerant piety, their sober cheerfulness, enliven the poet's tomb every year. Singing and drinking take place at it. That is to say, the most agreeable acts of popular religion are performed beside it. These Provençals comprehend life and death in an admirable way. To them everything is an excuse for a holiday.

But for them the author of "Galatée" would fall into oblivion, and that would be a pity. When we call to mind the memory of the Chevalier de Florian we have the same feeling of pleasure that is given by finding a very delicate half-obliterated pastel in an old curiosity shop.

"On the banks of the Gardon, at the foot of the highest mountains of the Cevennes, between the town of Anduze and the village of Massane, there is a valley in which nature seems to have gathered

together all her treasures. There, along wide fields, through which meander the waters of the stream, one may walk under arbours of fig-trees and acacias. The iris, the flowering broom, and the narcissus enamel the ground; pomegranate and hawthorn scatter their perfume through the air; a circle of hills studded with tufted trees shuts the valley in on all sides, and snow-clad rocks mark the distant horizon." Thus Florian himself, in his "Estelle," describes the valley where he was cradled. Alluding to this passage, the worthy Sedaine said to the poet, when he received him into the Academy: "The homage which you render to those places that have witnessed your birth is a new proof of that sensibility which characterises you."

Son of a poor Chevalier of Saint-Louis, Florian was brought up in the castle that an ancestor of his had built at a huge expense. "He was," Florian says, "a nobleman who spent all his wealth upon women and masons." His mother, Gillette de Salgues, was of Castilian origin. Boissy d'Anglas, a friend of the family, tells us that "she had retained some of the special habits and customs of the country where she was born, and transmitted them to her son." He lost her early, and was sent to a boarding school. He had many masters. One of them often brought him to the Rue des Prêtres, to the house of a lady who lived on the fifth storey and who painted fans. "I noticed," he himself related afterwards, "that he had almost always something to say to her in private, and that this required them to go into the adjoining room. One day I had the curiosity to go and look through the keyhole; I saw them conversing, but in a way that gave me food for thought for more than a week afterwards."

It was not from this master's lessons that he profited least. We know, by his own admission, that before he was seventeen he was "happy enough to possess a mistress, a trick with the sword, and a friend." The friend was a brawler of the worst type, who had trouble with the watch, and caused some unpleasantness to the young Chevalier. Luckily Florian had also an uncle, and this uncle, having married one of Voltaire's nieces, sent his nephew to Ferney. Voltaire found his young relative prepossessing, petted him, and called him Floriannet. He did better still. He placed him, when he was sixteen, as page to the Duc de Penthièvre. To celebrate his appointment, the Chevalier drank so much coffee and liqueurs with the other pages "that he became rather seriously ill." These little scapegraces committed a thousand pranks. The good Duke was not the man to notice them. He was a saint. In his own innocence he never saw anything that was evil. It is related that one day, at a fair, a dealer who did not know him showed him some indecent figures, and put them in motion before him. The worthy Duke believed in all innocence that they were playthings for children, and he bought them for a little princess and sent them to her next day.

This excellent man interested himself in Florian, and soon gave him a company in his regiment of dragoons. It was the custom. "Lindor," says Marmontel in his "Contes Moraux," "had obtained a company of cavalry on ceasing to be a page." Afterwards becoming gentleman-in-waiting to the Duc de Penthièvre, Florian celebrated the inexhaustible benêvolence of his master.

> "Avec lui la bonté, la douce bienfaisance
> Dans le palais d'Anet habitent en silence.

Les vains plaisirs ont fui, mais non pas le bonheur.
Bourbon n'invite point les folâtres bergères
A s'assembler sous les ormeaux ;
Il ne se mêle point à leurs danses légères,
Mais il leur donne des troupeaux." *

It was while living with the Duke, in the castles of Anet and Sceaux, that Florian composed those pastorals in which we see no wolves, those pretty Italian comedies in which Harlequin himself is visible, and those poetical romances of which at the time it used to be said with an exquisite politeness: "They are dedicated to Fénelon, and the offering does not disfigure the altar." On the eve of the Revolution, the young Chevalier was teaching his shepherdesses to dance. "Galatée" appeared in 1783, "Numa Pompilius" in 1786, "Estelle" in 1788. Without inspiring enthusiasm, these works were well received. Although people of taste felt the weakness of the form, pastorals became the fashion. The designers, and especially Queverdo, prefixed to them polite frontispieces on which one might behold shepherdesses with flowers in their hats, ribbons on their crooks, and the name Estelle engraven on the bark of the oaks. Laharpe, though he was a friend of the author, dealt severely with "Gonzalve de Cordoue." But he had praised "Galatée." It is said that Rivarol once overtook Florian, who was walking in front of him, a manuscript half sticking out of his pocket, and exclaimed: "Ah, sir, it would be a temptation to rob you if we did not know you." But this was merely a witticism. We know, from the evidence of a contemporary, that

* "Goodness and sweet benevolence dwell silently with him in the palace of Anet. Vain pleasures have fled, but happiness remains. Bourbon does not invite the wanton shepherdesses to gather beneath his elms ; he does not join in their nimble dances, but he gives them flocks."

"Estelle" brought to Florian much more than "Émile" and "la Nouvelle Héloïse" brought to Jean-Jacques.

Whatever we may think of him to-day, Florian had the genius of the opportune. He made himself a shepherd at a time when all the ladies were shepherdesses. He spoke of nature and sentiment to a society which wished to hear of nothing but sentiment and nature. His "Numa Pompilius," published three years before the assembly of the States-General, is merely one long allusion to the political aspirations of France. This king inspired by wisdom, this prince, a disciple of Zoroaster, raised by the people's choice to the august and supreme magistracy, this Numa who makes of the names of father and of king two perfect synonyms, was he not the image of the constitutional monarch, of the philosophic prince for whom the nation was waiting? Was he not the emblem of the hopes which Louis XVI. then gave to his idolatrous people?

People saw everything rose-coloured. Philosophy will govern us, they said. And what benefits are there which reason will not scatter among men when they become subject to its all-powerful empire? The golden age imagined by the poets will become a reality. All ills will disappear, and with them the fanaticism and tyranny that have given them birth. The virtuous and enlightened man will enjoy an untroubled felicity. Men dreamed of the morals of Galatea and of the policy of Numa.

The Chevalier de Florian had all the appearance of one of the flock. Nevertheless, it was a young wolf that stole into the sheepfold of the fashionable theatres. We find the following verses among his fugitive pieces:

"TO MADAME G——

"(*After having seen her play the 'Mère Confidente.'*)

"Que j'aime à t'écouter, quand d'un accent si tendre
Tu dis que la vertu fait seule le bonheur !
Ton secret pour te faire entendre,
C'est de laisser parler ton cœur.
Mais, en blâmant l'amour, ta voix trop séduisante
Vers l'amour, malgré moi, m'entraine à chaque instant ;
Et dupuis que j'ai vu *la Mère confidente*
J'ai grand besoin d'un confident." *

This Madame G—— is no other than Rose Gontier, who had not her equal in moving the spectator to both smiles and tears. She was eight years older than the Chevalier. He loved her, but she loved him much more. There remains but a single and a tardy testimony of their love. A long, long time after the death of Florian, Rose Gontier, who had then become the good Mother Gontier, was a source of amusement to her new companions, for she seemed to be a figure belonging to another age. She was very pious, and never went on the stage without making the sign of the cross two or three times in the wings. All the young actresses used to amuse themselves by teasing the woman who played "Ma tante Aurore" so naturally. They used to surround her in the green-room, and were continually asking her the same malicious question :

"Is it indeed possible, Mamma Gontier, is it indeed true, that M. de Florian used to beat you?"

* "How I love to listen to you when with so tender an accent you say that virtue alone brings happiness! The secret which makes you listened to is that you let your heart speak. But, even while it blames love, your too seductive voice drags me, despite myself, every moment towards love ; and when I have seen the 'Mère Confidente' I too have great need for a confidant."

And as sole answer and explanation, very reserved as she was, the good Mamma Gontier used to say to them in her eighteenth-century phrase:

"You see, my children, he was on the free list." *

It is piquant to know that Estelle was beaten by Némorin. The Revolution was a great nuisance to Florian, who had thought of it in quite a different manner. When the first troubles broke out he took refuge in Sceaux, where he lived in great retirement. On February 17th, 1792, he wrote to Boissy d'Anglas:

"I pass my life quietly by the side of my fire, reading Voltaire and avoiding a society which has become a frightful arena where everybody hates reason, where virtue is no longer even praised, where humanity, the first of virtues, and moderation, the first of good qualities, are despised by all parties. I am very well off in my solitude, and, if I had news of you oftener, I should like it still better."

Florian had about this time shown himself very ardent in regard towards the third daughter of M. Le Sénéchal, the Administrator of the Royal Domains. She was not insensible to the attentions of a man more than fourteen years her elder, but agreeable and celebrated. Without being betrothed to each other, they had exchanged pledges in which Sophie (that was the young girl's name) placed implicit trust. We possess a literary portrait of Sophie at the age of nineteen. It is well to state, before showing that portrait to the reader, that it is by an unsuccessful rival of the Chevalier. "To the regularity of her features," if we are to believe this witness, "Sophie joined an animated countenance. She was a Greek

* Saint-Beuve on Madame Desbordes-Valmore.

beauty or a French beauty according as it suited her. She lacked nothing except vivid colouring. At first, pride seemed to be the distinguishing character of her appearance, but the impression of pity threw over it, so to speak, a ray of celestial light. When she heard a fine action related her eyes flashed with noble fire. She had too keen a liking for striking flashes of wit."

And the lover-portraitist adds ingenuously:

"It was this that distressed me, for I could not carry on this species of contest with her." Then he adds the final touches to the picture: "An extreme activity endangered her health, which had already shown some disquieting signs. Music, painting, the translation of some English novels, to which she occasionally added very forcibly conceived scenes of her own, then occupied days into which there also entered the most poignant griefs." Vivacious, witty, melancholy, of a literary bent, Sophie Le Sénéchal was entirely suited to the fashion and taste of the time. Her father held one of those civil offices which the wealthy middle classes divided among themselves, for all positions of judicial and financial administration then belonged to the people as distinguished from the nobility. M. Le Sénéchal had established his two elder daughters in the ranks of the nobility; one was Marquise de Chérisey, her younger sister Marquise d'Audiffret. He was himself insignificant. But his wife had some pretensions to culture, and kept a salon for men of letters. This family, recently wealthy, had been almost ruined by the Revolution. The property of the Administrator of Royal Domains was being surely dissipated in the hands of a sequestrator. After the 10th of August M. Le Sénéchal judged it prudent

to leave Paris, where he had incurred the suspicion of being a Moderate. He retired with his family to Rouen. There he became acquainted with Charles Lacretelle, called Lacretelle the Younger, then aged twenty-six. Lacretelle was not long a visitor at the Le Sénéchals' house before he fell in love with the young Sophie. He concealed this love from her with the greater ease inasmuch as she did not share it. She used to call him "brother," and he soon felt all the bitter meaning of a word which had at first seemed so sweet to him. As he was a very worthy young man, he told his views and feelings to the fair Sophie's mother. The answer he obtained was not favourable. Here it is as it has been transmitted to us:

"It is because I regard you as Sophie's elder brother that I am going to confide to you something which must remain locked in your bosom, and which I believe to be necessary for your happiness. Do not deceive yourself; give up all hope. My daughter is courted by the Chevalier de Florian, and does not seem insensible to that homage. I should be glad if she lost the memory of it, for I have seen that the Chevalier's love diminishes in proportion as our fortune grows smaller, and every day of the Revolution injures what is left to us. Do not imagine that he is like one of his own pastoral heroes; he has too much honour to be a seducer; but he has too much prudence and calculation to be a Némorin."

It does not appear that the rival who listened to these words has softened them in any way. As he relates them, they are indeed too severe. If the Chevalier was not eager to marry Mlle. Le Sénéchal, it is easy to imagine other reasons for his delay besides deceived cupidity. A suspect himself, and in a

state of continual alarm in his retreat at Sceaux, he could reasonably judge that the eve of the proscription was not the time to unite his destiny with that of a young girl charged, like himself, with a want of patriotism. That would have been a piece of noble-minded folly, and M. de Florian was not capable of follies of any sort. He held with Parny that

> "Une indifférence paisible
> Est la plus sage des vertus." *

He was too prudent not to be a little selfish, and he, as well as others, thought that at such an epoch it was enough to keep oneself alive without doing anything more. Madame Le Sénéchal was far from having any illusions about his character, and a new proof of the Chevalier's peace-loving inclinations was not long in presenting itself. Having settled at Montrouge at the end of May 1792, this lady gave refuge to the Marquis d'Audiffret, her son-in-law, who had been placed on the list of *émigrés*. The patriots of Montrouge informed against him, and he was immediately arrested. Madame Le Sénéchal asked Florian to bear witness that M. d'Audiffret had not left the territory of the Republic. This was true, but there was danger in bearing witness to it. D'Audiffret was not an *émigré*, but he was a *ci-devant* aristocrat. His brother-in-law, the Marquis de Chérisey, had emigrated. D'Audiffret was doubly suspect. Florian, a *ci-devant* aristocrat also, could not show himself without danger. He asked to be excused. His young rival, too happy at seizing the opportunity furnished him, offered himself as a witness. He ran the greatest risks in taking this step, for his share in contributing with André Chénier

* "A peaceful indifference
Is the wisest of virtues."

to the "Journal de Paris" could not be forgotten. He did not hesitate, however, but presented himself before the municipality and obtained the freedom of Sophie's brother-in-law. Need it be said that he was not loved any the better because of this? Lucky for him if he was forgiven for having shown a greatness of soul that the man who was loved had not displayed! That is a grievance not easily endured by a woman who loves.

The Chevalier often visited Madame Le Sénéchal at Montrouge. He had lost his gaiety, and to Sophie he no longer displayed either gallantry or love. "One evening," says Lacretelle, "he suddenly came in at the moment when we were improvising as well as we could a little comedy taken from 'Gil Blas,' in which General Baraguay d'Hilliers, with his fine and noble appearance, represented Captain Roland, I Gil Blas, and pretty Madame d'Audiffret the old Hebe who supplied the robbers with drink. I never saw a more gloomy or a more wretched figure than that of Florian. He was a prophet whose hair stood on end. He had just read an account of a sitting of the Jacobins, filled with the most atrocious proposals, which were but too soon to be converted into decrees, and he himself regarded them as decrees that had already been enacted. To punish us for our gaiety, he seemed to take a pleasure in petrifying us with terror. He almost foretold all our deaths. The warning would have been useful if we had had opportunities for escape. That is what Madame Le Sénéchal gently remarked. After his departure we tried to go on with the piece we had begun, but could not force ourselves to do so."

It was decidedly wrong of the Chevalier not to be gay. I have it from a very witty and very sensible

person that gaiety is the most amiable form of courage. But we must admit that the anxieties of the *ci-devant* Chevalier were well founded. Soon this inoffensive man, the victim of an odious and absurd suspicion, was put under arrest and brought to La Bourbe. This was the name vulgarly given to the old convent of Port-Royal of Paris, which had become a prison under the name Port-Libre. It was still a habitable dwelling, in spite of the restraint, and its discipline was not so severe as that of the other houses of detention.

The company in it was excellent. In the evening the women used to dress themselves with the utmost pains, and to assemble with the men in the large common hall, which they transformed into an elegant drawing-room. The poet, Vigée, and Citizen Coittant used to repeat their verses. Baron de Wirbach used to give concerts, and it is said that Baron de Wirbach was the best performer of his time on the tenor viol. An acacia planted in one of the courtyards sheltered, it is said, the tenderest confidences ; a grateful poet has celebrated it in an ode which ends with this verse :

"Sous son ombrage on fut heureux." *

We read in the diary of one of the prisoners of La Bourbe, under the date of the 27th Messidor of the year Two (July 15th, 1794): "There was brought to us this morning a very estimable man, the Chevalier de Florian, author of 'Numa,' 'Estelle,' &c." Three days afterwards, they all assembled in the evening to hear one of their number sing a song written by the new-comer, whose companions in misfortune they held it an honour to be. It does not

* "Beneath its shadow happiness was found."

appear that Florian took part in those pale festivals of captivity. We are not told that he chatted with the gaily dressed women, or that he sat, at night time, beneath the acacia. Moreover, his detention was of short duration. He left La Bourbe a few days after the 9th Thermidor. Back in his dear retreat of Sceaux he was unable to find within himself the peace that surrounded him. A fever consumed him. At every knock at his door his agitated imagination saw patriots armed with pikes, come to arrest him. He languished on in this way for a few weeks, and died on the 29th Fructidor of the year Two (September 15th, 1794), at the age of thirty-eight. A few months afterwards Mademoiselle Sophie Le Sénéchal married an obscure but wealthy man, and, four years later, Rose Gontier married her comrade Allaire.

Such is the true Florian. He used to beat his mistress, and he did not marry Mademoiselle Sophie. But the shade of Estelle still smiles upon his tomb in the village graveyard where he rests.

ON THE INAUGURATION OF THE STATUE OF ARMAND CARREL AT ROUEN

HERE are different ways in which a member of a political party may inspire his opponents with respect. The surest way of winning it is a long, immutable, and majestic incapacity. But it is not always possible to attain it by force of talent combined with greatness of character. Carrel is a proof of this. His political enemies, though they feared him, bowed before the nobility of his soul. Carrel had been an ensign before he became a journalist. He brought with him into public life the brilliant virtues of arms. A few traits will be enough to depict his intrepidity.

The son of a cloth-merchant of Rouen, Armand Carrel was in 1820 one of the most intelligent and also one of the most erratic pupils at Saint-Cyr. His impetuosity and his elegance gave promise of a good officer. But he was not very manageable, and he also displayed his admiration for the soldiers of the Republic and of the Empire with a generous imprudence. The Commandant of the School at the time was Count Albignac de Castelnau, a brave soldier who, forgetting his honourable services in the Grand

Army, remembered only that he had emigrated in 1791. He affected to regard Liberalism as a baseness unworthy of an officer.

"Holding the opinions you do," said he once to the young friend of the brigands of the Loire, "you would do better to wield a cloth-yard at your father's counter."

Carrel replied:

"If ever, General, I again take up my father's cloth-yard it will not be to measure cloth."

Three years later, Carrel fought in Spain in the Liberal foreign legion, composed of Frenchmen and Italians, against the army of the Faith. In an engagement, the colonel commanding the legion, an Italian, thought he saw the Frenchmen beginning to give way. He galloped alongside them and cried out:

"Frenchmen, you are giving way!"

At once, Carrel, rushing in front of his chief, said to him in a loud voice:

"You lie!"

The following year, arraigned before a French Council of War, he opposed the evidence of his word of honour to the accusation brought against him.

"In your position," said the president to him, "you have no right to speak of honour."

When he heard these words, Carrel seized his chair and was on the point of hurling it at the president's head when he was dragged out of the room by the soldiers who guarded him.

The man is painted in these three anecdotes. Intrepidity was the mainspring of his soul. Thus it is not surprising that from his earliest manhood he felt a liking for the career of arms. This is not saying

that he had a vocation for the military life. The virtues needed to make him a model soldier are not, perhaps, the most brilliant, but assuredly they are not the least necessary. He did not know how to obey. The spirit of self-sacrifice was always lacking in him. He never had any notion of that sublime love of renunciation which makes good priests and good soldiers. Accordingly, we shall see that he remained only a short time in the service, and behaved himself in a manner that was far from irreproachable.

He was gazetted ensign in the year of Napoleon's death. It was a sad moment to enter the army. It is true that the law of Gouvion Saint-Cyr, passed in 1818 in spite of the opposition of the ultra-royalists, removed the power of promotion from the mere pleasure of the king, and placed it under fixed rules. It is true, also, that many officers of the Empire had returned to the Army List. But discipline was very often exercised in a spirit of hatred and rancour. Old soldiers, punished for their former glory, shook with anger even while they obeyed the sons of the *émigrés*. They heard, crying out to them, the blood of heroes, their companions, who had been unjustly done to death—Ney, the two brothers Fauchet, Labédoyère, Mouton-Duvernet, Charton, not to mention the brave Colonel Boyer de Peyreleau, condemned to capital punishment because he had defended Guadeloupe beneath the tricolour flag against the English. This army, justly irritated and desperate, full of regrets as mighty as its memories, and hating the new banners which it bore, was wrought upon by numerous secret societies organised within it by the Liberals. The *charbonnerie*, born on the classic soil of plots, in the cabins of the Abruzzi, had

established all over France those mysterious meetings which it called "sales," because originally the conspirators pretended to be charcoal-burners selling their charcoal. These conspirators and the "Chevaliers of Liberty," who were affiliated to them, were incessantly hatching military plots, seducing officers and non-commissioned officers, and persuading them to run greater risks than they were prepared to run themselves.

Carrel was then an ensign in the 29th regiment of the line, which was in garrison at Belfort and Neuf-Brisach. Very young, very enthusiastic, and as fond of danger as of liberty, he entered into a plot which had as its object to induce the garrisons of the East to revolt and proclaim a provisional government. One night he secretly left his company, which was at Neuf-Brisach, and accompanied one of the carbonari to Belfort, where the movement was to break out. But when he arrived at that town the conspiracy had been discovered and the conspirators either arrested or in flight. He returned to Neuf-Brisach at full gallop, and arrived there early in the morning, before parade. One of his biographers, after relating these facts, adds that "when an inquiry was held to discover who among the Belfort officers were conspirators, and especially to find out who it was that had gone to Neuf-Brisach from that town, nothing could be brought to light, and suspicion fell elsewhere than on Carrel, for his flippant and careless behaviour made the authorities regard him as entirely outside the intrigue." This result of his action must have been particularly painful to an honourable young man, always ready to claim the reward of his actions even if that reward were death. Besides, the Belfort conspiracy had

more lamentable consequences. The non-commissioned officers of the 45th regiment of the line, having been won over by the carbonari, conspired again. The four sergeants of La Rochelle paid with their heads for everybody else, for all were more or less in the business, even La Fayette and M. Laffitte. One would like to believe that this made a profound impression on Carrel's mind, and that a generous-hearted young man such as he was had henceforth a detestation for military conspiracies, since their most probable result is the ruin of a few unfortunates. But it must be admitted that Carrel never had a just sense of the soldier's duties. His impatience, his pride, and still more the misfortunes of the time, made him a bad officer. He never ceased to conspire. When in garrison at Marseilles he sent anonymous attacks upon his colonel to a newspaper in the town. He also wrote to the Spanish Cortes a political letter which was seized. This is conduct of which it is impossible to approve, to whatever party one belongs, for it inflicts a grave injury on the military spirit and the discipline of the army. In 1823, when the Government was preparing for the Spanish campaign, Carrel was left at Aix at the dépôt of his regiment. Giving new grounds for complaint in that town, he was ordered to be kept under close arrest. The disgrace was bitter to him. It cannot be denied that he had deserved it richly. I have before me a letter which he wrote at the time to General the Baron de Damas, who was in command of the 10th military division. Although it is rather long, I give it in its entirety, less because it has never been published than because it seems very interesting, and, above all, very instructive.

"GENERAL,

"I have received at Aix an order to keep under close arrest until the Minister gives the decision which Colonel Lachau has demanded regarding me.

"I am accused by him of having endeavoured to excite disturbances in the company to which I belong. I am ignorant of the grounds that he can have for giving any plausibility to this accusation, and I therefore dare to claim that you will be kind enough to order a prompt and severe inquiry extending from the 10th inst., the day on which the order for my departure for Aix was delivered, up to the 13th inst., the day of my departure for that town. The mere statement of the relations that have existed between me and the 5th company of the 1st battalion during these three days will prove the atrocity of a calumny, the sole object of which seems to be to bring me before a council of war under the weight of an odious prejudice.

"The officers of my company and the adjutant-major of my battalion will testify that I have not appeared at the barracks since the roll-call on the evening of the 10th, when I was present as officer of the week; and a letter which I have written to the non-commissioned officers of the 5th company will be enough to clear me from the provocations to disorder of which I am accused. The inquiry I demand cannot fail to be favourable to me, and I shall await its result before handing in my resignation, which is founded on the double injustice of which I believe I have a right to complain. I do not believe that any good reason can be alleged for sending me to the dépôt at a time when I had just left the military school, in good health, as capable of serving as any one, and firmly resolved to do my duty. No mere opinions should have barred me from a career which we are told is an honourable one, unless, indeed, vague words are to be taken as guarantees of devotion in regard to some, and as reasons for exclusion in regard to others. Dissatisfied with such causes for my exclusion, I have given evidence of it in the presence of my comrades and of others. The warmth, natural in a young man, and the bitterness that comes from a feeling of injustice, may have given a violent character to my complaints, but they have been far removed from the criminal attempts which nothing but a private desire for revenge could have invented in order to ruin me, and never has a soldier or a non-commissioned officer heard me utter those ignoble expressions from which I shall be able to clear myself at the inquiry I demand. I shall prove then, by counter-charges which I can easily establish, that the trouble now existing in the

29th regiment has neither come from me nor from the officers whose disgrace I share, and that the man who, in spite of the as yet unknown intentions of the Minister, and the consoling assurances which you yourself, General, have given us, has, in the presence of our former comrades and subordinates, described the officers sent to the dépôt as fomenters of trouble and enemies of the government, is the only person capable of estranging the regiment from its loyalty, if the devotion to the monarchy and the spirit of subordination of which it has given such admirable proofs before his arrival were not as immovable as they are. It is Colonel Lachau who has created secret coteries among us, parties that used to have no existence, and it is he who has distributed and classed individuals among these parties according to his caprice. Before he came we knew neither hatred, nor distrust, nor spying. There were no shades of opinion dividing men who served equally well. The colonel has placed himself apart from us. His scandalous harangues have always borne signs of suspicions and animosity. He has allowed couplets to be sung in his presence which were as insulting to his officers as they were basely adulatory to himself. Perhaps, General, I have said too much, but if the voices of all those whom the colonel terrorises into silence were joined with mine, you would see to what a height he has raised that terrible principle : divide in order to reign.

"I hope that you will grant my demand before the Minister's decision is given. I am ready to leave the service, but I intend first to confute my accusers. The wise moderation with which you have always commanded demands that none of the officers who have had the honour of serving under you should be victims of the dishonour that an enlightened justice can expose. Confident of this, I dare to express to you my regret at not having been summoned to serve in the same ranks as my comrades, and to pray you to believe in the feeling with which I have the honour to be

"Your very respectful and obedient

"CARREL.

"Officer attached to the dépôt of the 29th regiment of the line at Aix."

We must admit that this language is unworthy of Carrel. We are pained at hearing this officer bringing before a superior complaints against the chief whom he had secretly vilified in the newspapers.

We should like to believe that the chief whom he accuses was greatly in the wrong. It is impossible to believe that he was entirely so. It is vain to say that the times were cruel ; we can only excuse Carrel, but not absolve him. It was not for him to guarantee the regiment's devotion to the monarchy. His situation was false even if his character was frank; and his language is dictated by his situation rather than by his character. If he wished to be fair he ought not to have complained of injustice when he himself had been a traitor.

How is it that, after Neuf-Brisach and Belfort, his conscience did not tell him that there was something incompatible between him and the army of the Restoration, and that the only proper thing for him to do was to resign in silence ?

Let us hasten to say that a few days later he did resign, and that, when he was free, he threw himself into an heroic and unlucky adventure which may be condemned by patriotism but in which, nevertheless, he showed the full and unconquerable strength of his character.

As a matter of fact, while his former companions in arms were massing on the Spanish frontier to begin a war distasteful to our Liberal instincts and our feeling for the rights of peoples, but not, at least, without its political advantages, for it strengthened the government of the Bourbons and attached the army to the white standard; while the Duc d'Angoulême was preparing to cross the Bidassoa at the head of 80,000 men, Armand Carrel threw himself into a small fishing-boat which landed him at Barcelona, and from there went into the heart of Catalonia to enlist as an ensign in the regiment of French volunteers, called the regiment of Napoleon II., and

to fight in the uniform of the Old Guard, wearing the tricolor cockade, and beneath the Imperial Eagle, on behalf of the Cortes, against that army of the Faith and those very soldiers of Ferdinand VII. whom French bayonets, with the *fleur de lis* flying above them, had come to assist.

He showed the most ardent courage in that adventure. But, alas! it was against Frenchmen. His regiment was decimated and had to join itself to the Italian legion. After two days' fighting, in which the corps to which he belonged lost two-thirds of its fighting force, he and his comrades surrendered to General de Damas, who allowed them to keep their swords and the distinctive insignia of their uniform. The French Government did not think that this capitulation ought to be ratified, and Carrel was condemned to death by two courts-martial, but was definitely acquitted by a third. I shall not enter into the details of these procedures. I am not relating Carrel's life; I am only indicating some traits in that extraordinary man's character. It is a fact worth pondering upon that in 1823 it was possible for Carrel to fight against Frenchmen without any dishonour. More than one of the generals of the royal army had been in the Princes' army and had opposed the soldiers of the Republic. Had not Chateaubriand, the inspirer of the Spanish war, the Minister who rendered it inevitable, served under Condé against France? Yet Chateaubriand was a man of honour. It can be said, it is true, that the honour of Chateaubriand, a man of the old *régime*, stood in fighting for his king, whilst Armand Carrel belonged by origin and feeling to democratic France, and was therefore without excuse, since he could have no other tie than that of his country. But we

must remember that in troubled epochs duty is a thing difficult to determine. Carrel's contemporaries absolved him. Their judgment has been given. We are not in a position to revise it. Let us only rejoice in the progress of patriotic feeling which would to-day absolutely prohibit any man of honour from conduct which Carrel believed to be permissible. He himself, when he was a witness before the Court of assizes at Eure-et-Loire in 1823, having occasion to refer to his expedition in Spain, did so in terms that bore signs of a noble repentance. "Gentlemen of the jury," said he, "you know that the tricolor flag has also had its emigration, and that emigrations are not fortunate." There is nothing to add to that remark.

Moreover, Carrel made more than one mistake. But he was often heroic and he was always disinterested. This temper of mind gives a superb character even to some of his errors. He never considered his own interest. He had a magnificent contempt for what the crowd values most. "It more than once occurred," says his biographer, "that when throwing useless papers into the fire he at the same time threw in a bank-note, a thing which straitened his circumstances." Carrel was more at ease in civil life than he had been in military life. In a few years he became a great journalist. More even by force of character than by that of talent he quickly won a reputation. However, we must give high rank to his articles in the "Producteur," the "Constitutionnel," the "Revue Française," the "Revue Américaine," and the "Revue de Paris," as well as the large number published in the "National," of which he was the soul. Carrel was a very great journalist. He thought quickly and exactly, and expressed

himself with classic purity and force. Those who still remember what good writing is will admire the robust simplicity of his style.

So fine a talent was not formed without study. Carrel had read and reflected a great deal. In the fishing-boat that brought him to Spain he took with him some thirty carefully selected volumes, which he read at bivouacs, between two spells of duty, in this imitating the great captains whom he resembled in the promptness and audacity of his intelligence as well as in his firmness of heart. Thus he showed, while still young, a well-equipped mind. From his original calling he had retained a keen liking for military affairs, and although he has written with talent upon innumerable subjects bearing on politics, social economy, and literature, his best pages are inspired by the art of war. Among others the article which in 1832 he devoted to the "Mémoires de Gouvion Saint-Cyr" is a virile masterpiece which deserves to be studied and commented on in our military schools. It begins with these words: "It would be difficult to persuade men, and especially the men of our own time, who have seen many soldiers, that the art of war is perhaps that which gives the most useful practice to the mind. Yet such is the truth, and what makes this art so great is that it makes demands upon character as well as upon intellect, and that it sets in action and brings to light the entire man." I regard it as a real misfortune that I am not able to quote it in full.

Behind the writer there was felt the man. Carrel was always answerable for what he wrote. His ardent controversies led him into three duels. He took the utmost pains to lead his friends' affairs of honour to amicable conclusions, but he had less

patience when it was a question of his own. All the details of the duel that ended fatally for him have been minutely recorded. I shall only relate a few which were characteristic. When he reached the ground, he went up to M. Émile de Girardin, his opponent, and said :

"Sir, you have threatened me with a biography. The fortune of arms may be against me, and in that case you will, sir, write that biography. But if you do it honestly you will find nothing that is not honourable in my private and public life. Is that not so, sir ?"

"Yes, sir," answered M. de Girardin.

Carrel fired first, and M. de Girardin exclaimed :

"I have been hit in the thigh," and fired.

"And I in the groin," said Carrel, after he had sustained his opponent's fire.

He still had strength to go and sit down on a slope at the side of the alley, where his seconds and his doctor gave him first aid. Then they took him in their arms and carried him into an adjoining house. As he passed close by M. de Girardin he wanted to stop.

"Are you in pain, Monsieur de Girardin ?" he asked.

He died after forty-five hours of suffering, at the age of thirty-six, on July 24th, 1836. He had given, during his too short life, in spite of grave faults, an example of firm will, manly courage, and lofty intelligence. Spirits of his temper were rare in his time; perhaps they are still rarer to-day. It is possible to believe, however, that our epoch is better than his, and that it is a pleasanter one in which to live. It is less violent and less disturbed. National feeling has grown stronger. Many dividing gaps that were

formerly open have been filled. Many reconciliations have been made. Others will take place gradually. Our life is easier and our duties are more clearly defined. In our present regularity even average people are able to guard against errors into which the best of men were formerly led.

RECOLLECTIONS OF LOUIS DE RONCHAUD

AM deeply grieved to hear this morning that M. de Ronchaud has just died at Saint-Germain. I have known him since my childhood. His honest face is one of my earliest recollections. I still see him as he was about 1860, very fair, with his hair lying back from his forehead, blue eyes, an air of profound gravity and gentleness, and the simplicity of all great souls. I still hear him speaking of the arts of Greece and of Florence in the tones of one of the most disinterested lovers of their beauty. He was then engaged upon his "Phidias"; it was the time when M. de Lamartine devoted to him a whole number of the "Cours familier de Littérature."

As far as I remember, the picture of my friend, as traced by the great poet, was vague, ideal, Elysian, and yet like him. "M. de Ronchaud," said he, "would in other days have been an orator as he is now a poet and an historian of art." In order to be a perfect orator it would be necessary for M. de Ronchaud to have lived in the age of fables, and for a god to have come and unloosened his tongue; for he spoke with his teeth closed, and in a hoarse, monotonous voice. But he was eloquent by force

of thought, by sincerity of expression, and by the incomparable beauty of his glance.

His conversation was one of my earliest delights. I was still a child. Very often, when I came back from school, I heard him speaking in the midst of the little circle that used to assemble each evening in my father's book-shop. He charmed me. I did not understand all he said. But when one is very young one does not need to understand everything in order to admire everything. I used to feel that he was in possession of the good and the beautiful. I was sure that he shared the tables of the gods and the couches of the goddesses.

In class, upon the following day, I would come to the conclusion that my modest teacher did not belong to that divine race, and I used to despise him on that account. I was shocked to see him so ignorant of the beauty of antiquity. In this way M. de Ronchaud's influence made me miss a number of classes and spend my time in the Louvre before a metope of the Parthenon. But, as M. Renan says, we can win our salvation in different ways.

M. de Ronchaud knew how to love. That is a secret which he possessed all his life long, and one which prevented him from growing old. All his life long, M. de Ronchaud loved poetry, art, and liberty.

Under the Empire, he used to frequent Madame d'Agoult's salon, the centre of the republican opposition. He himself was an ardent republican. I still remember an article which he contributed to the "Revue de Paris" in 1856 on M. de Lamartine's "César," and another study of the same personage by M. Troplong. The divine Julius used to pass

many uncomfortable moments at that time. He was a target for all the ill compliments that could not be paid to Napoleon III. M. de Ronchaud conformed to this usage. In covert terms he blamed the august son of Venus for having brought about the 2nd of December. I believe, indeed, that there was a prosecution on account of this article, for it excited great enthusiasm among my class-mates. During our recreation we used to recite tirades taken out of it, and it would not be impossible even to-day for me to recall some of its phrases to my memory. "However great the Cæsars may be in the opinion of their flatterers, even if they had made a compact with victory, and the entire world were theirs, we" &c. &c. It was very naïf, but how fine it seemed to us!

M. de Ronchaud had the inward genius and the soul of a great poet. He felt like Lamartine, but expression was not always at the service of his thought. He brought even to his verses that negligence, that carelessness, that forgetfulness of self, which his friends knew well, and which extended to his whole person; for they knew that he was very careless of all that concerned himself, and that he left it solely to his natural nobility to repair the disorder of his dress. His verses, likewise, are unpolished, and beautiful with a natural beauty. I am thinking particularly of his last collection, the "Poèmes de la Mort." It was doubtless after reading this book that M. D. Nisard said that, if he were more chastened in form, M. de Ronchaud would be one of the first poets of this age. There is, indeed, in that collection, a poem of fifteen hundred lines, "la Mort du Centaure," the vigorous inspiration of which one cannot feel without a shudder. I will quote the lament of old Chiron, regretting his youth and

the youth of things which have departed in its company:

"Encore un jour de plus levé sur l'univers !
Que j'en ai vu depuis que mes yeux sont ouverts !
Que d'aurores depuis cette joyeuse aurore
Où ma course à travers l'air brillant et sonore
Vint réveiller l'écho dormant dans ces vallons !
Les jours comme aujourd'hui ne me semblaient pas longs.
Étonné de moi-même et de mon être étrange,
De l'homme et du cheval mysterieux mélange,
. . . . .
Curieux d'inconnu, l'âme de désirs pleine
J'embrassais d'un regard, j'aspirais d'une haleine
Et l'air et la lumière, et la terre et le ciel.
Tout était liberté, joie, amour, lait et miel.
Cette immortalité, qui maintenant me pèse,
Je la portais superbe, avec un cœur plein d'aise.
Et, sur la terre en fleurs, sous les cieux éclatants,
Libre, je m'emparais de l'espace et du temps.
Un jour, je rencontrai Pholoë sur la cime
Où m'avait emporté mon vertige sublime.
Superbe, le front haut, ses longs cheveux épars,
Les seins au vent, le ciel était dans ses regards.
Ou eût dit à la voir, dans sa grâce ingénue,
Une fille du ciel, une enfant de la nue,
Ou la divinité sauvage du vieux mont.
Moitié femme, moitié cavale, son beau front
Rayonnait dans l'air pur de lumière et de gloire,
Et son pied frémissant creusait la terre noire.
Que je la trouvai belle ! Elle me regarda.
. . . . .
A mon désir muet son âme fut séduite ;
Et tous deux emportés par une même fuite,
Nous allâmes cacher dans les bois nos amours." *

This poem, "la Mort du Centaure," is inspired by a noble philosophy. I had the pleasure, a few days ago, of dining with a very great sage, and I

* "Yet another day risen upon the universe !
How many have I seen since first I opened my eyes !
How many a dawn since that glorious dawn

learned from him the philosophy which it is best to have if we desire not to be too much the dupe of life and things. "Pantheism," said the sage to me, "Pantheism for yourself and deism for the others." M. de Ronchaud never knew this prudential philosophy. He was a pantheist for others as well as for himself. He professed a cheerful obedience to the eternal laws. He openly believed in the good deities who are hidden in nature. Of all philosophical doctrines, pantheism is assuredly that which is most favourable to poetry. M. de Ronchaud owes his

When, cleaving through the brilliant and resounding air,
I went forth awaking the slumbering echo in these valleys!
Days did not then, as now, seem long.
Amazed at myself and at my wondrous being,
Of man and of horse a mysterious union.

. . . .

Seeking the unknown, my soul full of desire,
I embraced all in one glance, I drank all in with one breath,
Air and light, earth and heaven.
All was liberty, joy, love, milk and honey.
That immortality which now weighs upon me,
I then bore in pride and with a heart full of pleasure.
And, on the flowering earth, beneath the dazzling skies,
Free, I possessed myself of space and time.
One day I met Pholoë on an eminence
Whither my sublime intoxication had carried me.
Majestic, with uplifted brow, her long hair flowing,
Her bosom in the wind, heaven in her glance.
One would have said at seeing her unstudied grace
That she was a daughter of the skies, a child of the clouds,
Or the wild deity of the mountain.
Half woman, half horse, her noble brow
Radiant in the pure air with light and glory,
And her quivering hoof spurned the dark earth.
How beautiful I thought her! She turned her gaze upon me.

. . . . . .

By my unspoken desire her spirit was taken captive,
And in a single flight we both were borne
Into the woods to hide our amorous toying."

finest verses to pantheism. That poem of Chiron from which I have quoted is an admirable canticle sung to divine nature. The old centaur is the symbol of humanity, and when the oracle of Dodona says to the brutish yet noble archer:

> "Tes parents
> Sont dans les flots et les cieux transparents,
> Et tout la nature, alliée à ta race,
> Dans sa maternité t'enveloppe et t'embrasse!"*

it is our own origin that the poet teaches us.

Chiron, satiated with life, is athirst for death. He knows that it is good, that it is necessary, that it is divine, since it is natural. He aspires to enter again into the great whole.

This thought of the centaur was, in truth, that of M. de Ronchaud himself. As he was very simple-minded, he believed in the goodness of nature, and this illusion gave fragrance to his life.

M. de Ronchaud published in 1861 a book entitled "Phidias, sa Vie et ses Ouvrages." It was in London, gazing at the marbles that have been torn from the Parthenon, that he had the first idea for that book. As he beheld those beautiful relics, he was seized by a generous emotion, and, thinking of Greek art and its peaceful wonders, he exclaimed with Chandler: "That banquet for the eyes has disappeared, and nothing of it remains but a dream!" The account he has given of his visit to the Elgin Hall in the British Museum bears the impress of a pious and ardent admiration: "It seems," says M. de Ronchaud, "that we have before our eyes the

> * "Thy kin
> Are in the waves and the transparent skies;
> Nature herself, with whom thy race is one,
> Envelops and enfolds thee in her motherhood!"

broken fragments of an antique lyre; we attempt to piece them together in thought, and to evoke again the genius which animated its silent strings. But the scattered limbs of the poet will never be united again. Orpheus' head, stranded upon a barbarous shore, sends forth only a confused and plaintive melody.

"And yet what a beauty breathes in these ruins of beauty! Nowhere does one better feel the power of art and genius than before these ruins, from which nothing has been able to efface the imprint of the hand that was formerly placed upon them and gave them their form and their life. The form has been shattered, but the life still breaks forth from these scattered relics. Over this creation, which has half returned to the chaos whence genius summoned it, the breath that formerly gave it birth still hovers; and at times it even seems as if one is going to see it arising again in its glorious fulness. But soon we perceive how powerless is imagination to restore these masterpieces of antique art. Irreparable regret, and attraction towards an insoluble problem, thus add to the beauty of these statues the poetry of mystery and infinity, the only charm which they lacked in the time of their glory. The feeling which they excite arises from tenderness and admiration for human beauty, enthusiasm for genius, respect for antiquity, the sadness that belongs to ruins, curiosity in the presence of an enigma, and disquiet before an unrealisable ideal."*

This book, so ardently conceived, was executed with laborious care. When it appeared, it represented the state of knowledge at the time. We must not complain if thirty-seven years of archæological

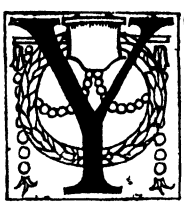
* "Phidias," p. 212–213.

labours and excavations in the soil of Greece have put it a little out of date. M. de Ronchaud was preparing a new and completely revised edition a short time before his death. It is to be hoped that this will be published soon under the care of some pious editor.

It was his noble and disinterested labours in the history of art that caused M. de Ronchaud to be chosen for the post of Administrator of the National Museums. Instances of such a choice are rare enough for us to congratulate those who made it. We can say that M. de Ronchaud honoured the position he held, and that, even if he had not all the special aptitudes of a perfect Administrator, he did not cease to show, during his too short stay at the Louvre, the same ardent and enlightened love of the good and the beautiful that inspired his whole life.

He carries away with him in death the purest and noblest visions that the masterpieces of art have ever imprinted on an elevated soul. He leaves us some admirable verses, some pages in which enthusiasm is joined with knowledge, and the memory of a noble life.

"LA TERRE"



OU know that M. Zola has just undergone the same treatment as the patriarch Noah. Five of his spiritual sons have, while he slept, committed against him the sin of Ham. These accursed children are MM. Paul Bonnetain, J.-H. Rosny, Lucien Descaves, Paul Margueritte, and Gustave Guiches. They have publicly mocked at their father's nakedness. M. Fernand Xau, imitating Shem's piety, has stretched his mantle over the old man as he slept. That is why he shall be blessed for ever and ever. Thus the ancient law is the image of the new, and M. Émile Zola is indeed He who had been foretold by the prophets.

All the newspapers have published the literary manifesto of MM. Gustave Guiches, Paul Margueritte, Lucien Descaves, J.-H. Rosny, and Paul Bonnetain. This is how it appreciates the master's new novel, "La Terre": "Not only is its observation superficial, its procedure antiquated, and its narrative destitute of anything characteristic, but the note of indecency is sounded still deeper, sinking to such a level of obscenity, that, at times, one seems to be standing before a cess-pool. The Master has sunk to the very depths of uncleanness."

That is what the Five say. Their declaration has caused some surprise. There are at least two of them who have no right to cast the first stone. M. Bonnetain is the author of a novel that is not usually regarded as chaste. He replies, it is true, that, having begun in the way that M. Zola ends, he intends to end in the way that M. Zola began. But the manifesto itself is not of a sort to which one can take no exception. It contains comments on the physiological state of the author of "La Terre" that pass the bounds of legitimate criticism. To explain the work by the man is an excellent procedure when we are dealing with the "Misanthrope" or the "Esprit des Lois," but it cannot be applied to the works of contemporaries without some inconvenience. M. Zola's novels fall within the province of criticism, and you will see in a moment whether I am afraid to say what I think about them. But M. Zola's private life ought to be absolutely respected, and we must not search in it for an explanation of the obscenities that he displays in his books. We have no wish to know whether it is from inclination or from an interest in the subject that M. Zola concedes so much to lubricity. Finally, the manifesto ends with a recommendation to readers, which, coming from young novelists, does not seem entirely disinterested. "The public judgment," the Five have said, "should direct its whole artillery against 'La Terre,' and not waste itself by a scattering fire upon the sincere books of to-morrow." Evidently these gentlemen have some volumes in the press. I do not know which to admire most in this recommendation, its astuteness or its ingenuousness.

The Five did not wait to know what the end of the

book would be before coming to a decision in regard to "La Terre." M. Zola has complained of this. It is true that, as a rule, before judging of a work we ought to wait until it is finished. But in this case we have no ordinary work. "La Terre" has neither beginning nor middle. M. Zola, whatever he may do, cannot give it an end. For this reason, following the example of those gentlemen, I shall permit myself to give my opinion of it at once. I stopped reading it at the passage where La Grande, a peasant ninety years old, is raped by her grandson, as is related in the ninety-sixth instalment. I therefore warn you that what I am going to say only applies to the events preceding that incident of rural life.

The subject of the book, as the title indicates, is the earth. According to M. Zola the earth is a woman or a female: in his view it is all one. He shows us "old men worn out in impregnating her." He describes for us peasants who desire "to penetrate and fructify her womb," who love her "during that warm intimacy of every hour," and who breathe "with a thorough masculine joy the odour of her impregnation."

That is brutal rhetoric, but still it is rhetoric. Moreover, the whole book is full of well-worn episodes badly reproduced—working at night, the haymaking, the rustic feast, the harvest, the vintage, the hail, the storm—all these have been already sung by Chênedollé with a juster feeling for nature and for the peasant: the sower, whose "majestic gesture" has been shown us by Victor Hugo; the cow going to the bull, about which M. Maurice Rollinat has written a vigorous poem. Have you by any chance read the "Prædium Rusticum"? It is a poem in Latin verse composed

in imitation of Virgil by an eighteenth-century Jesuit for his pupils. Well, M. Zola's book made me think of Father Vanière's, because there is a certain fundamental flatness of style which is common to both. Nothing in these pages, though they are written by a pseudo-naturalist, shows direct observation. In them we feel neither man nor nature to be alive. The figures are painted according to formulas of the schools that seem out-dated to-day. What are we to say of the notary "drowsy from the digestion of the excellent luncheon that he had just finished"? of the curé "in the black fluttering of his soutane," of the house which "was like those very old women whose backs are bent double"? of the "pleasant and rhythmical murmur of the dung that had been spread out," of that "drowsy savour that ascended from the large green pieces"? Do we see the peasants sitting down to a meal any better when we are told that "emotion bathed their faces"? M. Zola has scarcely put anything into this new book except his faults. The most singular of them is the impression of looking at things through the eye of a fly, that eye with so many facets, which shows objects multiplied as if in a cut topaz. For example, he ends the description, in other respects exact and vivid enough, of a market in the chief town of a canton by this inconceivable stroke: "Great yellow spaniels ran away howling, with crushed paws." Thus, by an hallucination, he sees myriads of sowers at the same time. "They multiplied," he says, "they swarmed like black, industrious ants, brought into the air by some huge travail, desperately bent upon a measureless task gigantic when compared with their littleness; and yet, even in the most distant of them, one observed that persistent gesture, always the same, that infatuation of insects

struggling with the immensity of the soil, and conquering both space and life."

M. Zola does not show us the peasants distinctly. What is still more serious is that he does not make them speak as they should. He lends them the violent loquacity of town workers.

Peasants speak little. They are inclined to be sententious and often express very general ideas. Those of the regions where a dialect is not spoken have, however, pithy expressions which retain the savour of the soil. There is nothing of this in the speech which M. Zola puts into their mouths.

M. Zola* makes the rustics speak in a style of prolix obscenity and picturesque lubricity which

* I am happy to bring forward in support of what I advance a documentary proof, the authority of which is beyond dispute. It is a letter dated from Rambervillers, and signed by a country doctor who for twenty years has attended the peasants of the Vosges. Here it is:

"August 28, 1887.

"SIR,

"I have just read your 'Vie Littéraire' in the 'Temps' of August 28th. Will you allow a country doctor who has lived with the peasants for twenty years to give you his view of their morals? One fact stands out in the most striking manner, and it is that the peasant is never foul in his language. Always, when led to say anything risky, he employs the formula 'saving your respect.' Never does he, as M. Zola contends, relate a story in rather broad style. He always does so with reticences, with oratorical precautions, with paraphrases. And for this reason. The fact he relates is certain to be a *personality*, and, in this respect, the peasant always shows extraordinary prudence. It is not the peasant whom we can accuse of calling a spade a spade. Quite the contrary, we can say of him that speech has been given in order to disguise thought.

"As you rightly say, he speaks in maxims and axioms; and if he tells a loose story at the public-house when his tongue is loosened by wine or alcohol, he glosses over his narrative. Never, as you justly say, does he employ the language of the slums.

"This does not imply that I wish to put forward my peasants

they never employ. I have sometimes conversed with Norman peasants, especially with old men. Their language is slow and sententious. It abounds in precepts. I do not say that they speak as well as Alcinous and the old men in Homer; far from it! But they recall in some slight degree that grave tone and didactic style. As for the younger peasants, they show a rough animation and a clumsy phraseology when they chat together in the public-house. Their imagination is narrow, simple, and not obscene. Their longest stories are of heroism, not of love, and tell of violent blows given or received, examples of strength and audacity, great feats of fighting or of drinking.

I regret to have to add that when M. Zola speaks in his own person he is cumbrous and very tame. He fatigues one by the tiresome monotony of his

as models of chastity or of virtue. There are many things to be said on this head. But what I have read in 'La Terre' proves to me—and I have lived for twenty years among peasants—that M. Zola has never associated with our country folk.

"One finds among them an excessive feeling of modesty which the doctor is in a better position for observing than anybody else, a feeling which even goes to the extent of concealing, at the risk of losing health and life, things which the dweller in the town or the slum does not hesitate for a moment to reveal.

"That the peasant lives with the animals of his stables is no reason why he should be unclean in his person or in his speech. If M. Zola had ever visited a stable or a cattle-shed he would have discovered that the peasant places his whole pride in having his animals clean, and his stable well swept out; and I do not see that there is anything indecent or prurient about a dung-heap. Of course the peasant may be neglectful of a regard for cleanliness during the rush of gathering in the crops at haymaking or at harvest . . . but who could blame him for this? I must come to an end, for on this subject I could go on for ever.

"The peasant has a regard for his dignity; he has modesty. He does not employ crude expressions. The reasons that make him act in this way matter little. The fact is established. And

formulas: "his tender flesh of a colossus,"—"his agility of a thin dark man,"—"her fat gossip's gaiety,"—"the nakedness of her stout girl's body."

There is a beauty in the peasant. The brothers Lenain, Millet, and Bastien-Lepage have seen it. M. Zola does not see it. The mournful gravity of face, the solemn rigidity that incessant labour gives to the body, the harmonies between man and earth, the grandeur of poverty, the sacredness of toil, of the noblest of all toils, that of the plough, nothing of all this touches M. Zola. The grace of things escapes him, beauty, majesty, simplicity, vie with one another in avoiding him. When he names a village, a river, a man, he chooses the ugliest name; the man he calls Macqueron, the village Rognes, the river the Aigre. Yet there are many pretty names of towns and rivers. The streams above all, retain, in

this fact proves how little M. Zola knows about the people whom he aims at describing.

"Yours, &c.,

"DR. A. FOURNIER.

"P.S.—Excuse the want of connection in this letter, which I have written hastily."

This letter reminds me of what was said to me one day by a young peasant girl of the neighbourhood of Saint-Lô. It was a Sunday, and she came out from mass, very displeased. She was asked what it was that had offended her, and she answered: "Monsieur le curé has not spoken well. He said: 'You scour your kettles and you do not scour your souls.' That was badly said: a soul is not to be compared with a kettle, and it is no way to speak of Christians." The village curé had employed a proverbial expression, sanctioned by long usage, and one which the dictionaries mention as a very old locution. However, his flock was wounded by it. My young peasant was hurt at hearing a vulgar phrase fall from the holy pulpit. The poor child assuredly had not refined taste, but she had delicacy. We are, in this instance, far away from M. Zola's abominable peasants.

memory of the nymphs who formerly bathed in them, many charming vocables, which sing as they flow from the lips. But M. Zola ignores the beauty of words as he ignores the beauty of things.

He has no taste, and I have come to believe that want of taste is that mysterious sin of which the Scripture speaks, the greatest of sins, the only one which will not be forgiven. Do you require an example of this irremediable infirmity? M. Zola shows us in "La Terre" a debauched peasant, a drunkard and a poacher, whose pointed beard, long hair, and swimming eyes have caused him to be nicknamed Jesus Christ. M. Zola never fails to call him by this nickname. By this means he obtains phrases like "It was Jesus Christ who seized hold of Flora and asked her for a litre of rum"—"How Jesus Christ made fun of the little family party!"—"Jesus Christ was very flatulent." One does not need to be a Catholic or a Christian to feel the unseemliness of this procedure.

But the worst fault of "La Terre" is its gratuitous obscenity. M. Zola's peasants are infected with satyriasis. All the demons of the night, whom the monks fear, and whom they exorcise by singing the Breviary hymns at vespers, seat themselves until dawn beside the beds of the agriculturists of Rognes. That unhappy village is full of incest. Work in the fields, far from quieting the senses, exasperates them. In every thicket there, a farm-labourer is hugging "an odoriferous girl as if he were a maddened animal."

Grandmothers are raped there, as I have already regretfully told you, by their own grandchildren. M. Zola, who is a philosopher as well as a scholar, explains that the blame must be attributed to the hay and the dung-heap.

It has pleased M. Zola to lodge in this village of Rognes a married couple, M. and Madame Georges, who have gained a position of honest comfort by keeping a "Maison Tellier" at Chartres, which they have handed over to their son-in-law, and over which they still solicitously watch.

It is M. Guy de Maupassant's well-known story, but amplified, magnified in an absurd manner, and set out in sickening style. Madame Georges has brought to Rognes an old cat which she had at Chartres. This cat, "caressed," says M. Zola, "by the plump hands of five or six generations of women, . . . familiar with shuttered rooms . . . mute, . . . dreamy, . . . seeing everything through the pupils of eyes which contracted in their golden circle." And M. Zola does not stop there. He transforms this cat into some monstrous and mystic figure of Oriental genius, into a sort of old man resembling Gustave Moreau's "Herod," floating in voluptuousness like a fly in honey. Then, when we have done with the cat, it is a ring, a simple wedding-ring of gold, worn on Madame Charles's finger, which is enchanted and relates unmentionable things.

M. Zola has on this occasion filled up the measure of indecency and coarseness. By an invention which insults woman in all that is most sacred in her, M. Zola has imagined a peasant woman being brought to bed whilst her cow is calving. . . . The crudeness of the details goes beyond anything that can be imagined.

He has offended nature not less in the animal than in the woman, and I am angry with him for having polluted the innocent cow by pitilessly displaying the misery and the suffering of its maternity. May I give you the reason for my indignation? Some

years ago I happened to see a calf born in a stable. The mother suffered cruelly and in silence. When it was born she turned towards it, her fine eyes full of tears, and, stretching out her neck, she spent a long time licking the little being that had caused her so much pain. That was a beautiful and touching sight, I can assure you, and it is a disgrace to profane these august mysteries. M. Zola says of one of his peasants that he had "an infatuation for filth." It is an infatuation which M. Zola lends to-day to all his personages without distinction. By writing "La Terre" he has given us the "Georgics" of filth.

That M. Zola formerly had, I do not say a great talent, but a copious talent, is possible. That he still retains some remnants of it is credible, but I confess that I have the greatest difficulty in thinking so. His work is evil, and he is one of those unhappy beings of whom one can say that it would be better had he never been born.

I will not, certainly, deny his detestable fame. No one before him had raised so lofty a pile of ordure. That is his monument, and its greatness cannot be disputed. Never had man made a similar effort to debase humanity, to insult all images of beauty and of love, to deny all that is good and all that is worthy. Never had man gone so far in disowning the ideal of man. There is in us all, in the small as well as in the great, in the humble as well as in the lofty, an instinct of beauty, a desire for all that adorns and beautifies, and this, spread throughout the world, makes the charm of life. M. Zola does not know it. There is in man an infinite need for loving which makes him divine. M. Zola does not know it. Desire and

modesty are sometimes charmingly blended in human souls. M. Zola does not know it. There are on earth magnificent forms and noble thoughts. M. Zola does not know it. Even many weaknesses, many errors, and many faults have a touching beauty of their own. Grief is sacred. The sanctity of tears is at the base of all religions. Misery should suffice to make a man august in the sight of men. M. Zola does not know it. He does not know that the graces are seemly, that philosophic irony is indulgent and gentle, and that human things inspire only two feelings in well-regulated minds: admiration or pity. M. Zola is entitled to the deepest pity.*

* I learn at the present moment that the translation of "La Terre" is forbidden in Russia. M. Louis Ulbach, who quotes this news, adds: "We may be certain that this work, so insulting to France, will be translated and commented upon in Germany." And M. Ulbach protests with an energy which I should like to be able to equal.

"No," he says, "No. This novel is a calumny, an insult to the majority of Frenchmen.

"With his theory of heredity, M. Zola would have a difficulty in explaining how these peasants are the fathers of what is worthiest, most intelligent, and bravest in France. Which of us has not in our veins some peasant blood, and which of us does not admire these resolute toilers and look on them as an example, as a tradition to follow?

"To deny the peasant's delicacy of feeling is to deny evidence; to deny his courage is to deny France.

"After the war, after the *franc-tireurs*, after the heroism that has been shown, such books are pleasant to our enemies, but are insulting to our patriotism.

"I described, a few days ago, a noble sight I had witnessed, a brigade manœuvring with admirable discipline and superb dash. It was a manifestation of the French peasantry.

"I know that the simple article which I wrote on that subject has been read in the barracks of the brigade; I know that the number of the 'Petit Marseillais' containing it has been posted up, and I will even add, by way of a boast, not of what I wrote, but of what I thought, that the general has had read

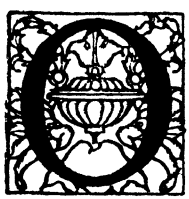
to the Minister of War this testimony of a spectator, and that the latter said :

" ' That is the note I like to hear and which the soldiers know how to appreciate.'

" Go then to those soldiers who are ready to be killed for France, who have learned to read in their village or their barracks, who are developing notions of national honour, go to those heroes in embryo and read to them a book which pretends that they are victims of social inequality ; that they are sons of scoundrels on their fathers' side and of women without morals and without shame on their mothers' side ; that they have the appetites of the dung-heap ; that they have no ideal feeling ; that they are the product of incest or, at the least, of debauchery, the excrement of France heaped upon a pile of excrements !

" You will then see with what contempt they will receive you, for they are Frenchmen who are animated by the pure French sap."

M. THIERS AS HISTORIAN*



N Saturday last the monument erected in the cemetery of Père-Lachaise to the memory of M. Thiers was unveiled in the presence of his family and some friends. This private ceremony commemorates the tenth anniversary of M. Thiers' death, which took place at Saint-Germain en Laye on September 3rd, 1877. Ten years! posterity has already begun for him. It is interesting to inquire how this illustrious man's books bear the test of time.

The "Histoire de la Révolution" and the "Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire," by M. Thiers, were, for more than thirty years, the books most read in France, if we except "Les Trois Mousquetaires," which, it will be admitted, does not belong to the same class. It is said that during the past ten years readers of these works have grown fewer in number. I am inclined to believe this to be the case, but it is certain that they are still very numerous.

As for the judgments passed upon them to-day—I am speaking of judgments entitled to some authority—they are very diverse. Let us admit that the new historical school is not very favourable to them. But

* On the inauguration of the monument to M. Thiers at Père-Lachaise.

we must beware of judgments that are too general, and examine things a little more in detail.

It was in 1823 that M. Thiers began his "Histoire de la Révolution." For that great epoch only the evidence of contemporaries was available at the time. MM. Berville and Barrière were publishing the voluminous collection of "Mémoires" which bears their name. Every generous reader was moved to the depths of his soul by those burning pages, written in prison or in exile, under the shock of proscription or of death, by those public testaments of Madame Roland and so many other heroic victims. Already the legend of the Girondins was beginning to grow. M. Thiers' book was conceived in the fire of this enthusiasm.

He was not prepared for his task either by prolonged study or by grave meditation. M. Thiers was still very young, and he showed more intellectual petulance than depth of reflection. This little man, intoxicated by the heady novelty of life, asked of the world pleasure in preference to power. He was in the habit, it is said, of giving suppers which were ill-suited to his delicate temperament, and of riding on Ibrahim, his piebald horse, though not without a certain amount of risk. However, he inspired no confidence in the minds of publishers. When he suggested to Lecointe and Durey a history of the Revolution, the plan of which he had in his head, those gentlemen hesitated. They wanted a work of the sort as a continuation to Anquetil, but they did not dare to entrust it to an unknown writer. At last, after a sufficient amount of reflection, they accepted M. Thiers' offer on the condition that the book should bear Félix Bodin's name on its title-page as well as his own. This Félix Bodin, who

acted as guarantor for M. Thiers, was not much older than he, but was known as an historian. He wrote historical abridgments, and he also got others to write them. His industry prospered. The chances are that if one happens to be looking over old books on the quays one will find some of his abridgments in the twopenny box. Those of the history of France and of the history of England are by Félix Bodin himself. Armand Carrel and Amédée Thierry both commenced author in the warehouse of this manufacturer of histories.

The first two volumes of the "Histoire de la Révolution" bore the names of Félix Bodin and A. Thiers. It does not seem that Félix Bodin contributed to them anything more than his name. These two volumes were favourably received by the public. They embraced the whole period of the Constituent Assembly, and a great part of that of the Legislative Assembly. Their success can be easily explained. They appeared as the first attempt at a general history of those events which changed France and moved the world; the authors, or, more properly speaking, the author, before any other writer, passed judgment on the Revolution in the name of the young generation which was the product of it. To-day, these two volumes appear a little thin. The other nine, bearing M. Thiers' name alone, were published 1824–1827. They are far superior. M. Thiers had learned many things in a few months. He had seen, at Manuel's and at M. Lafitte's, old members of the Constituent Assembly, adherents of the Mountain who had escaped the Convention, survivors of the Five Hundred, of the Legislative Body, and of the Tribunate, old generals of the Republic, and army contractors; he had measured

all these ruins, questioned all these shades; he had even laboured at the art of war with Jomini and at finance with Baron Louis.

He listened to these witnesses of the past as well as he could, for he was not naturally a good listener. But above all he divined them; that was the art in which he always excelled. The third volume already bears evidence of this intercourse with men and this practice in affairs so indispensable to the historian. It is informed, luminous, alive. Somebody has well said of M. Thiers that he reaches the Revolution simultaneously with the men of Marseilles themselves, on the eve of August the 10th. But the source of his inspiration did not lie altogether in the study of the past. He did not live shut up with his work. Present affairs engaged at least as much of his attention as the memories of the Convention. In 1824, the leader of the ultra-Royalist faction had ascended the throne. What animated M. Thiers with a spirit whose ardour passed into his book, were the Villèle Ministry, the law of sacrilege, the thousand million of francs bestowed on the *émigrés*, the censorship, the attempt made by the Government to return to the old *régime*. His history betrays the time in which it was written. Although purely narrative, it breathes forth the love of threatened institutions and an obstinate zeal on behalf of achievements that had not yet passed out of the region of controversy. M. Thiers left to his friend Mignet, whose "Précis" appeared in 1824, the task of composing a dogmatic history; he himself only related and expounded. But with what vivacity! His active mind seems to set in action the events which it narrates.

I have just reopened this book of my youth. I confess that I have been entranced, and that I have

had to go on to the end. One is carried away as if by a stream which flows smoothly between level banks. One never notices any shock when the scene or the personages are changed, for the historian, though always rapid, is never abrupt. And how excellent are the chapters on finance: assignats, the law of maximum, forced loans, the institution of the Great Ledger! * What lucid expositions of the events of war! How he makes one understand the starting-point, the prosecution, the minor events, and the climax of a campaign!

His philosophy has been called in question, but to do this is sheer loss of time, for he has none. He is neither a fatalist, as has been charged against him, nor a believer in a Providential order. He has himself, in one of his articles in the "National," declared with all the firmness that belongs to sincere convictions that "There are only men and the passions of men." He has also said: "We are all men, and the condition is a hard one." He wants the Revolution to succeed; he wants this at any cost. It is in this sense that, after having bewailed the Girondins who died for it, he adds: "We could only place above them a member of the Mountain who had decided for revolutionary methods from policy alone and not from the impulse of hate." That is far from being philosophy and is scarcely moral. How far away we are here from M. Quinet, who utters laments as soon as he sees the Revolution turn aside from the rules of humanitarian philosophy! But philosophy and morality are not the essential parts of the historian's art.

* Assignats: paper money secured on State property. Law of Maximum: prohibited merchants from charging beyond a certain price for the necessaries of life. Great Ledger: *Grand livre:* list of the creditors of the State.

M. Thiers' accuracy has been questioned. He has been blamed because, on more than one occasion, relying on the authority of the "Moniteur," he has confused Maximilien Robespierre with Robespierre the Younger; he has been upbraided for saying that Couthon, who was a cripple, "flung himself" into the tribune. A number of mistakes have been pointed out in his book, but upon the whole no serious errors. His gravest faults in this respect would be mere peccadilloes with Michelet. Besides, no one can write a general history without slipping into a great number of inaccuracies. The question is whether general histories ought to be written. The fashion for them seems in our day to have passed away.

The scholars of the new school who are now devoting themselves to the study of the Revolution are more inclined to publish documents than to make use of them. They proscribe all general histories except those of Michelet, and these appear to them in the light of epic poems, where every licence is a poetic licence. They give us to understand that it would be imprudent to write anything about the great epoch until all the papers preserved in the public depositories are printed, a business which will take two or three hundred years more. In the meantime they hardly allow M. Sorel and M. Chuquet to treat of external relations and campaigns. The Municipal Council of Paris has ordered an extensive publication of unprinted documents, and the business is being pressed forward with great activity. M. Maurice Tourneux has been given, as his share of the undertaking, a work before which a Benedictine monk would have quailed.

All this is excellent. But if we take into consideration that the printed records run to about

fifty thousand volumes, and that the unpublished documents are even more numerous still, we shall despair of ever knowing the history of the Revolution. Arising out of this subject, allow me to tell you an anecdote which the Abbé Blanchet has already told, and much better than I can tell it. But, not having his book at hand, I am compelled to tell it as well as I can. I dedicate it to M. F. A. Aulard, who, with unwearied zeal, is collecting documents to be employed in the history of the epoch to which he has attached his name and his fortune.

When the young prince, who had been a disciple of Zeb, succeeded his father on the throne of Persia, he summoned all the learned men in his kingdom, and, when they were assembled, he said to them :

"Doctor Zeb, my master, has taught me that sovereigns would be less exposed to error if they were enlightened by the example of the past. For this reason I wish to study the annals of the peoples. I order you to compose a universal history and to neglect nothing to make it complete."

The learned men promised to satisfy the king's desire. They withdrew, and immediately set to work. At the end of thirty years they presented themselves before the king, followed by a caravan composed of twelve camels, each loaded with five hundred volumes.

The chief of them, having prostrated himself on the steps of the throne, spoke in these terms :

"Sire, the Academicians of your kingdom have the honour to lay at your feet the universal history which they have composed for Your Majesty. It comprises six thousand volumes, and contains all that it has been possible for us to collect touching the customs of peoples and the vicissitudes of empires.

We have inserted in it those ancient chronicles that have happily been preserved, and we have illustrated them by abundant notes on geography, chronology, and diplomacy. The prolegomena alone form a camel's load, and the paralipomena are with difficulty borne by another camel."

The king answered:

"Gentlemen, I am greatly obliged to you for the trouble you have taken. But I am greatly occupied by the cares of government. Besides, I have grown older whilst you were working. I am past by ten years what a poet calls the middle of the pathway of life, and, even supposing that I die of old age, I cannot reasonably hope to have still time to read so long a history. It will be deposited among the archives of the kingdom. Be good enough to make me a summary of it, better proportioned to the brevity of human existence."

The Academicians of Persia worked for another twenty years. Then they brought to the king fifteen hundred volumes on three camels.

"Sire," said the chief in a voice enfeebled by age and toil, "here is our new work. We believe that we have omitted nothing essential from it."

"It may be so," answered the king, "but I will not read it. I am old. Lengthy undertakings do not suit my age; abridge it still more, and do not delay."

They delayed so little that at the end of ten years they came back, followed by a single camel bearing five hundred volumes.

"I flatter myself," said the chief, "that we have been concise."

"You have, but not concise enough," replied the king. "I am at the end of my life. Abridge, if you wish me to know the history of men before I die."

At the end of five years the chief was again seen before the palace. Walking on crutches, he held by the bridle a little ass, which carried a large book on its back.

"Make haste," said an officer to him, "the king is dying."

In truth, the king was on his death-bed. He turned a feeble glance towards the chief and his large book, and said with a sigh:

"I shall die without knowing the history of men!"

"Sire," answered the chief, who was almost as near death as the king, "I am going to summarise it in three words: *They were born, they suffered, they died.*"

It was thus that the King of Persia learned universal history at the moment of passing, to use the common expression, from this world to the next.

M. Thiers, by impetuously issuing his book in 1823, was, we must admit, better advised than the chief of the Academicians of Persia. It remains for us to say a word about the way in which the book is written, for, after all, our business is to speak of literature.

Let us at once admit that M. Thiers is careless and inaccurate. Carrel, who nevertheless rated him highly, said: "When he writes, one can almost believe that he is improvising." His style, often soft and fluid, is wanting in strength. This is true. In order to place one's finger upon the writer's main defect it is enough to quote a fragment of Garat's portrait of Danton and to place alongside it the passage in the "Histoire de la Révolution" which is avowedly imitated from it. Here is the piece from Garat:

"Danton never wrote or printed a speech. He used to say: 'I do not write.' His imagination and the species of eloquence with which it endowed him, singularly appropriate to his face and to his stature, was that of a demagogue; his outlook on men and things was quick, clear, impartial, and true, and had that solid prudence and practicality which is given only by experience. He knew hardly anything, and he took a pride in divining nothing; in the tribune he uttered a few words which reverberated for a long time; in conversation he was silent, listened with interest when people spoke little, with astonishment when they said a great deal. He pressed Camille to speak, and he permitted Fabre d'Églantine to do so."

That is beyond question a penetrating bit of rhetoric. Here is the way that M. Thiers has imitated it in his "Histoire de la Révolution":

"Danton had an uncultivated but great, profound, and above all simple and solid mind. He never employed his intellect save for his needs, and never in order to appear brilliant; thus, he spoke little and disdained to write. According to a contemporary he had no pretensions, not even that of divining what he did not know, a pretension so common among men of his stamp. He listened to Fabre d'Églantine and he continually pressed his young and interesting friend, Camille Desmoulins, to speak, for he derived great enjoyment from his wit."

One sees at the first glance that in this copy all the outlines are softened, all the lines are blurred. I need hardly point out how flat the last phrase is. M. Thiers has, as a rule, no relief in his phrasing. It has been remarked also that the style of his first history has grown antiquated in some passages. We no longer say, as he did, *the temple of the laws*, in order to designate the Convention; we no longer call André Chénier and Roucher *two children of the Muses*. Although these expressions offend me but slightly, for they are in the taste of the time, I condemn them with all the other faults of M. Thiers' style. But let not that writer's enemies hasten to triumph. All these blots seem little in regard to the

whole, and it is the whole that we must judge. We must also praise the merits of his style, and that is not done as much as it ought to be. We must recognise its clearness, its warmth, and its movement. These are no small merits. M. Thiers' language is exact, copious, and animated. I stop myself; perhaps when we come in a moment to deal with the "Consulat" it will be easier for us successfully and in the broadest traits to defend the historian's manner.

M. Thiers undertook in 1845 to write the history of the great man whose ashes he had brought back to France. That design was not entirely disinterested. When he formed it, M. Thiers was in opposition, and we can strongly suspect him of having consented without any unwillingness to eclipse the July monarchy by the glory of the Consulate and the splendour of the Empire. We must not lose sight of the fact that, if M. Guizot is a historian who occupies himself with politics, M. Thiers is a politician who occupies himself with history. Yet one could not say without injustice that his work is composed for the occasion. His model, which he spent twenty years in painting, filled him with enthusiasm. He has been heard to exclaim: "What good luck! Alexander has been taken from the depths of antiquity and set down in our own days, in a captain's uniform and with all the genius of modern science, and all for me!" And, to paint the new Alexander, M. Thiers employed all the resources of an inexhaustible mind. One does not know what to admire most in this work, the grandeur of the design, the noble ease of the arrangement, or the clearness of the pictures. Vast and magnificent composition whose chapters bear, not, like the books of Herodotus, the names of the Muses,

but the names of victories! Harmonious unity of truly classic beauty! Immense, unique achievement of a spirit trained to affairs and sensitive to fame! M. Thiers was, at the time of his enterprise, an experienced statesman. Pedants have cavilled at the variations of his opinions, as if twenty years of revolutions did not bring about changes in a political mind. They have blamed him for the length of his battles. It is true that these are long, and he lengthens them still more by adding summaries of them. It is true also that, after having related them as they were fought, he relates them again as they ought to have been fought, and that in this way he wins them all—after the event. It is true that he employs documents a little too much according to his fancy, and that—sometimes—as the phrase goes, he stretches them on his own side.

In this admirable "Consulat" as well as in the "Révolution," errors and mistakes have been pointed out. M. de Martel, following upon Charras, Lanfrey, Barni, and so many others, does not fail to do this. But who would dare to maintain that Lanfrey's Napoleon is as true as M. Thiers'? Honestly, which of the two is more alive? Was it not M. Brunetière who said of M. Thiers' history: "It still remains the most like the original"? M. Thiers, it has been said, has in his twenty volumes spoken only of the "pomps of the flesh," and he has said nothing of those of the mind and of letters. He has written the history of affairs. The saying is, I believe, M. Nisard's. Be it so! It is not the easiest history to write. We should be very grateful if a contemporary of Tacitus had written the history of the affairs of his time.

Space fails me for so great a subject. We are led

back to the question of writing. The style of "du Consulat et de l'Empire" is that of the last volumes of the "Révolution," as simple and as alert, but purer and fuller. In its large simplicity it is perfectly appropriate to the nature and extent of the work. M. Thiers had theories on the art of writing. In 1830 he stated them very simply in "Le National" when dealing with Napoleon's sayings. "We can no longer have," said he, "the sublime and ingenuous grandeur that belonged to Bossuet and to Pascal, and that belonged as much to their age as to them. We can no longer have even the delicacy, the grace, the exquisite naturalness of Voltaire. Their time has passed away. But a simple, true, calculated style, an elaborate and skilful style, that is what it is permitted us to produce. This is no bad fate when with it there are important truths to be said. The style of Laplace in the 'Exposition du système du monde,' of Napoleon in his Memoirs, these are the models of the simple and deliberate style proper to our age."

A great deal might be said upon this subject; for, though I do not know how Bossuet, Pascal, and Voltaire might have written in 1830, I am quite certain that they would not have written like M. Thiers. Napoleon wrote differently from Laplace, and neither wrote like M. Thiers. There is no one style proper to an epoch. There is a style proper to each writer of genius.

Twenty-five years later, M. Thiers, going back upon these ideas, laid down in the preface to the twelfth volume of the "Consulat" the principles of the art of writing history. He there compares a good historical style to a large, flawless mirror, the merit of which is to allow everything to be

seen without itself being visible. He repeated the same maxims a short time afterwards in a letter to Sainte-Beuve. "I look," he says, "at the history of literatures, and I see that those who seek for effect live, not for a generation, but as long as a fashion; and truly it is not worth while tormenting oneself so much for that sort of an immortality. Besides, I defy them to compel people to read, not twenty volumes, but a single one. It is a monstrous piece of impertinence to claim the attention of others so long for oneself—that is to say, for one's style. Only human things displayed truthfully—that is to say, in their grandeur, their variety, their inexhaustible fruitfulness—have the right to retain the reader and do actually retain him."

He was all the more faithful to his system as it was imposed upon him by his temperament. He used to say: "I write history in the way it ought to be written"; in reality, he wrote it in the way he was able to write it. His method was good, but he made a mistake in believing that it alone was good. More than one style suits history. That of Augustin Thierry is perfectly appropriate to it. The same can be said of Guizot's, which is quite different. Tacitus and Michelet are neither of them simple, and both are great writers.

However, M. Thiers was right in thinking that his own manner can be borne for a long time without fatigue, and that it is excellent for very long books.

Moreover, the joyous majesty of his composition gives support to his style and makes it seem less unadorned in the luminous effect of the whole achievement. On the other hand, what would Michelet, who ignores the fair ordering and the noble

arrangement of ideas, be without the splendour of his phrasing? Michelet's sensual phrasing gives a very keen pleasure, but it is a pleasure which cannot be prolonged without turning into discomfort and at last becoming actual pain. Everything is paid for in this world, and pleasure most of all.

THE CORRESPONDENCE OF MARIE LOUISE

HE literary life is sometimes nourished by memories and seeks converse with the shades. We are going to begin to-day with a princess whose correspondence, recently published, has roused a certain amount of curiosity. You already know that at Vienna, under the private patronage of Count Falkenhayn, the Minister of Agriculture, there has just been printed a selection from the letters which Marie Louise wrote from 1799 to 1847, to the Countess Colloredo, who for ten years had directed her education, and also to the Countess's daughter, Victoire de Pontet, Countess of Crenneville.

"We have taken the utmost pains in selecting her letters," says the German editor, "so as to be sure of winning the interest of the public for them, and we shall count ourselves happy should it be sufficiently aroused to make it turn its attention to the Duchess of Parma's tomb. Would that, on All Souls' Day, when everybody goes into the Imperial vault, we might hear some one say: 'That is the coffin of the Archduchess Marie Louise, who, in the year 1840, sacrificed herself on behalf of her father's kingdom!'" Count Falkenhayn's pious hopes will not

be fulfilled. The letters which he publishes will not change the feeling of those who read them. After their publication, as before it, the memory of the daughter of the Emperor Francis I. will not, even in her native country, obtain the reverence due only to the memory of noble spirits. The sacred name of victim will, wherever honest hearts beat, be refused to the woman who showed herself unfaithful to misfortune.

The letters of Marie Louise to the Countess of Colloredo and to Mademoiselle de Pontet are written in French, without brilliancy, without correctness, and without grace, but with clearness. The princess was, from the age of seven upwards, as well able to express herself intelligibly in French as in German. She accustomed herself later to think in the language of her new country. At twenty-one, she knew French better than German. "In her correspondence with her father," says Baron Menneval, "she was often obliged to have recourse to French expressions, because she had forgotten the equivalent words in her mother tongue."

The first letters are, it must be admitted, amiable enough. They bring us into intimate relations with the Court of Vienna, and bear witness to the simple family habits that ruled there. "Mamma," says the little Louise, speaking of her young stepmother, "chats and reads all the evening to me." The Emperor makes excursions into the country with his daughters. These little journeys please Louise extremely, "because," she says, "my dear papa is kind enough to teach me a quantity of things." One of the letters written in her tenth year begins thus: "I have read with great pleasure that doves build a nest." Louise works with her needle,

makes clothes for babies, and embroiders neckerchiefs.

At fourteen, she writes that she has read Zimmermann's travels, and adds:

"I have also embroidered a portfolio for papa, whose birthday was yesterday; then I began another piece of work of which I will write to you later, for it is a surprise for mamma. In the evenings I am knitting a petticoat."

The future Empress of the French was at that time a timid, quiet, obedient, backward child, whose laughter and tears were endless. Her character was already formed. She used to extricate herself at once from any trouble she fell into by a fit of hysterics. In other respects she was kind to all and everything, docile to men, caressing to her parents, to her friends, and to animals. She fed frogs, and tamed a little hare. She was the good Louise. But those who knew her best discovered in her a fund of instinctive slyness and unexpected resources for extricating herself from a difficult situation. (See on this point the letter of December 23rd, 1809, p. 132.)

She has not been accustomed to think for herself; yet, at seventeen, she ventures to have her own opinion on what she has read. She dares to think the novels of Auguste Lafontaine dull and insipid, though her mother delights in them. The "Pluralité des Mondes" inspires her with the following sound reflection:

"We must," she says, after having read that book, "we must, however, allow to the French an advantage which the Germans have not, namely, that of giving to the most abstract and serious sciences a turn so agreeable that they please even women, and this is the case with Fontenelle."

She has a taste for painting, and makes pretty water-colour sketches. She does not stop at this.

"My uncles, who are excellent painters, and my master, have tormented me so much that I have been compelled to form a resolution to paint in oils. I am painting a very melancholy landscape which pleases me for that very reason."

Then she attacks "an enormous picture which represents Saint Barbe standing up," and she attempts a portrait of Count Edling. "Count Edling is not handsome, but it is precisely in ugliness that one can study the art of painting."

She sings, she plays the harpsichord, she has even composed six waltzes, "but she cannot have them performed." She loves dancing, and she dances a great deal. Waltzes, schottisches, and quadrilles delight her equally. She is in despair when she has to remain at the piano so that the guests may dance.

Driven out of Vienna in 1809 by the victorious French, she withdraws to Erlau with the Empress. She lives in an unfurnished hovel and sleeps in a bed full of vermin. Yet she is satisfied, because "it is like a country house." "At three o'clock one is wakened by the pigs that are driven to pasture." Her great pleasure is to buy cherries from the peasant women.

From that time, Napoleon appears to her as a monster. Is he not the persecutor of her family and her people? Has he not brought the House of Hapsburg to the brink of ruin? Is it not to escape him that she and her relatives are flying from town to town?

Accordingly, she welcomes all the stories that are repeated about the tyrant, and relates in good faith that he became a Turk and denied Christ in Egypt,

and that in a great defeat on May 22nd, 1809, he killed two of his generals with his own hand. The fact is that on May 22nd, 1809, the Emperor won the battle of Essling, and wept when he embraced Marshal Lannes, who was mortally wounded. For her, Napoleon is Antichrist. (Letter of July 8th, 1809.) She trembles at his name.

"I assure you that to see that person would cause me worse suffering than martyrdom, and I do not know whether a wish to see me may not enter into his head."

She soon hears on all sides that the monster is leaving his wife and going to take another from one of the European Courts. "I pity," she says, "the poor princess whom he will choose." But when at last she suspects that this poor princess is to be herself, she resigns herself to her fate. Marie Louise was born for resignation.

"Since Napoleon's divorce I open every 'Frankfort Gazette' with the idea that I may find in it the nomination of the new spouse, and I confess that this delay causes me some involuntary uneasiness; I place my fate in the hands of Providence, who alone knows what can make us happy. But, if ill-fortune requires it, I am ready to sacrifice my private happiness to the good of the State, persuaded that we find true felicity only in the accomplishment of our duties, even though it be at the price of our inclinations. I want to think no more about it. But, if it be necessary, my resolution is taken, though it would be a double sacrifice and a very painful one. Pray that it may not come to pass." (January 22nd–23rd, 1810.)

You know the tale of "Beauty and the Beast." Beauty was greatly afraid of the Beast, but when she saw him she loved him. Napoleon, flattered at marrying an archduchess, welcomed his *fiancée* with an ardour the very violence of which did not displease the young German, who came to him white, fair, and plump. "He was so full of enthusiasm," says one

of the Empress's waiting-women, "that he was barely willing to stop for a few moments at Soissons, where it had been decided that we should sleep, and we went on immediately to Compiègne. It appeared that Napoleon's prayers joined to the entreaties of the Queen of Naples, decided Marie Louise to refuse nothing to her too happy husband." The letters written from France to the Countess Colloredo and to the Countess of Crenneville are filled with evidence of an unclouded joy. "I feel," she says, "how sweet it is to speak of his happiness."

She displays the innocent pride of her motherhood: "My son improves as I look at him, he is becoming charming, I even believe that I heard him say *papa;* my maternal love, at least, flatters itself in this way." (September 2nd, 1811.)

But we know from an eye-witness that she was awkward and clumsy with her son, and that she did not dare either to take him in her arms or to caress him. The Emperor, on the contrary, took him in his arms every time he saw him, caressed him, teased him, carried him in front of a mirror, and made faces at him. When he lunched, he used to put him on his knees, dip his finger in the sauce and make him suck it, smudging his face all over at the same time. The nurse grumbled, the Emperor laughed, and the child seemed to receive his father's noisy caresses with pleasure.

For three years Marie Louise did not cease to boast of her conjugal happiness. "The most agreeable moments I spend are either those when I am with the Emperor or when I am quite alone. The Carnival will be sad enough, but that does not affect me, for I have entirely lost my fondness for dancing and I have replaced it by riding." (January 1st, 1811.)

Separated from her husband, the sentimental German languishes and pities herself. Neither her father nor her son can distract her from the sadness which the Emperor's absence causes her.

"You can imagine the happiness I feel at being in the midst of my family, for you know how I love it; however, it is troubled by the sadness of being separated from the Emperor. I can only be happy near him." (Prague, June 11th, 1812.) "I shall only be satisfied and easy when I see him again: may God always preserve you from such a separation; it is too cruel for a loving heart, and if it lasts long I shall not be able to bear up against it." (Prague, June 28th, 1812.) "I have found my son grown handsomer and bigger; he is so intelligent that I never tire of having him near me. But in spite of all his charms, he cannot make me forget, even for a few moments, the absence of his father." (Saint-Cloud, October 2nd, 1812.)

What will become of this love on the day of trial? Empress Regent, wife, and mother, Marie Louise abandoned the capital on March 29th, 1814, when the allies were still several days' march away. A lamentable and disastrous desertion, with which we will not reproach her, for she went away only on the reiterated orders of Napoleon. He is still powerful: she obeys him; but soon he has fallen, and departs for the island of Elba. This tender wife will not follow him. She hardly makes a pretence of rejoining him. She allows herself to be stopped on the first few stages of her journey and to be led back to Vienna.

The ill-fated hero summons her and expects her. She does not go to him. She writes as long as she is permitted to do so. But when her father forbids her she ceases to answer his letters. She is an obedient daughter.

It is recorded that at Vienna she met her grandmother, Queen Caroline, Bonaparte's enemy, and that

the daughter of Maria Theresa asked Marie Louise why she had thus abandoned her husband. The latter timidly excused herself by the obstacles that had been placed against their reunion.

"My daughter," answered the old queen, "you can always jump out of the window!"

But the good Marie Louise did not think of jumping out of the window. She was too well brought up for that. During all this time she used quietly to play her guitar. It is she herself who tells us so:

"This tranquil life suits me very well. You know, my dear Victoire, that I have never cared about the great world. And I hate it at present more than ever. I am happy in my little corner, seeing a great deal of my son, who grows handsomer every day and is becoming more and more lovable. . . .

"My health is very good. . . .

"They were wrong to tell you that I am neglecting my music; I often occupy myself with it still. I am even beginning to play the guitar, very badly it is true." (Schœnbrunn, March 3rd, 1815.)

The return from Elba disturbed her, and nothing less than Waterloo and St. Helena were needed to reassure her. She had managed her little affairs well enough, and provided for her own peace of mind. She had caused the Duchy of Parma to be assigned to her, on the condition that she would never see her son again. There, during the Emperor's long agony, this tender and virtuous German kept giving little Germanic brothers to the King of Rome. Her new master was a Würtemberg gentleman in the service of Austria. A safe man—she had it from M. de Metternich. He was over forty, fair, and wore a big black bandage over an eye which he had lost. Count Neipperg gave three children to the

good Marie Louise, whose Duchy he administered. But Marie Louise was pious. As soon as she could, she hastened to consecrate this union by a religious and secret marriage. If she put it off until 1821, it was Napoleon's fault, for he was slow about dying.

He died, however. Marie Louise learned it from a gazette, and this news, by which the whole world was moved, annoyed the Duchess of Parma. Under the date of July 19th, 1821, she wrote to the Countess of Crenneville :

"I am at present in great uncertainty. The 'Gazette de Piémont' has announced Napoleon's death in so positive a manner that it is hardly possible to doubt it any longer. I confess that I have been extremely moved by it. Although I have never had any warm feeling *of any sort* for him, I cannot forget that he is my son's father, and that far from having, as everybody believes, treated me badly, he has always shown me every consideration, and that is the only thing that one can desire in a political marriage. I have been very much grieved by it, and, although one ought to be thankful that he has ended his unhappy existence in a Christian manner, yet I would have wished him many years of happiness and life—provided he was far away from me."

She adds that her stomach is so upset that she cannot eat at all, "not even melon," and that, as she has been stung by gnats in the face, she is pleased that she is not compelled to show herself.

At last she could marry Count Neipperg.

"Widow of Hector, alas! and wife of Helenus!"

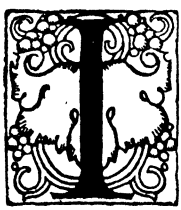
Neipperg committed the fault of dying in his turn. He was replaced by M. de Bombelles.

She herself at last left this earth, on which she had never sought anything but her own repose. In September 1847, the world was surprised to hear of the death

of Marie Louise, for it had believed her to be dead for a long time.

Mediocre, though of an exalted fortune, she was neither good nor bad; she belongs to the numberless flock of those tepid souls whom Heaven rejects and whom, as the poet says, Hell itself vomits forth in disgust.

QUEEN CATHERINE*



N the last essay as we turned over the pages of Marie Louise's letters we had the painful spectacle of a vulgar soul, thrown amidst illustrious events, and meanly fulfilling a great destiny. Whilst the unworthy Empress was refusing to take part in the exile of the man whose throne she had shared, another princess, subjected to similar trials, met them in a way that redounded to her glory. Giving an example of constancy in those days which saw so many examples of baseness, Catherine of Würtemberg remained faithful to her proscribed and fallen husband when all Europe was attempting to drag him away from her. "By her noble conduct in 1815," said Napoleon at St. Helena, "this princess has with her own hands inscribed her name on the pages of history." It happens that just as the letters of Marie Louise have been published at Vienna, Dr. August von Schlossberger has extracted from the archives of Stuttgart the correspondence exchanged from 1801 to 1815 between Catherine and her father. This is an excellent opportunity for seizing

* "Briefwechsel der Kœnigin Katharina und des Kœnigs Jérôme von Westphalien so vie des Kaisers Napoleon I. mit dem Kœnig Friedrich von Würtemberg." Herausgegeben von Doctor August von Schlossberger. Stuttgart, 2 vols.

upon a contrast which I did not seek, for comparing the two sisters-in-law, and for showing weakness and virtue side by side.

Catherine was born at St. Petersburg on February 21st, 1783. She was the second child of Frederick, Duke, and afterwards King, of Würtemberg, and of Princess Augusta of Brunswick.

She scarcely knew her mother, who died young, and she was brought up at Mumpelgard by her grandmother, Sophia-Dorothea of Würtemberg, niece of the great Frederick, and remained with her up to the age of fourteen. Looking back upon the period of her childhood, she herself has said: "Although I was intelligent and pretty, I was, nevertheless, very self-willed, very imperious, and very capricious, and it was impossible to subdue me or make me apply myself to the least thing." Sophia-Dorothea was, we are told, a well-informed and superior woman. She took pains over her granddaughter's education and "cultivated her like a young plant." Catherine, who retained a profound gratitude towards her, said: "It was from her I acquired the few virtues I possess." But, whatever Sophia-Dorothea's influence may have been, it must be admitted that her granddaughter was born with an upright heart and a generous soul. Catherine was fifteen years old when she lost her grandmother. This was her first sorrow. She then went to live at the Court of her father, whom she found married again. His second wife was Charlotte Matilda of England.

Owing to a disposition of mind which, as we know, is not uncommon, she refused to give her friendship or her confidence to her young step-mother, reserving for her aunt, and above all for her father, the full

tenderness of her ardent soul. She was then a beautiful young girl, with a clear and bright complexion, great blue eyes, and fair, curling hair. She had an air of refractoriness which was soon to be changed into an air of heroism. Her father, seeing that she was good-humoured and cheerful, displayed his affection towards her and was always ready to play with her. Frederick of Würtemberg was a soldier. A soldier's heart is sometimes exquisitely kind and good-natured. But he was also a politician, and a politician's tenderness is always short-lived. We shall see Frederick stifling his as soon as reasons of State whisper in his ear. It has been said that, even in his daughter's youth, "his caresses were those of a lion who makes his claws felt." This Germanic lion was also something of a fox. He was violent, but he was crafty as well. The relations of this little sovereign with Napoleon remind one a good deal of certain episodes in the popular story which Goethe put into verse, where we see Noble, the lion, and the ingenious Goupil walking in company. To be just, let us add that the Swabian fox only snatched himself and his people from the lion's claws when they had been half devoured. The friendship of the great man was a gift from the gods. But it was not a gratuitous gift.

The life that Catherine led in the little Court of Stuttgart dragged itself along sadly and monotonously, without any pleasant warmth, and without any intimate joys. The young princess, thrown upon her own resources, occupied her time with reading, with the usual household duties, and with music. She practised singing, and wished to learn Italian, as being the most musical language, and she began to play the mandoline. But she was not of a nature to allow herself

to be completely captivated by the illusion of the arts. The practical generosity of her instincts retained her in the wholesome reality of life. Day-dreaming held a small place in a soul which was always in touch with actual things. Even in the playfulness of youth she had a certain gravity. When she was twenty-two she used to be called the Abbess. At that time she often spoke of herself as an old maid, and with a serious gaiety added: "I am consoling myself and will act my part like a good soldier; as I shall never have a husband, to be an Abbess is an excellent refuge for an old maid."

Two years later, she received a husband from her father's hands. This was in 1807. The victorious Napoleon had just dictated the Treaty of Tilsit. Out of Hesse-Cassel and the Prussian possessions west of the Elbe he had formed the kingdom of Westphalia, which he gave to his brother Jerome. The latter, though only twenty-three years of age, had, four years before, and without the knowledge of the head of the family, married Miss Paterson, the daughter of a Baltimore merchant. But the First Consul, who disliked the marriage, had it annulled, as being contracted by a minor. Jerome was thus free, and a queen was needed for Westphalia. Napoleon chose Princess Catherine. He asked her from the King of Würtemberg, and the latter had neither the desire nor the power to refuse her to his powerful ally. But when Frederick broached the project to his daughter she met it with an energetic resistance.

We know, by her own admission, that she was at the time "occupied with other projects." She only yielded at the end of a year. In the meantime war had broken out. Jerome, with Vendamme, was in

command of an army on the Rhine. The Emperor wrote from Saint-Cloud to King Frederick: "I am afraid that the marriage will have to take place under rather inconvenient circumstances; no matter, another time will come when we will celebrate again and in better style what we will now have to do with our boots on."

Catherine had resolved to find the satisfaction of an accomplished duty in those bonds which politics alone had formed. We see from her correspondence that, during the journey which she made to join the prince, her sole uneasiness was lest she might not please the husband who as yet only knew her by a portrait. Her beauty did not reassure her. She wrote to her father before the meeting:

"It is not without a trembling heart that I think of this first interview; I am more afraid of it than I can describe."

This interview which she dreaded so much took place at the Tuileries on August 22nd, 1807. On the following day Catherine gave an account of it to her father in these terms:

"I made my toilet to receive the prince. I cannot express to you my emotion at sight of him, though he was extremely polite. But he seemed a prey to so great an embarrassment that mine was naturally increased."

This was the day on which the marriage contract was signed. The Princess brought the King a dowry of a hundred thousand florins, with jewels amounting to an equal sum. The German editor, whose work we have before us, takes care to remark that this sum was by no means small, having regard to the time and the circumstances. As for the trousseau, it was made according to the Würtemberg fashions,

and therefore useless. The Emperor and Jerome gracefully replaced it by another.

Catherine found happiness where she had looked only for duty. Her husband was young, brave, and in love, and she fell in love with him at once and for life. She wrote on August 25th:

"For the past two days, the Prince, my husband, seems to be genuinely attached to me; he is really a charming man, very lovable, full of wit and good-nature. You ought to see the attentions, the delicacy, the tenderness which he lavishes upon your daughter. He is already beginning to spoil me; for it would be impossible to put more grace, more sincerity, more confidence into what he does to give me pleasure, so that now I could not be happy without him."

And three days afterwards she said:

"I could no longer live without him."

She spent the remainder of the year at Saint-Cloud, or at Paris, with the Imperial Court, and after that went to the kingdom which Napoleon had carved out with his sword. On January 1st, 1809, she made her entry into Cassel, where she was destined to remain for six years in the face of trials which demonstrated her unshaken firmness of character. Catherine, both as wife and as queen, had to suffer doubly. The campaign of 1809 removed her husband from her.

She wrote on March 25th to her father:

"I can assure you that I await events, if not with entire security, at least with the courage and strength of soul that beseem me. If my husband is going to join the army, as is probable, I shall not oppose so sensible a plan by any misplaced weakness, but I shall hope that the goodness of Providence will grant success to his military labours and achievements."

The kingdom of Westphalia, formed, so to speak, out of limbs that were still bleeding, was in a state of terrible convulsion. Catherine and Jerome, surrounded by assassins, ran a risk of being murdered in their palace. A formidable insurrection of the peasants broke out in 1809. Amid these events the princess wrote to her father: "I beg you to be at ease. I assure you that I am."

She only left Cassel at the last moment, as the Austrian troops were entering Westphalia, which had risen in revolt, and she only consented to leave even then in order that the king might not be obliged to employ part of his forces in her protection.

We shall not retrace here the vicissitudes of that six years' reign. To do that we should have to follow step by step the "Mémoires du roi Jérôme," published from 1861 to 1866. We shall confine ourselves to indicating some features of Queen Catherine's life and character, as found in the recent Stuttgart volume.

We find the princess back again in her capital in 1811. On November 25th a fire destroyed her palace. On the day following this catastrophe, to which she herself nearly fell a victim, she wrote:

"I can say that I was not frightened for a single moment, and that I neither lost my presence of mind nor my composure in yesterday's terrible catastrophe. I trembled only at the idea of the danger which the King ran."

Summoned to Paris at the end of the year 1809 for the ceremonies of the marriage of the Emperor with Marie Louise, she found Napoleon thinking of nothing but the coming of the Archduchess. The anecdotal letters which she wrote at the time are most curious. In them we find that gentle playful-

ness and good-humour which her contemporaries liked so much in her.

"You will never believe, my dear father, how much he [the Emperor] is in love with his future wife; he is more excited about her than I could have imagined or can express. Every day he sends her one of his chamberlains, charged, like Mercury, with great Jupiter's missives. He showed me five of his epistles which are not, it is true, at all like St. Paul's, but which really show all the signs of having been dictated by an infatuated lover. He speaks to me of nothing else but her and all that concerns her. I will not here enumerate the *fêtes* and presents he is preparing for her, though he has told me the smallest details of them all. I shall confine myself to letting you know his state of mind by repeating that he said to me, that when he is married he will give peace to the world and the rest of his time to Zaïre." (March 17th, 1810.)

. . . . .

"To prove to you how much his future wife fills the Emperor's mind, I will tell you that he has had interviews with his tailor and his bootmaker so that he may be dressed with the utmost possible care, and that he is learning to waltz. These are things that neither you nor I would have imagined." (March 27th, 1810.)

This is a Bonaparte whom we scarcely suspected, even after the copious documents of M. Taine. Men are in reality more complex than we imagine, and we must in future form in our minds a picture of Napoleon as a waltzer. The two fragments of letters, just quoted, are more important as contributions to the psychology of the great man than to that of his sister-in-law. But they seem to us piquant

and of an agreeable turn. By their vivacity they contrast with the usually grave tone of Catherine's correspondence.

The papers published at Stuttgart do not furnish us with any document relative to the years 1810 and 1811. Up to the date of January 17th, 1812, nothing (Catherine attests it solemnly) had yet "altered the repose and happiness" of her home. But the days of her royalty were already numbered.

The Emperor was meditating the Russian campaign and preparing both the ruin of his own Empire and that of the little States which were its satellites. Jerome had tried in vain to open the conqueror's eyes to the difficulties and perils of that gigantic enterprise. Napoleon shut him up with a word.

"I pity you," he said to him. "It is just as if Homer's pupil tried to teach him how to make verses." (*Cf.* Schlossberger, p. 5.)

When war was declared, Jerome was forced to go to Glogau. Catherine anticipated this fresh separation. On February 24th she wrote to her father:

"I shall be separated from the King. . . . I shall have to go in fear both for a husband and for a brother. However, do not believe, my dear father, that in these circumstances I shall show myself either selfish or weak. I feel too deeply how essential it is to the fame of princes, and perhaps to their present and future existence, that they should show themselves at such moments and take an active part in their cause, for me in any way to keep the King back."

On May 17th she went to Dresden, arriving there at the same time as Napoleon. She hoped to meet her husband.

"Sire," said she to the Emperor, "will you not

send Jerome here so that I may have an opportunity of seeing him ?"

He replied bluntly :

"Do you think that I will disturb one of my generals for the sake of a woman ?" (*Loc. cit.* p. 22.)

Catherine relates this hard answer and adds : "I could not conceal the tears that escaped me at this reply."

Regent of Westphalia in the prince's absence, it was not without misgiving that she accepted her lofty functions.

"I wished to prove to the King by this submission," she says, "that I desired nothing except what could be agreeable and useful to him. Here I am then, launched upon affairs, I who have always detested them. . . . This is the greatest sacrifice I can make for the King, for I love a tranquil, calm, peaceful life, I adore reading, sewing, music, and all a woman's occupations." (*Loc. cit.* p. 9.)

Her father, anxious because of the risks she ran, and already secretly inclined to separate his daughter's cause from that of the Bonapartes, urged her to leave Cassel and come to him. She answered : "My dear father, I shall always remember having heard you blame the hereditary Princess of Weimar for leaving her country at the moment when she ought to have remained in it."

But events hurried forward. We reach the heroic phase in Catherine's life.

The sixth coalition put an end to the kingdom of Westphalia. Catherine left Cassel, never to return, on March 19th, 1813. At Leipzig, the Würtemberg cavalry crossed over to the enemy upon the field of battle. King Frederick, hitherto the vassal of France, had become her enemy.

In 1814, after the fall of the Empire, he invited his daughter to follow the example of Marie Louise, and separate from her husband. Policy, according to him, could loosen a bond which it alone had forged.

Catherine, indignant and resolute, made this proud reply:

"Sire, I will not leave the husband whom you gave me, now that he has fallen from his throne. I have shared his prosperity. It is my part to share his misfortunes."

She was then, along with her husband, a refugee at Trieste. When Napoleon, having escaped from Elba, reappeared in France, and the eagle flew from steeple to steeple, Jerome resolved to join his brother. Outwitting the surveillance of the Austrian authorities, Catherine assisted him to flee in disguise. He managed to reach France, took part in the campaign of 1815, and was wounded at Waterloo.

During this time, his wife remained exposed to the insults of an anxious and brutal police, who went so far as to place ladders against her windows that they might be able to look into her house. Soon she was driven from Trieste, and found herself without a refuge, without knowing in all Europe where to lay her head, and was, moreover, being urged to separate from her husband. She thought of obtaining a refuge for Jerome and herself from her father. She obtained only a prison. What she suffered in the castle of Ellwangen made her wish a hundred times for death.

But exile, captivity, and persecution did not wear out her fidelity. At least, she tasted, in the midst of her trials, joys that had been denied her in her days of prosperity. She had ardently desired to

become a mother. She became one for the first time in 1814, and of a son, though he was destined to survive her but a short time. She had two other children: Princess Mathilde and Prince Napoleon.

This life, whose spring was so pure, and whose summer glowed with a generous ardour, did not know the peace of a lengthy evening. Catherine of Würtemberg, whose health had always been delicate, died of dropsy of the chest, near Lausanne, on the night between the 29th and the 30th of November, 1835, in her fifty-second year. Her last moments, worthy of her entire life, offer a spectacle of antique greatness.

At eight o'clock in the evening, the doctors declared to Jerome that the Queen had but a few hours to live. He sought her children, and brought them into their mother's room. When she saw them kneeling before her bed, Catherine, who retained full consciousness, but who did not believe that death was so near, asked what was this blessing which they asked from her.

"It is advisable for you to bless your children every evening," said her husband, "for misfortune is always possible."

Catherine understood by these words that her last moment was at hand. She blessed her children and said calmly: "I see that death is near; I do not fear it. What I have loved most in the world is you, Jerome." And saying these words she raised her husband's hand to her lips.

She added: "I am ready . . . I should have liked to bid you farewell in France. . . ." Jerome and her elder son remained beside the dying woman. Napoleon and Mathilde, the one thirteen and the

other fifteen years of age, were led into a neighbouring house. At ten o'clock Catherine lost consciousness. At half-past two in the morning she had ceased to live. Dying, she left behind her a noble memory, the remembrance of a soul which always walked directly and loftily towards duty, because she had two guides who, when they are united, never mislead—courage and love.

ON BEHALF OF LATIN

UR schoolboys have resumed their satchels, and are once again studying sound learning in those halls where so much ink has been spilt and so much chalk-dust scattered around the blackboards. The first day of term is not generally feared. It is even more and more wished for as it draws nearer. The holidays are long and idle. The reopening unites comrades who have much to say to one another. In short, it causes a change. That alone would make it welcome. Young people like novelty. We should like it as much as they do if the unknown still inspired us with any confidence. But we have learned to distrust it. And then we know that life never brings anything new, and that, on the contrary, it is we ourselves who give it its novelty when we are young. The universe is just as old as each of us. It is young to the young. It is clothed, for fifteen-year-old eyes, with the tints of the dawn. It dies with us. It is born again in our children. Which of us is not anxious about a future which he himself will never see? For my own part, I follow the fortunes of our classical studies each year with a more eager and more anxious interest. Consider this, that our French culture is the noblest and most delicate thing in the world, that it is becoming

impoverished, and that the most dangerous attempts to regenerate it are being made upon all sides. How, in such a critical time, could one look without emotion at a little schoolboy going in the morning, with his nose in the air and his books on his back, to his school.

He is the future of the country, that poor little wretch! It is with anguish I try to foresee whether he will keep alive the flame that has lighted the world for so long, or whether he will allow it to be extinguished. I tremble for our humanities. They form men; they teach them how to think. Some have wished them to do more, to have a direct and immediate utility. They have wished education to remain liberal and yet to become practical. Syllabuses have been loaded like guns for some ferocious combat. They have been stuffed with facts, facts, facts. An inconceivable rage has been shown on behalf of geography in particular.

Latin has greatly suffered from this. Many republicans are pleased with such a result, for they believe that Latin was invented by the Jesuits. They are mistaken. The Jesuits have never invented anything; they have always made use of everything. We have only to open Erasmus or Rabelais to see that classical Latin was established in the schools by the scholars of the Renaissance. The Superior Council of Public Instruction could not come to a decision so easily. It wished to give Latin its due. But the will of a Council, even of a Superior Council, is never very stable or very efficacious. Its energy quickly changes into acquiescence. People want us to believe that the best manner of restoring Latin is to create a type of secondary instruction in which only living

languages will be taught. They want us to hope that Latin studies will be saved as soon as they share the worthy name of classics with rivals which, whatever they do, will never equal them in nobility, in force, in grace, or in beauty. These are illusions which it is difficult to share.

In truth, the decline of Latin studies is terribly rapid. Sixth-form pupils used in my time to read Virgil and Cicero fluently. They used also to write in Latin. I admit that they found a difficulty in expressing their still half-awakened thought in this dead language. One could not expect it to be otherwise. But I am told on all sides, and I see for myself, that this is no longer the case. At the head of each class there are still some young people who care for Latin literature. But they are already regarded as our last humanists. The greater number are becoming less and less interested in classical studies.

Even if we must be saddened by this can we be surprised at it? Latin has departed from the world; it tends to depart from the school. It is the decree of fate. In the eighteenth century Latin was still the universal language of science. Science now speaks French, English, German. Theology alone preserves its old idiom, but theology is strictly confined within the compass of the seminaries, and the public no longer gives ear to its disputes. Already the place occupied by Latin in the syllabuses has been greatly diminished. It has been stripped of its ancient honours. These have been gradually taken away from it, and its total disappearance is assured in a future that is not far distant but which, I hope, we at least shall not see.

However, mutilated as it is, it remains the back-

bone of secondary instruction. In the place of its amputated limbs various branches of science have been substituted. It does not appear that the minds of the pupils have benefited by the change. There has been in this respect a painful deception. For, as the methods of science are beyond the understandings of children, they are kept to its nomenclature, which fatigues the memory without moving the understanding. The elements of natural history when introduced into class-teaching have, in particular, furnished very poor results.

"It can safely be said," observes M. H. de Lacaze-Duthiers, "that there are few professors examining for the degree of Bachelor who have a very high opinion of the knowledge shown by the candidates either in physics or chemistry or natural history. . . . As to the Bachelors in Letters, it is of course possible that many of them may have a good knowledge of natural history, but I confess that few of these are to be found among those whom I have examined, while there have been abundance who are without such knowledge." *

* M. Lacaze-Duthiers adds:

"They are not merely ignorant; they invent answers and pronounce them with a cool audacity deserving another fate than a pass. I cannot refrain from giving an example:

"D. How do animals breathe?

"R. By means of lungs, gills, and wind-pipes.

"D. What is a wind-pipe?

"R. *It is a tuft of little villosities fixed upon the end of an insect's nose.*

"This candidate was accepted; he scored the average for a pass—and he passed."

Without offending M. Lacaze-Duthiers, the young limb who gave that answer invented nothing. He returned to *Alma Mater* change for her own sovereign. He gave her back the words she had given him. Only he did not return them in the order he had received them. He had heard too many, and they got mixed up in his head.

Much history and still more geography have also been added to the programmes. The study of living languages has been taken up more seriously. In a word, an attempt has been made to give a practical character to secondary teaching.

We must admit that it has not succeeded. Are our Bachelors of Letters any better armed for the struggle of life when a few chemical terms have been put into their heads? No. The elements of an exact science are of no utility for those who do not pursue their studies far enough to form a synthesis or to draw some industrial applications from them. Have they more experience because they learn universal history from the time of the cave-dwellers up to the presidency of M. Jules Grévy? I doubt it. History, as it is taught them, is merely an insipid catalogue of facts and dates. It would perhaps be better to embrace less time, to keep to modern ages, and to study these with all the circumstances which reveal their spirit and life. But how is it possible to make the life of a people known to children who do not know what the life of a man is? I say nothing about geography, which for a long time was the object of the most superstitious hopes. It is only a great science when it absorbs several other sciences such as geology, mineralogy, ethnography, political economy, &c. &c., and it is not in this fashion that it is taught in the secondary schools. In them it becomes a long and sterile exercise for the memory. Amidst all these new notions I hardly see anything except the study of living languages which has a practical interest. It cannot be denied that it is an advantage to know English and German. This knowledge is useful to the business man and to the legislator as well as to the soldier and the scholar. But it is

doubtful whether secondary education ought to have what is useful as its sole object. It is far too general for that.

No, the fine name "humanities," which was given it for a long time, enlightens us about its true mission. It ought to form men, and not any one type of man. It ought to teach how to think. A sensible man will be satisfied if it succeeds in this, and will not expect from it many other things as well.

To learn how to think, that sums up the whole programme of secondary education properly understood.

This is why I deeply regret the loss of the methods by which Latin was formerly taught, for by learning Latin in that way the pupils learnt something infinitely more precious than Latin. They learnt the art of directing and expressing their thought.

I am struggling against necessity. Please excuse my vain obstinacy. I have a desperate love for Latin studies. I firmly believe that without them there is an end of the beauty of the French genius. Latin is not for us a foreign language, it is a mother tongue; we are Latins. The milk of the Roman wolf forms the best part of our blood. All those among us who have thought forcibly have learned to think in Latin. I do not exaggerate when I say that a man who is ignorant of Latin is ignorant of the sovereign clearness of speech. All tongues are obscure beside it. Latin literature is more suited than any other to form the mind. When I say this, do not imagine that I am falling into an error concerning the genius possessed by Cicero's fellow countrymen; I see its limits. Rome had simple and powerful ideas, but not a great number of them. But it is because of

that very fact that she is an incomparable educator. Since her time, humanity has conceived profounder ideas, the world has thrilled anew by coming into contact with things. So much is true. It is also quite true that, to equip youth, nothing has the power of Latin.

Look at "Hamlet"; it is an immense world. I doubt if ever anything greater has been done. But what is there for a schoolboy to lay hold of in it? How can he grasp those phantoms of ideas which are more impalpable than the phantom which wanders on the terrace of Elsinore? How can he make clear to himself this chaos of images as uncertain as the clouds whose changing forms the sad young prince points out to Polonius? All English literature, poetic and profound as it is, presents similar complexities and a similar confusion. I could say the same of German literature, at any rate of those parts of it which have not been inspired either by Rome or by France. Yesterday I was re-reading Goethe's "Faust," the first part of "Faust," in M. Camille Benoit's fine translation, which has just been published. It is a rich storehouse of ideas and feelings. It is more than that. It is a laboratory where the substance of humanity is put into the crucible. Still, what a number of fogs there are in this work of the most luminous genius Germany has produced! We feel our way in it through tortuous bypaths, our glance blinded by meteors. It will never be a classic for us. Now, open Livy's history. There all is ordered, luminous, simple. Livy is not a profound genius; but he is a perfect pedagogue. He never moves us, and for that reason we read him without any keen pleasure. But how regularly he thinks! How pleased he is to show his thought, to examine all

the pieces of it, and to explain the part which each of them plays. So much for the form. As to the matter itself, what do we find? Lessons in patriotism, in courage, in devotion, in the ancestral religion, in the worship of country. There is a classic for you! I do not speak of the Greeks; they are the flower and perfume of classicism. They have more than virtue; they have taste! I mean that sovereign taste, that harmony which is born of wisdom. But it must be admitted that they have always occupied a small place in the programmes for the Bachelor's degree.

And now Latin has been reduced in our schools to the same level as Greek. It has become no more than a vain shadow, the plaything of the lightest breath.

Secondary education tends to strip itself more and more of that incomparable splendour which it derived from its apparent uselessness. Since such a transformation is necessary, since it corresponds to the change in customs, it is not very philosophical to lament it overmuch. If I am inconsolable, my reason condemns me. Nature is never on the side of the inconsolable. To fret over the future is always a somewhat foolish attitude for one to adopt. Nations have an instinct for what suits them best, and the new France will doubtless find the teaching which her children need. Yet we, if this selfish pleasure be allowed us, may rejoice that we have been among those called last of all to the banquet of the Muses, and we may murmur these verses of a learned poet, Frédéric Plessis, although from a pious feeling we may refuse to believe in the entire fulfilment of the prophetic threat which they contain:

"Les siècles rediront que, d'Athène et de Rome,
Au stérile Occident l'art fécond est venu,
Et ceux qu'autour de nous la voix du jour renomme
Périront dès demain pour l'avoir méconnu.

"Dans la route banale où leur foule s'engage
Ils trouvent la fortune et l'applaudissement;
Mais la noble pensée et le noble langage
Par eux ne seront pas foulés impunément." *

* "The ages to come will repeat that fruitful art came to the sterile West from Athens and Rome, and those among us whom the voice of the day exalts will to-morrow be forgotten, because they ignored this. The hackneyed path on which they press in crowds leads them to fortune and applause; but noble thought and noble language will not be trampled upon by them without taking their revenge."

AFTER THE HOLIDAYS

SPEECH AND SOIL *

HE first cold winds of winter are beginning to drive us back to town. The days are getting short and gloomy. While I am writing this, by the fireside, in a lonely house, I can see the red moon rising at the end of a glade now strewn with dead leaves. Everything is silent. An infinite sadness spreads out to the horizon. Farewell, ye long sunny days, ye luminous and tuneful hours! Farewell, ye fields, and your untroubled rest! Farewell, earth, beautiful, flower-strewn earth, mother earth from which we all come, and whither one day we shall all return!

On the eve of my departure, when boxes are already packed and bags fastened, I have, in this melancholy dwelling, but a single volume within my reach, and that a very small one. It is by chance that this little volume has remained here, upon the mantelpiece. Chance is my steward. To him I leave the care of my goods and the administration of my affairs. He often robs me, but he is a witty rogue—he amuses me, and I forgive him. Besides, whatever mischief he does, I should do still more

* "La Vie des Mots." Par Arsène Darmesteter. Delagrave.

myself. I am indebted to him for some excellent transactions. He is a servant full of resource and of a delightful fancy. He never gives me what I ask him. I do not get angry at this, remembering that the wishes of men are nearly always ill-advised, and that they are never so unhappy as when they obtain what they ask for. "Thou hast become miserable," says Creon to Œdipus, "only because thou hast always done thy will." Chance, my steward, does not do mine. I have a suspicion that he is more initiated than I am into the secrets of destiny. I trust myself to him and I despise human wisdom.

On this occasion, at least, he has served me well by leaving within my reach this evening that little yellow volume which I had already read during the summer with a certain intellectual emotion, and which is in perfect harmony with my evening reveries, for it speaks of language, and I am thinking about the earth.

Do you ask me why I associate these two ideas? I will tell you. There exists an intimate relation between human language and our fruitful earth. Men's language takes its birth in the fields: its origin is rustic, and, if towns have added something to its beauty, all its force is derived from the meadows where it was born. The thing which impresses and moves me most at the present moment is, how rural and peasant-like is the language which we all speak. Yes, our speech, like the song of the lark, comes from the cornfields.

M. Arsène Darmesteter's book, which, as I turn over its pages, helps me to weave these autumn reveries which lose their colour as I transfer them to paper, is a scientific volume worthy of a better use,

of a more serious study. M. Arsène Darmesteter is a linguist, gifted with a mind at once analytic and capable of generalisation, who rises by gradual stages to the philosophy of language. His severe and powerful intelligence inaugurates a method and constructs a system.

The Darwin of grammar and lexicography, he applies evolutionary theories to words, and draws the conclusion that language is a sonorous matter which human thought modifies insensibly and continually under the unconscious action of the struggle for existence and natural selection. This methodic study of his deserves to be analysed methodically. I leave that task to others, to M. Michel Bréal, for instance. I shall not enter into M. Arsène Darmesteter's profound and regular thought. I shall only amuse myself a little by playing around it. I am going to turn over the pages of his book, but as I do so I shall, from time to time, cast a glance towards the fields half covered by the night, which I am to leave before dawn to-morrow.

Yes, human language comes from the soil—it retains its fragrance. How true this is of Latin, for example! Beneath the majesty of that sovereign language we still feel the rugged thought of the shepherds of Latium. Just as at Rome the circular temples built of marble eternalise the memory and form of the old thatched and wooden cottages, so the language of Livy preserves the rustic images which the first nurslings of the Wolf have with their vigorous simplicity impressed upon it. The masters of the world used the words bequeathed them by their ancestors, the labourers, when they called the wings of their armies by the name of the horn of the ox or the ram (*cornu*), sections of their legions by the name

of the farmyard (*cohors*), and the units of their cohorts sheaves of corn (*manipulus*).

And here is something that tells us more about the Romans than all the speeches of the historians. Those industrious men, who by toil raised themselves to power, employed the word *callere* when they meant "to be skilful." Now what is the primitive sense of *callere?* It is to have hardened (callous) hands. It is in truth the tongue of peasants which expresses the fertility of the field and man's joy by the same word (*lætus*), and compares the maniac to the labourer leaving the field (*lira*, a furrow; *deliare*, to be in delirium)!

I take these examples from M. Arsène Darmesteter's book on "La Vie des Mots." French, in like manner, was born and moulded from the labours of the field. It is full of metaphors borrowed from rustic life, and it is strewn with flowers of the fields and of the woods. And that is why La Fontaine's fables are so full of perfume.

Every dweller in the country is a sportsman or a poacher. It is impossible to live in the fields without going in pursuit of fur or feather. My colleague M. de Cherville, the author of "La Vie à la Campagne," will not contradict me. Now, men change less than we think. There always have been in France many sportsmen and still more poachers, and so the number of metaphors with which the chase furnishes our idiom is large.

M. Darmesteter quotes curious examples of these. Thus when we say "to follow any one's footsteps" (*brisées*) we unconsciously employ an image taken from the practice of hunting. The *brisées* are the branches broken off by the hunter so that he may know the place where the animal has passed.

How many among those who employ the word to excite (*acharner*) know that it properly means to let loose a falcon on the prey? The chase has given to current speech: "to be upon the watch" (*à l'affût*); "bait" (*amorce*), what the animal bites; "enticement" (*appât*), what one gives the animal to eat to attract him; "to disgorge" (*rendre gorge*), which was properly used of the falcon before being figuratively applied to dishonest financiers; "haggard" (*hagard, faucon hagard*), a falcon that lives in the hedges and has not been tamed, whence comes *air hagard*, a wild look; "simpleton" (*niais*), properly a bird still in the nest.

"Words," says M. Arsène Darmesteter, "words retain the primitive impress that popular thought has given them. Generations succeed one another, receiving from anterior generations the oral tradition of expressions, ideas, and images which they transmit to the generations following them." Thus, when one has got the hint, one can read the whole history of France in a French dictionary. I remember a saying of M. Renan on this subject. We were talking of the Merovingians. "The life of a Clotaire or of a Chilperic," M. Renan told us, "was not so very different from that led, in our time, by a substantial farmer of La Beauce or La Brie." Now, the etymology of the words court (*cour*), town (*ville*), constable (*connétable*), and marshal (*maréchal*) proves that M. Renan was right, for it shows us the mode of existence of these long-haired kings. In truth, the Merovingian court, the *cortem*, was nothing but the *cohortem*, or farmyard, of the Romans. The constables were the heads of the stables, and the marshals the guardians of the beasts of burden. And the king resided in his *villa*—that is to say, his farm.

"All the misery of the Middle Ages," says M. Darmesteter, "shows itself in the captive (*chétif*)—that is to say, in the *captivum*, the prisoner (*chétif*, or wretched, in the Middle Ages, still means prisoner), the weak man incapable of resisting—in the *serf*, the slave, and in the butcher (*boucher*), he who sells the meat of the buck (*bouc*).

"We see feudalism declining with the *vasselet* or *vaslet*, the young *vassal* who degrades himself to the level of the modern valet, and the middle classes rising in rank with the humble *minister*, or servitor, who becomes the *Minister* of State."

Every act, every institution of the national life has left its stamp upon the language. We find in the French of to-day marks left there by the Church and by feudalism, by the Crusades, royalty, the common law and the Roman law, scholasticism, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the humanities, philosophy, the Revolution, and democracy. We can say without any exaggeration that philology, which has just formed itself into a positive science, is an unlooked-for auxiliary to history.

It is the people who make languages. Voltaire complains of this: "It is unfortunate," he says, "that in regard to languages as well as to other more important matters, it should be the populace who direct a nation's first steps." Plato said contrariwise: "The people is, in matters of language, a most excellent master." Plato spoke the truth. The people constructs languages well. It constructs them full of images and clear, living and forcible. If scholars constructed them they would be dull and cumbrous. But, in compensation, the people does not pride itself on regularity. It has no idea of scientific method. Instinct suffices for it. It is by instinct that it creates.

It does not add reflection to instinct. Thus the most enlightened and most learned languages are tissues of inexactitudes and whimsicalities. Doubtless, all the facts can be brought under rigorous laws, for everything in the universe is subject to laws, even anomalies and monstrosities. The great Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire did nothing more than determine to the last degree of rigour the laws of teratology. It is none the less true to say that blunders and malapropisms form a certain part in the confection of languages in general, and of that one in particular which Brunetto Latini reckoned the most delectable of them all.

I shall quote two curious examples of this.

Foie (liver) comes from *ficus*, which means fig, or, to be perfectly exact, from a derivative of *ficus*. How? The most natural way in the world. The Romans, who, as was inevitable, became gourmands as soon as they were rich, liked *foie gras* prepared with figs, *jecur ficatum*, or *ficatum* alone. This latter word, *ficatum*, came to denote not only liver prepared with figs, but also simply liver. And that is how *foie* (liver) comes from a derivative of *ficus*.

The etymology of *truie* (sow) is analogous, but even more curious still. *Truie* is the popular Latin *troia*, the name of the city of *Troy!*

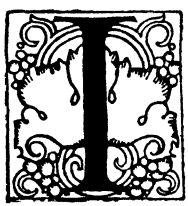
The Romans called a pig served up with stuffing made of the meat of other animals *porcus troianus* (in vulgar Latin *porcus de Troia*). This was a comic and quite popular allusion to the horse of Troy, to that machine *fœta armis*, as Virgil says. Hence, from the restriction or absorption of the defined word by the word defining it, Troia alone came to take the meaning of stuffed pig (*porc farci*). Then, thanks to its feminine termination, it became feminine. *Truie*

(sow) is the popular form of Troia, of which Troie represents the learned formation.

The caprices and errors of language are innumerable. And these caprices impose themselves upon us, these errors could not be rectified. Scholars look at the matter wrongly; they cannot remedy them. It is useless to know that we ought to say *l'endemain* and *l'ierre*; we are compelled to say *le lendemain* and *le lierre.*

We speak in order to be understood. That is why usage is the absolute rule in matters of language. Neither science nor logic will prevail against it, and to express oneself too well is to express oneself badly. The finest words in the world are but vain sounds if they are not understood. That is a truth which our younger literature has not taken sufficient hold of. Even if the decadent style were the most perfect of styles, it would still be of no value because it is unintelligible. We must not refine too much nor sin from an excess of nicety. The Catholic Church, which carries the knowledge of human nature to its highest point, forbids man to make himself an angel, from dread lest he should make himself a brute. That is precisely what happens to those who are anxious to express themselves too subtly and to give too rare a beauty to their "writing." They occupy themselves with trifles and imitate the cries of animals. Language is formed naturally; its first quality will always be naturalness.

M. BECQ DE FOUQUIERES



PROCLAIM him happy and to be envied. He is dead, but he lived a full life, he accomplished his task and erected his own monument. It is of M. Becq de Fouquières that I am speaking. I had never seen him, yet how highly I rated and how much I envied that excellent man who was a man of a single book! Once only, and then too late, was it given me to meet him. That happened at a little Norman watering-place where I passed the summer three years ago. He had the appearance of a soldier. As one saw him, with his vague glance, his drooping mustache, and his rounded back, one would have said that he was a dreamy and retired captain. The expression of his face disclosed a solitary, innocent, and generous temperament. He went about silently, with a touch of weariness, of melancholy, and of gentleness. He spoke to me tenderly, as to some one who had discovered ten unpublished lines by André Chénier. But his voice sank. He seemed even then to long for that final rest which he enjoys to-day. Perhaps he might not have seemed so languid had he not been accompanied along the strand by that excellent poet M. José-Maria de Hérédia; for M. de Hérédia is all brilliance and resonance, he beams, sparkles, and coruscates, without a moment's rest.

But, even without this contrast, it was evident that M. Becq de Fouquières had come to an understanding with death. He had published the works of André Chénier and established the text of that poet with as much exactness as lies within the bounds of possibility. He had annotated and illustrated that text and commented upon it in notes and prefaces, as well as by a collection of documents, and by letters addressed to M. Antoine de Latour, M. Prosper Blanchemain, and to M. Reinhold Dezeimeris. His work was therefore done. Nothing retained him any longer in this world, and illness, which was approaching, did not in his eyes appear to be a very intrusive visitor.

His life was a modest one. But Cæsar, if we are to take him at his word, would have been satisfied with it. For M. Becq de Fouquières was first in his own village. He leaves behind him the fame of a prince among editors. Do not misunderstand me. His domain was not that in which the great philologists, the Madvigs and the Henri Weils bear sway. They are scholars, M. Becq de Fouquières was a man of letters. The text which he has reconstructed was a French, almost a contemporary, text. But, as he himself rightly said, "To reconstruct a text is always a delicate task upon which even the most practised minds may often be at fault." The public has not the least idea of the trouble that is taken by a conscientious editor, a Paul Mesnard, for example, or a Marty-Laveaux or a Maurice Tourneux. One cannot verify exactly the text of one of Racine's tragedies or even of one of La Fontaine's fables without a great amount of application and a certain intellectual endowment which cannot be acquired. Yet the "Fables" were printed during La Fontaine's lifetime, and

Racine himself revised the complete edition of his "Théâtre" in 1697. Difficulties increase when we have to deal with the "Essais" of which Montaigne, at his death, left a copy that it is impossible either entirely to ignore or implicitly to follow. An editor's sagacity is put to still more formidable proof by Pascal's "Pensées" and André Chénier's poems. These are, as everybody knows, scattered fragments, ruins of a peculiar nature over which chaos reigns in all its power, ruins of an edifice that has never been built. I have not to speak here of the zeal which M. Ernest Havet has displayed in giving order to Pascal's "Pensées." As for Chénier, he found in M. Becq de Fouquières the most loving and faithful of editors. It was nothing less than his whole life which M. Becq de Fouquières devoted to André's glory.

With the object of preparing himself for his editorial labours he not only studied the unfinished works of his author, fragment by fragment, verse by verse, and word by word, but he also followed him step by step through his earthly existence, and lived again the life which the poet had lived, that short though full life, so generously dedicated to friendship, to love, to poetry, and to country, that life glowing with manly virtue. He associated with André's friends, the de Panges, the Trudaines, the Brézais. He loved the women André had loved; he formed attachments for those charming shades the Bonneuils, the Gouy-d'Arcys, the Cosways, the Lecoulteuxs, and the Fleurys. More than this, he shared the poet's studies as well as his pleasures. The son of Santi L'Homaca had learned Greek lovingly and, so to speak, naturally. He lived in intimate commerce with the Hellenic and also with

the Latin muse. M. Becq de Fouquières, following the footprints of the young god, became the companion of Homer and Virgil, of the Latin elegiac poets, the Alexandrine Pleiad, Callimachus, Aratus, Meleager and the Anthology, and of Theognis and Nonnus. He did not neglect, either, the writers of little romances, the diegematists, he forgot neither Heliodorus of Emesa, nor Achilles Tatius, nor Xenophon of Antioch, nor Xenophon of Ephesus. He forgot nobody, with the one exception of Theodorus Prodromus, who composed, as perhaps you know, the "Adventures of Rhodates and Dosicles." M. Becq de Fouquières failed here. He did not read the "Adventures of Rhodates and Dosicles." And it is precisely from this book, it is from Theodorus Prodromus, that Chénier has borrowed one of his masterpieces, the "Malade":

"Apollo, dieu sauveur, dieu des savants mystères." *

M. Reinhold Dezeimeris pointed this out to him in an elegant and subtle dissertation. In this we have a striking example and one worth meditating upon. We have, all of us, our Achilles' heel. No matter how well we may be prepared for the task that devolves upon us, there is always a Theodorus Prodromus who escapes us. We must make up our minds not to know everything, since even Becq de Fouquières himself was ignorant of one of the sources of his poet.

It was in 1862 that this loving editor issued his first critical edition of André Chénier's poems. Ten years later he issued a second, much improved and greatly augmented both in its preface and in its commentary.

A little later, in 1874, M. Gabriel de Chénier

* "Apollo, saviour, god of the learned mysteries."

published his edition. M. Gabriel de Chénier was a robust old man. At eighty, he carried his head high; his athletic shoulders reared themselves above those of other men. His face was impassive, and his hair had turned white, but his dark eyes flashed fire. He had peacefully grown grey in an office of the Ministry of War, and he seemed, like another Latour-d'Auvergne, to have come back from some army of which he had been the oldest veteran. One of my contemporaries, a young journalist whose name I forget, met him at Lemerre's, the publisher's, was filled with admiration for his vigorous old age, and took him for a man of the antique days. He rushed to his newspaper and excitedly proclaimed that he had seen André Chénier's uncle. In reality he had only seen his nephew. M. Gabriel de Chénier was the son of one of André's brothers, Louis Sauveur. There was absolutely nothing Attic about the superb old man. He had delayed the publication of his uncle's works for a long time, and he had a deadly hatred for those who had anticipated him in that task. He never called them by their names. He said the *first editor* to designate Latouche, whom he blamed equally for being a liar, a thief, and for having only one eye. "The first editor's preface," he said, "is a romance." And he said also: "The first editor, who had been deprived of one eye, and who did not see very clearly with the other, mistook the reading."

He formally accused the first editor of having robbed him of André Chénier's manuscripts. The death of this "first editor" did not calm his hatred. It may be noted that he had complained of nothing as long as Latouche was alive. Let us be just. Latouche showed no lack either of tact or of taste in

editing André's poems. If he made in the sacred text some changes which rightly shock us to-day, he did, upon the whole, good service for the then unknown poet's reputation. But M. Gabriel de Chénier would not have his uncle touched. He was an extremely jealous man. And as he was also very simple-minded, he imagined that all those who occupied themselves with André Chénier were robbers. There was not the slightest gradation in his feelings. He pursued the memory of M. Latouche and the person of M. Becq de Fouquières with an equal hatred. He called the latter "the critical editor of 1862 and 1872," taking care never to designate him more expressly. He was in truth an irascible old man.

Before publishing anything, M. Becq de Fouquières had gone to see him. But at the first interview he had been treated as an enemy.

"That man smells of the pipe," M. de Chénier had said as an explanation of his antipathy. As a matter of fact he did not like tobacco, and from his youth onwards was certain that all smokers were rakes and romantics. M. de Fouquières, who wore mustaches, seemed to him to be both. M. de Chénier abominated the manners of the day. You could not drive out of his head the belief that debauchery is a contemporary invention. He put it down to literature. Such was André Chénier's nephew. But, whatever he may have said, M. Becq de Fouquières' great fault in his eyes, the fault he could not forgive, was that he had occupied himself with André's poems. This became evident in 1874, when M. de Chénier disclosed his griefs in his own belated edition. He made strange complaints against "the critical editor of 1862 and 1872." For instance,

the latter having innocently remarked that André Chénier had translated Sappho's verses whilst he was at the Collège de Navarre, the irritable nephew fell into a regular rage. He replied, disregarding André's own evidence, that this was not and could not have been the case, and he added: "It would no more have been tolerated at a school then than now for a pupil to have Sappho's poems in his possession."

M. Becq de Fouquières must have smiled gently at this reason which the old man put forward. I have perhaps a right to smile too; for I read Sappho at school in a small volume of Boissonnade's edition, in which the poor poetess occupied very little space. Alas! time has respected only a small number of her verses. I may add that that very volume afterwards passed, with the rest of my collection of the Greek poets, into the library of Father Gratry of the Oratory, a man whose ardent imagination fed itself both on science and poetry. As a matter of fact what could M. Gabriel de Chénier have thought about Sappho's poems? Did he by any chance imagine that those beautiful fragments contain something that might have tarnished the innocence which young André was already leaving behind him? That would have been a strange mistake.

The quarrel between M. Becq de Fouquières and M. Gabriel de Chénier will remain memorable in the history of the republic of letters. M. de Fouquières had quoted the well-known saying of Chênedollé: "André Chénier was an atheist and liked being one." The nephew replied with assurance: "André had too superior an intelligence and was too well able to admire the wonders of nature and to comprehend the infinite grandeurs of the universe, for any one

except an enemy of the eighteenth-century philosophy to suppose him to be infected with that infirmity of the human mind which we call atheism." These words breathe conviction, but they prove nothing. It remains certain that the idea of God is absent from André Chénier's poetry. M. de Chénier would have the young uncle, whom he watched over, to be pious and chaste. He was scandalised when M. Becq de Fouquières suspected that the poet of the "Elégies," the erotic singer of "la Lampe," had had mistresses. These suspicions were, however, well founded. André himself says somewhere: "I often gave myself up to the distractions and errors of a vigorous and impetuous youth." We know that the Camille whom he "loved to distraction" was no other than the fair Madame de Bonneuil, whose property adjoined the forest of Sénart. Amélie, Rose, and Glycère did not seem entirely poetic fictions any more than the fair and easy Englishwomen whose forms André has immortalised in some free Greek epigrams. People spoke of Madame de Gouy-d'Arcy, of fair Mrs. Cosway, of whom the poet boasted

> "La paix, la conscience ignorante du crime,
> Et la sainte fierté que nul revers n'opprime." *

It seemed as if even at the foot of the scaffold the ardent and proud young man had been attracted by a woman's beauty, it seemed as if at that moment he had cast longing looks on that young captive, that Duchesse de Fleury of whom Madame Vigée-Lebrun has said: "Her countenance was enchanting, her

* "The peace, the conscience ignorant of crime,
And the holy pride which no reverse wore down."

glance ardent, her form such as we ascribe to Venus, and her intelligence superior."

But M. Gabriel de Chénier declared, in a tone admitting of no reply, that neither Bonneuil nor d'Arcy, nor Cosway, nor Fleury had been his mistress, that Amélie, Rose, and Glycère had never existed, and that the uncle, whose nephew he was, had been a very good young man. "Because André," he says, "may sometimes have taken his place at suppers at which his young college friends and beauties of easy virtue were assembled, because in his elegies we find traces of these exceptions to his quiet and studious habits, this is no reason for concluding that his life was dissipated and given over to unbridled pleasures." And, pretending to believe that "the critical editor of 1862 and 1872" made out André to be a rake, the serious nephew exclaims that he did this "perhaps in order to explain and excuse the dissipations and wild orgies of our own days." Is not that admirable? And was I not right in telling you that this quarrel is destined for immortality?

After having with so much perspicacity discovered the motive which influenced M. Becq de Fouquières, his obstinate opponent adds: "It has been asserted that André had been in love with a great number of women. . . . This, however, was not the case, and what proves it is the freshness, the vivacity, of the love which he expresses. A man surfeited with pleasures and satiated with mistresses has no longer so fresh, so ardent, and so fruitful an imagination." What do you say to that? . . . But he does not stop there. He hurls a final argument, which reveals his full candour: "André," he says, "had too much philosophy to abuse things instead of using them." M. Becq de Fouquières—need I say it?—never believed

in so reasonable an André Chénier. He persisted in regarding him as violent, spirited, extravagant, giving himself up unrestrainedly to everything that attracted his mobile and ready temper, ardent in love, in hate, and in work, full of life, of soul, and of genius.

As for M. Chénier, he was not a man to draw back. The utmost he did was to admit that Fanny, the virtuous Fanny, had really existed, and that perhaps André had loved her. "But," he hastens to add, "that love, if love it was, was never a love such as we understand by the word to-day." Alas! we understand it to-day just as it was understood formerly. The things of love are those which change the least. And if some young inquirer to-day asks, as Euripides' heroine formerly asked: "What then is love?" we must still answer her in the words of the poet's old Athenian woman: "O my daughter, it is at once the sweetest and the cruellest of all things!"

This, doubtless, is what M. Becq de Fouquières thought. He was indulgent, for he knew that men are worth anything only by the passions that animate them, and that there are no reserves of force except in strong natures.

He had seen his god, his André, beginning by scattering haphazard the fires of his ardent youth. Then, calming and purifying himself each day by toil, reflection, and suffering, at last attaining, in some years, to the chaste melancholy of ideal love. For that was the feeling which, in the last months of his life, that modest Muse, the gentle hostess of Luciennes, the charming Madame Laurent Lecoulteux, inspired in the poet.

That lady, the poet's Fanny, was, as every one

knows, the daughter of the beautiful Madame Pourrat, whose grace and wit Voltaire had praised. Now, Fanny, to give her her name of love and of immortality, Fanny had a sister, the Countess Hocquart, who lived long enough to bring her evidence to the new generation. She has said of André, whom she often saw at her mother's and her sister's: "He was at once full of charm and very ugly, with large features and an enormous head."

This is precisely how he appears to us in the portrait that Suvée painted at Saint-Lazare on the 29th Messidor of the year Two. But at the idea of that enormous head and those large features M. Gabriel de Chénier became furiously angry with Madame Hocquart, as well as with "the critical editor of 1862 and 1872," who had recorded the sayings of that lady. Without heeding a maxim of the poet, who wrote on the canvas of his "Art of Love" this consoling thought, "Handsome boys are often such fools," the zealous nephew exclaims against the calumny. "Everybody knows," he says, "that André was handsome!" And he tries to prove it by quoting these lines from a letter formerly written to him by General the Marquis de Pange: "I knew your uncle; I saw his features again in you the first moment I looked at you."

Poor M. de Chénier was not capable of producing a good edition. To do that it is necessary to know how to doubt, and this is what he was most ignorant of, although he was ignorant of everything in general. However, his edition is useful. It is rightly in request, though less because it is well printed than because it contains several unpublished fragments taken from manuscripts preserved in the family. M. Becq de Fouquières issued a little

volume expressly to point out M. de Chénier's blunders. He pointed them out with equal consideration and exactness. He showed knowledge, but no ill-nature. It was necessary for him to be unjustly attacked in order for it to be known how perfect a gentleman he was. In that, too, I esteem him happy. He has not lived in vain ; he has left behind him good editions of a great poet who was also an excellent writer of nervous and concise prose. It is not sufficiently known that André Chénier is to be reckoned, for his prose, among the great writers of the Revolution. Without M. Becq de Fouquières this would not be known at all. M. Becq de Fouquières has realised the design which Marie-Joseph Chénier formed in the transient enthusiasm of his regret when he said eloquently :

> "Auprès d'André Chénier, avant que de descendre,
> J'élèverai la tombe où manquera sa cendre,
> Mais où vivront du moins et son doux souvenir
> Et sa gloire et ses vers dictés pour l'avenir." *

That monument, which Marie-Joseph did not raise, is at last finished—it is the twofold critical edition ("Poésie" 1872, "Prose" 1886). If, as M. Renan will have it, the spirits who have flown from this earth assemble according to their tastes and their affinities in the Elysian Fields, if they there form harmonious groups, then without doubt M. Becq de Fouquières is at this moment conversing with François de Pange and André Chénier beneath the shade of the myrtles. Seated near them, on a marble bench, Fanny is playing with the child whom

* "Before going down to André Chénier I will raise for him a tomb which will not, indeed, hold his ashes, but in which his gentle memory and his fame and the verses he uttered for posterity will survive."

she has found again. M. de Fouquières is asking the poet if the fragment which begins with the words *Proserpine incertaine* is authentic, although M. Gabriel de Chénier did not admit it into his text, and he keeps begging for unpublished verses for a celestial edition. For what could he do among the shades but edit? It would be pleasant to think that things were thus arranged in the place whither we are all going. Rigorous doctrines may perhaps contradict this; but an excellent Academician who has a great love for books, M. Xavier Marmier, is inclined to believe that there are libraries in the other world.

M. CUVILLIER-FLEURY

CUVILLIER - FLEURY, whose funeral took place yesterday, had been engaged in literary criticism for longer than a man's lifetime. Journalism is honoured by his vigorous talent which he exercised over so lengthy a period. It is not enough for me to pay my respects to this honourable writer. I should like, if I had the art and the leisure, to sketch his portrait, for it is well worth drawing. But I must be careful. M. Cuvillier-Fleury's face was not one of those which the painter should flatter. The caresses of too soft a pencil would make it lose its character, and that would be a pity. He would have to be painted with broad strokes. His merit was solid, his charm was severe. He put dignity even into his playfulness. You know that he always refrained from the lighter graces and from too ready a smile. Perhaps he was sometimes less successful in defending himself against solemnity.

However, he was neither melancholy nor severe. He was not a grumbler—far from it; he was even inclined to optimism. He believed in goodness. He had, on various subjects, all the certainty of a professor, which, whatever may be said, is as firm as a charcoal-burner's faith. He desired to be just, and he was even able to be moderate, though he was extremely

attached to his own ideas and tastes. And this honest intellect was no narrow intellect. He did not confine his criticism within the puerilities of the schools, or amuse himself by literary trifling. He sought the man beneath the writer. It was man he studied, man as a social and moral being. For this reason his opinions obtained credit and have preserved their interest. The books in which he collected them, "Posthumes et Revenants" and "Études et Portraits," read very well even to-day. I made the experiment this morning, and turned with pleasure to the studies which, more than fifteen years ago, M. Cuvillier-Fleury devoted to the characters of the eighteenth century—to the delightful Chevalier de Boufflers and to the exquisite Madame de Sabran, the most circumspect of tender souls; to Madame Geoffrin and her "dear child," the King of Poland; to the Maréchale de Beauveau, in whom atheism assumed the sweetness of a pious hope; to Marie Antoinette, towards whom M. Cuvillier-Fleury committed only one wrong, that of regarding the letters published by M. d'Hunolstein as genuine. But how could he have avoided that deception, since Sainte-Beuve himself was half deceived by it? M. Cuvillier-Fleury's are solid pages, and if they seem a little heavy it is because there is a great deal in them. When one is not empty it is not easy to be light. And if, during some ideal promenade along a flowery path, you suddenly lift your eyes and see, floating like blissful shades in the midst of the air, solid forms which bear signs of all the fulness of life, throw yourself on your knees and worship them, for they are divine.

The critic's inspiration had no wings; but it walked straightly and firmly. There are many

praiseworthy features in M. Cuvillier-Fleury's moral physiognomy. Among others, there is one which is quite original. And that is fidelity. M. Cuvillier-Fleury remained attached to the end to the ideas, the friendships, and the adorations of his long-past youth. He did not desire that this constancy which honours his life should be looked upon as a merit: "I should think it very humble on my part," he said, "to boast of that virtue, since I know of none simpler to conceive or easier to practise." In 1830, at the period when he wrote a notice of Count Lavallette, his creed was already determined. Henceforth M. Cuvillier-Fleury was attached to the liberal monarchy.

On the last page of the interesting notice I have mentioned, we read a phrase that gives food for thought, although it is quite simple. It is this: "Count Lavallette died full of days in the sixty-first year of his age." The same man who expressed himself thus at twenty-eight, said to me, a full half-century later, when speaking of a candidate for the Academy who, as the phrase runs, carried his sixty-four years: "He is young." O terribly human contradiction! O touching contradiction! How natural it is thus to change one's feeling in regard to men's ages and appearances! He said what was true on both occasions. We all judge everything by our own standard. How could we do otherwise, since to judge is to compare, and we have only one standard, ourselves? And that standard changes continually. We are all the playthings of fickle appearances.

By that phrase, "He is young," I understood that M. Cuvillier-Fleury regarded me as a child, for I was not sixty-four, nor even forty. As a matter of fact my youth astounded him. He never tired

of saying to me: "What! you are thirty-six!" And with wide-open nostrils he seemed to breathe all the air of the time that was opening before me. He enjoyed it too, for he loved life. As he held me in great favour, he deigned one day to ask me what I was writing at the moment. I was unlucky enough to tell him that it was my recollections. I said this to him gently, denoting by an inflection of my voice how intimate and modest those recollections were. However, I saw that I had made him angry. "Recollections!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "At your age, recollections!"

"Alas!" I replied, hesitating, "may I not jot down the impressions of my childhood?"

But he would not understand anything I said, and with a severity, the secret kindness of which I did not mistake, he went on:

"Sir, the Academy would not be pleased to know that you have any recollections."

I confess that notwithstanding this I made a little book out of my recollections.

Several times afterwards I visited M. Cuvillier-Fleury at the house in the Avenue Raphael where he ended his long existence in modest and becoming repose. He was surrounded by recollections. Nowhere else have I ever seen so many pieces of furniture veneered with mahogany or so many hand-worked draperies. Everything at M. Cuvillier-Fleury's, portraits, statuettes, what-nots, porcelain lamps, fancy clocks, down to the little dog worked in party-coloured wools which formed the covering of a footstool, everything spoke of the reign of Louis Philippe, and the uprising of middle-class life that then took place.

M. Cuvillier-Fleury had become blind, but he

endured that infirmity with admirable constancy. He still kept in his warm heart a love of letters and a fondness for the things of the mind. On the brink of the tomb, and with his brow already wrapped in eternal night, he spoke of the Academy with a filial pride whose expression melted one even when it made one smile. The visits of candidates gratified his eighty-years-old heart. The little affairs of the Palais Mazarin delighted him. Well! ought not life to be made amusing to the end?

He was a keen old man, and grew heated over questions of literature and grammar. His conversation was based upon morals and history, had less of subtilty than vigour, and was interspersed with Latin quotations given with a good-natured simplicity. He was ever ready to apply a line of Virgil to his domestic affairs, and asked for something to drink in a hemistich of the "Æneid."

His books, ranged around his room in careful order, formed a working library from which neither the classics nor collections of memoirs were absent. One day, when he did me the honour to receive me in this room, he suddenly got up in the middle of a conversation of which his own recollections formed the chief part, and affectionately asked for my arm in order that we might go round the room together. He was then quite blind. I helped him to make a survey of his books. He would stop every minute, put his hand on a book and, recognising it by the touch, designate it by its title. Suddenly his hand passed over the gilt edges of a "Cicero" which I still see. It is a last-century edition in twenty or twenty-five octavo volumes. The copy was bound in fawn-coloured calf. As he caressed it with his shaking fingers the old man trembled.

"My prize in honours!" he exclaimed. "I obtained it in 1819. I was then in the sixth form at Louis-le-Grand. I bequeath it to . . ."

And he pronounced two names—the name of the worthy comrade who was soon to close his eyes, and that of the prince whose master, and later on whose colleague and friend, he had been.

As he spoke his sightless eyes were wet with tears. I was the only one there to see them. It touched me, for at once I saw all old men embodied in him. Do not the memories of our vanished youth come upon us with a sweet and delicious sadness in the decline of life? Happy the King of Thule! Happy also the old critic of the Avenue Raphael! Happy he who dies pressing against his heart the golden cup of the first loved one, or the book that bears witness to a studious youth! The relics of the heart and those of the mind are equally dear and equally sacred.

It seems to me that this anecdote, little adorned though it be, would not be without its effect in the speech to be delivered at the Academy in honour of M. Cuvillier-Fleury. Possibly my want of study and of vocation may mislead me. But in any case it is with a willing heart that I offer it to the successor of the devoted Academician whom we bury to-day, to M. J. J. Weiss, for instance.*

* It is now known that M. Weiss was not elected. The Academy lost an opportunity, though these are rare enough, of admitting a true writer into its body.

M. ERNEST RENAN, HISTORIAN OF ORIGINS

ERNEST RENAN will give us next week the first volume of a "Histoire d'Israël," which will comprise three volumes. This work will form a sort of introduction to his history of the "Origines du Christianisme."

When it is published, M. Renan will have finished his vast enterprise. He will have investigated the profound sources of the religion which was destined to give sustenance to so many peoples, and which to-day still shares with Buddhism and Islam the empire of souls.

Whatever be the manner in which we approach the obscure beginnings of those great ideas which envelop us on all sides, and in which we are steeped, and whatever account we give of the elaboration of so high an ideal, we must admit that M. Ernest Renan made no mistake regarding the nature and extent of his talents when he directed his mind towards such studies. The subject demanded the rarest and even the most contradictory of intellectual qualities. It required a critical sense always on the alert, a scientific scepticism able to defy all the stratagems of believers and their simplicity, which is mightier still than their stratagems. It required at the same time a vivid feeling for the divine, a secret

instinct of the needs of the human soul, and, so to speak, an objective piety. Now this double nature is found in an extraordinarily rich degree in M. Ernest Renan. Without belonging to any religious communion, he has his full share of religious feeling. Though he himself does not believe, he is infinitely apt at seizing all the delicate shades of the popular creeds. I may perhaps be understood when I say that faith does not possess him, but that he possesses faith. Thus happily endowed by nature for his work, he has also prepared himself for it with thoroughness. Born an artist, he has made himself a scholar. His youth was devoted to a fierce labour. For twenty years he studied night and day, and he acquired such a habit of toil that he can accomplish immense tasks in his maturity with all the calm of a contemplative genius. To-day, everything is easy to him, and he renders everything easy to us. In a word, he is an artist, he possesses style —that is to say, he possesses infinite shades of thought.

It must also be said that, if M. Renan was fitted to write about the origins of Christianity, he came at a propitious moment. The work was prepared and men's minds inclined towards the subject. Doubt had been born, and with it curiosity The philosophy of the eighteenth century had freed men's understandings, and had even penetrated into the Protestant theology. The texts, so long held sacred, had been studied with a great deal of critical ability in France, and with a great deal of knowledge in Germany. M. Renan found the materials for his history ready to his hand. The substance was there; and since he is an artist and a poet he gave to it form and soul.

As a general rule it is imprudent to believe in the novelty of ideas and feelings. Everything has been said and felt long ago, and oftenest we only rediscover the thing which we believe we have found. However, it does seem that the scholars of our own time have a new faculty—that of understanding the past and going back to distant origins. Doubtless in all times man has preserved some remembrances and established some traditions. For a long period he has possessed recorded annals, and it is this, even more than the habit of wearing clothes, which distinguishes him from the beasts. He has rightly said, "Our fathers did this or that." But the differences which there were between himself and them impressed him only slightly. He readily lent the appearance of the present to the most distant past. He was not sensible to the profound differences brought into modes of life by time. He pictured to himself the childhood of the world in the likeness of its maturity. This tendency is strikingly shown in the ancient historians, especially Livy, who makes the rude shepherds of Latium speak as if they were contemporaries of Augustus. It is still more strikingly shown in the art of the Middle Ages, which gave to the Kings of ancient Judea the Hand of Justice and the Crown, decorated with its *fleur de lys*, of the Kings of France. With Descartes the human understanding crossed an abyss. None the less, our seventeenth-century tragedies, although they show a perfect knowledge of abstract man, are based, even in Racine himself, upon the invariability of habits and customs throughout the ages. The eighteenth century, although it concerned itself a great deal with origins, did not hesitate to depict Solon as a sort of Turgot and to invest Semiramis

with the royal mantle of Catherine II. It seems that the true image of the past has been revealed to us by the great historical school of our own age. It seems that the sense of origins is a new sense, or at least a sense newly employed by man. The generations that will come after us will perhaps say that we have had a very ridiculous and a very trite view of antiquity; but it is nevertheless certain that in some respects we have created the comparative history of humanity. Fresh sciences such as ethnography, archæology, and philology have had a great share in doing this. The men of antique times are seen by us to-day with a physiognomy, with a character, which may well be true, and which at least approaches truth. And this sense of origins, this divination of a lost past, this knowledge of the childhood of humanity, is possessed in the highest degree by M. Renan. He has shown it in all those parts of his work which border on legend and present primitive scenes which the sun of history has not illumined. With peculiar insight and with perfect tact he has discovered what lay submerged in the twilight of dawn.

M. Renan has had full scope for the use of this art, this gift as I should like to call it, in the history of Israel, a history which we see springing in all its primitive simplicity from childish stories and rustic poems. His travels in the East have furnished him with authentic backgrounds for those pastoral or warlike scenes to which his artist's intelligence gives form and feeling. I do not intend to speak now of his book. I only attempt to indicate the essential qualities of the historian, especially those he has shown in a chapter already familiar, that of Saul and David. I cannot refrain from quoting the portrait

M. Renan traces of the first King of Israel. It is an excellent example in support of what I have just said.

"He [Saul] usually dwelt in the district of his birth, Gibeah of Benjamin, called, after him, Gibeah of Saul. There he led a family life without pomp or ceremony, the simple life of a peasant noble, tilling his fields when not at war, and in other respects keeping aloof from all business. His house was of considerable size. At each new moon he held sacrifices and feasts in it, and at these all the officers had special places assigned them. The king sat with his back to the wall. To execute his orders he had *râcim*, 'runners,' similar to the Oriental *chaouch* of modern times. There was nothing else which resembled a court. His proud neighbours, who were, like Abner, more or less his relations, kept him company. It was a sort of nobility, at once rustic and military, which we find at the basis of monarchies that endure."

We are far away from the obscure and noble Saul of tradition. How intelligible and clear the shepherd king has become! And M. Renan's David is still more interesting. How living he seems, with the grace of a young brigand, with the craft of a young chieftain, the ingenuous cruelty, the poetry of a savage. I thought as I read those subtle and vigorous pages how very amusing it is to live in a time like ours, a time when one can compare the little David in a *burnous* of M. Renan with the majestic and pensive David whom the thirteenth-century sculptor shows us, wearing a long white beard, covered by a heavy crown, and holding the prophetic lyre in his hands.

Yes, I said to myself, it is interesting and pleasant

to live in a time when both science and poetry find their account, when a broad criticism shows us in marvellous fashion the bud full of the sap of reality as well as the flower of the legend in its full bloom.

VIRTUE IN FRANCE*

HERE is in Athens, at the foot of the Acropolis, a charming little temple dedicated to Victory. This temple has on one of its sides a bas-relief representing the goddess engaged in loosening the straps of her sandals. She thus declares her intention of remaining among the descendants of Themistocles and Miltiades. But it is in vain that her feet are bare: Victory has wings. The day which will see her fly far away from the Athenians is near at hand. No nation, even though it has been peopled by heroes, has long retained in its arms that bloodstained and faithless one. And why should she be constant? She knows that the moment she returns she will be forgiven. However, the Attic sculptor had in this conceived a beautiful allegory. I would like to imitate it in imagination and to give it a truer bearing. I imagine, not Victory, but Virtue, seated by some humble hearth in our land of France, and throwing off her travelling mantle as something henceforth of no use to her. In thought I place this figure as a symbolic frontispiece at the beginning of M. Maxime du Camp's new book. Virtue is doubtless of all countries and of all ages. Her presence is necessary

* "La Vertu en France." Par M. Maxime du Camp.

everywhere, peoples only exist through her; but it is true to say that she loves the French, and that their land is that which she loves the best. Virtue! she has been among us for a long time. I know no people among whom she has shown so much vigour joined to so much charm. She led our fathers by the hand, and to-day we follow her still. Yes, this very day! . . . It is useless to point to our scandals—we know that beneath that shameful surface there are in reality the military and civil virtues of a population which toils and serves. Praise is due to M. Maxime du Camp for having at the present moment written and published a book on virtue in France, a book of examples, a simple collection of true stories.

Everybody knows that for several years M. Maxime du Camp has made himself the annalist of contemporary charity. He keeps the register of goodness with restrained emotion and perfect exactness. His works on philanthropic institutions are models of clearness and precision. He has seen everything for himself, and it is reported that, the better to observe what he wished to describe, he has more than once joined the poor in their night refuges. A powerful attraction draws him to all the meeting-places of misery and charity. It is that attraction, allied with a true patriotism, that has driven him to write his new book, "La Vertu en France."

"When I was a little boy," he says, "I read 'La Morale en Action,' and I recognised that the annals of all times and of all peoples had to be examined in order to write that book. I asked myself whether our own contemporary history—namely, that which begins with the century and continues up to our own days—would not afford a series of stories capable of

demonstrating that our own epoch, so often decried, is not inferior to past epochs, and whether it would not be possible to garner from it a series of facts analogous to those that had been formerly offered for our admiration."

He sought and he has found. He has met the good Samaritan a thousand times upon our highways. He has discovered many obscure and beautiful actions, and he has related the finest of them. Yes, virtue is everywhere, in the fields and in the towns; it runs through the streets of Paris.

Make no mistake as to what we call by the name of virtue. It is the generous force of life. Virtue is not an innocent. We adore divine innocence, but it is not of all ages and all conditions; it is not ready for all encounters. It protects itself against the snares of nature and of man. Innocence fears everything, virtue fears nothing. Virtue can, if it be necessary, plunge with a sublime impurity into the depths of misery to console it, into every vice to recover it. It knows what the great human task is, and that it is sometimes necessary to soil one's hands. *Inquinandæ sunt manus* (Hands must be stained). Warlike or pacific, it is always armed. It loads the soldier's gun and puts the scalpel into the surgeon's hand. It is thus that M. Maxime du Camp understands it. He requires it to be active and strong. It is indeed a *morality in action* that he has written. His predecessors, the Blanchards and the Bouillys, were but colourless apologists of sentiment. M. Maxime du Camp's book, though intended for youth, is full of virile thoughts.

If we attempt to draw comparisons between the humble and sublime actors in charity and devotion who live again in this book we do not know to

whom to give the palm, we hesitate between the poor peasant who dies because of her incurable kindness, the sister of charity, the noble-minded servant, the sailor, and the soldier. Yet it is perhaps to these latter, it is perhaps to the soldiers and the sailors, that belongs the honour of the finest and most painful sacrifices. Has not the heroic Gordon said: "A soldier can do no more than his duty"? Listen to what M. Maxime du Camp tells us of Lieutenant Bellot, who perished amid the ice after unimaginable sufferings: "His brilliant action was not one of a moment's duration. It lasted for years without being abated by any apparent weakness. He held the honour of his nationality and of his uniform so high that nothing could cool his courage. When in the month of May 1852 he came on board the 'Prince Albert,' after his three months of exploration, he wrote: 'I had a hard apprenticeship to serve, and everybody here, except myself, had known the fatigue of a similar journey, while for me it was quite a new experience. How many moral torments did I not also suffer in addition to material difficulties! But I kept these momentary struggles to myself, and no one can say that a French officer wavered where others did not flag.'"

These are examples capable of making the most sluggish hearts beat faster. M. Maxime du Camp was well inspired to retrace them with the sobriety and simplicity that become them.

His book, as I have said, is intended for young people. When I finished reading it a thought came into my mind which I am glad to believe will not occur to young people. It is a melancholy book. I insist upon this. The great affairs of man and of life must be spoken of with entire sincerity. On

this condition alone has one any right to address the public.

Now, what strikes one when one reads the actions of these men who devoted themselves to death, is the sublime powerlessness of their courage, the undeserved sterility of their sacrifice. Heroism and devotion are like great works of art—they have no object beyond themselves. One could almost say that their uselessness makes their greatness. Men sacrifice themselves for the sake of sacrifice. The object of the finest sacrifices is often unworthy, sometimes it is nothing at all. In the madness of a species of sublime egoism, charity resembles love. Without doubt virtue is a force ; it is even the only human force. But its fatal destiny is to be always defeated. It gives its soldiers the incomparable beauty that belongs to the vanquished. For a long time now, virtue has been striking formidable blows against evil ; but evil is immortal ; it laughs at our blows.

Yes, evil is immortal. Satan, the genius in whom the old theology incarnates it, will survive the last man and remain alone, seated with folded wings, upon the ruins of extinct worlds. And we have not even the right to desire Satan's death. An elevated philosophy will not lament the eternity of universal evil. It will, on the contrary, recognise that evil is necessary, and that it ought to endure ; for without it man would have nothing to do in this world. He would be as if he were not. Life would have no meaning and would be quite unintelligible. Why ? Because evil is the final cause of good, and good is the final cause of man. If, by some impossibility—the supposition need not alarm you in the least—if, by some impossibility, evil should ever disappear, it would take away with it all that makes the worth of

life, it would despoil the earth of its splendour and of its glory. It would tear from it the tremulous love of mothers and the piety of sons, it would banish knowledge along with study, and would extinguish the lights of the mind. It would slay the honour of the world. We should no longer see the blood of heroes flow, nor the tears of lovers, sweeter than their kisses.

Amidst the eternal illusion that envelops us one thing is certain—suffering. It is the corner-stone of life. On it humanity is founded as on a firm rock. Outside it all is uncertainty. It is the sole evidence of a reality that escapes us. We know that we suffer, and we know nothing else. This is the base on which man has built everything. Yes, it is on the parched granite of pain that man has firmly established love and courage, heroism and pity, the choir of august laws and the procession of terrible or delightful virtues. If that foundation failed them, those noble figures would all crash together into the abyss of nothingness. Humanity has an obscure consciousness of the necessity of pain. It has placed pious sorrow among the virtues of the saints. Blessed are those that suffer, and woe to the fortunate! Because it uttered that cry the Gospel has reigned over the world for two thousand years.

We said one day that it is possible to imagine our planet, our poor little earth, surrounded by thinking but invisible beings.* The atmosphere may, in truth, be inhabited by creatures of too subtle an essence to come within reach of our senses. It is only a dream, but a dream has its rights. I like to dream of these aerial genii floating in the spaces of the ether. I figure them to myself as more intelli-

* See pp. 161–2 of the present volume.

gent and gentler than the Elohim whom M. Renan shows us scattered around the tents of nomad Israel. I would also have them less vain, less indifferent, less sportive than the thin shades with which ancient Greece peopled her woods and mountains. My genii will be, if you like, angels, but philosophic and learned angels—that is to say, angels of an entirely new species. They will not sing, they will not worship: they will observe. Suppose that one of them, lying on the side of a cloud, turns towards the earth his eyes, more powerful than our telescopes, and looks upon the lives of men. There he is, examining us as Sir John Lubbock observes ants. This rational angel finds nothing to admire in the appearance of the little beings whose movements he follows. He is impressed neither by man's strength nor woman's beauty. We inspire in him neither liking nor dislike; for his pure thought is as elevated above desire as it is above repugnance. As he scrutinises our actions he will perceive that they are full of violence and deceit, and he will be astounded at the multitude of crimes that hunger and love produce among us. He will say: "These are evil little animals. By eating one another they treat each other in the way they deserve." But soon he will perceive that we suffer, and all our greatness will be revealed to him. Then you will hear him murmur: "They are born infirm, suffering, starving, destined to devour one another. And they do not all devour one another. I even see some who in their great distress reach out their arms to others. They console and support each other. By way of consolation they have invented the industries and the arts. They even have poets to divert them. Their god had created disease: they have created medicine, and

they employ it as well as they can to repair nature. Nature has made evil and that is a great evil. It is they who do good. The good is little, but it is their work. The earth is bad: it is without feeling. But man is good because he suffers. He has derived everything, even his genius, from his pain."

That is how, it seems to me, an angel nurtured on sound philosophy would speak. And he would carefully refrain, if he had the power, from extirpating from this world the bitter leaven of its greatness and its beauty.

We should learn from him that we must know how to suffer, and that the science of pain is the only science of life. His lessons would inspire us with patience, which is the most difficult of heroisms, the one continual heroism. They would teach us mercy and forgiveness; they would teach us resignation, I mean that active resignation which consists in always attacking evil without ever being enraged by its invulnerable immortality.

By this inspiration the humblest existences can become works of art far superior to the finest symphonies and the most beautiful poems. Are not the works of art which one realises in oneself the best? The others, that are projected outwardly on canvas or paper, are nothing but images, shadows. The work of life is a reality. That simple man of whom M. Maxime du Camp tells us, that poor old clothes-dealer of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, who made his life a poem of charity, is worth more than Homer.

GEORGE SAND AND IDEALISM IN ART*

ONLY to-day do we realise the gap that M. Caro's sudden death left among us. M. Caro was cut off, full of life, in all the activity of his intelligence. On the day after his death, in the first surprise,—may we be forgiven for it,—we spoke of him as if he were going to come back to us again. We kept the familiar tone of the preceding day. We had not yet the feeling of the irreparable. That has come to us since. Henceforth we feel the loss of M. Caro, and we shall feel it for a long time. We keep saying: "Who is there now to expound as he did, with luminous clearness, the new systems and the fresh theories? Who will teach the profane? Who will be the apostle of the Gentiles? From what lips shall we seek the noble graces of philosophy? Nothing is more agreeable or rarer than an attractive teacher. To teach with grace is a divine thing, and that thing has departed with him."

We were saying this to ourselves when a little book came to deepen our regret. Some days before his death M. Caro completed a study of George Sand for the Collection of Great French Writers.

* "George Sand." Par E. Caro.

This collection is composed, as every one knows, of studies on the lives, the works, and the influence of the principal authors of our literature. Each volume forms a monograph. The study on George Sand by M. E. Caro has just appeared. This volume is the fourth in date of the collection. A "Victor Cousin," by M. Jules Simon, a "Madame de Sevigné," by M. Gaston Boissier, and a "Montesquieu," by M. Albert Sorel, have preceded it.

"Turgot," by M. Léon Say, and "Voltaire," by M. Ferdinand Brunetière, are in the press. Others announced are: "Villon," by M. Gaston Paris; "d'Aubigné," by M. Guillaume Guizot; "Rousseau," by M. Cherbuliez; "Joseph de Maistre," by the Viscount Eugène Melchior de Vogüé; "Lamartine," by M. de Pomairols; "Balzac," by M. Paul Bourget; "Musset," by M. Jules Lemaître; "Sainte-Beuve," by M. H. Taine; "Guizot," by M. G. Monod; "Boileau," by M. Brunetière, who is thus entrusted with two studies. Not that I complain of it, very much the contrary.

One sees from these names, as well as from those of other volumes which are announced, that the directors of this literary enterprise have taken care to choose critics well prepared for their task by their tastes, their works, or their intellectual temperament.

If they asked M. Caro to write a study of George Sand they had good reasons for doing so. The spiritualist philosopher was wedded to the memory of George Sand as to the muse of his youth. The mere name of the author of "Indiana" summed up for him days of delightful reverie and of ardent discussion. "This name," he tells us, "represents many a generous passion, many

a confused aspiration, audacities of thought, profound discouragements, and superhuman hopes, mingled with the elegant torture of doubt." In calling to mind his recollections he again feels the charm, and his book is a homage to the noble genius of Madame Sand. It is true that the author of the "Idée de Dieu" had not the same ideas concerning the family and society as the author of "Lélia"; but ideas are a trifle in the case of Madame Sand. Feeling, on the contrary, is everything, and one can admire her without thinking with her, provided we feel as she did.

The soul of this admirable woman is poured forth in her books spontaneously "like those pure and beauteous streams which flow without effort from natural springs." Do not ask her what she thinks; thought supposes reflection, and she does not reflect. She lets her friends think for her; she receives their ideas ready-made, and she prefers to repeat them rather than to understand them. Her sole function in the world is to express with an incomparable magnificence the feeling for nature and the images of passion.

She sees nature well, for she sees it beautiful. Nature is only what it seems. It is in itself neither beautiful nor ugly. It is man's eye alone which makes the beauty of heaven and earth. We give beauty to things by loving them. Love contains the whole mystery of the ideal. M. Caro recalls very happily, in his book, a charming feature of this great and artless lover of things, whose soul was in harmony with the flowers and the fields. "Raising my hands to my face," says George Sand, "I breathed the perfume of a wild sage plant, the leaves of which I had touched some hours before. The little plant was now blooming on the mountain several leagues away from

me. I had not plucked it, I had only carried away its exquisite odour. How had it left it? What a precious thing perfume is, which, without causing the least loss to the plant from which it emanates, yet becomes attached to the hands of a friend, and goes with him on his way to charm him and remind him for a long time of the beauty of the flower he loves! Remembrance is the perfume of the soul."

She was in perpetual communion with nature, and could not inhale the fragrance of a wild sage without feeling in it the unknown God. Let us not be deceived by high-sounding words about art and truth. The secret of the beautiful is within the reach of little children. The humble sometimes divine it more quickly than the proud. To love is to beautify, to beautify is to love.

Realist art is not a whit truer than idealist art. M. Zola does not see man and nature with more truth than Madame Sand saw them. He has only his eyes to see them with, just as she had hers. The witness which he gives is but the witness of an individual. He tells us how nature is refracted through his personality, neither more nor less; but he does not know what the universe is, nor even if the universe exists. Naturalists and idealists are alike the playthings of appearances; they are both the prey of the idols of the Den. That is what Bacon called the principle of our eternal ignorance, the ignorance to which the condition of man condemns us, walled in as we are within ourselves as if we were enclosed within a rock, solitary and deceived in the midst of the world. Since, then, the witness that any one of us gives of nature is no better than that of any other, since every image of things that we form corresponds, not to the things themselves, but

to states of our own souls, why should we not preferably seek and enjoy appearances that inspire charm, beauty, and love? Dream for dream, why not choose the pleasanter? That is what the Greeks did. They adored beauty; ugliness, on the contrary, seemed to them impious. Yet they had not the smallest illusion either about the reality of things or about the benevolence of nature. The Hellenes had, early in their history, a sad and disillusioned philosophy.

I was turning over the pages, this morning, of M. Victor Brochard's excellent book on the sceptics, and in it I saw that scientific doubt, with its train of sadness and bitterness, held sway in the oldest of the Greek schools. Intellectual Greece suffered, from childhood up, from the impossibility of believing. Its religion was only the pastime of its incredulity. This is perhaps the reason why that religion remained human and benevolent. At least that charming little people did not increase their wretchedness by adding the impossibility of loving to the impossibility of believing. They had the wisdom to pursue beauty when truth escaped them, and beauty did not deceive them as truth did.

Beauty depends upon ourselves; it is the sensible form of all that we love. It is a mistake to contrast the realist novelists with the idealists. People oppose the real to the ideal as if the ideal were not the only form of the real which we can grasp. The truth is, the realists want to render life odious, while the idealists seek to beautify it. And how right they are! What an excellent task they perform! There is in mankind an incessant desire, a perpetual need for ornamenting life. Madame Sand has very well said: "By a natural law, the human mind cannot hinder itself from beautifying and

elevating the object of its contemplation." In order to beautify life, what have we not invented? We have made ourselves magnificent garments for war and for love, and we have sung our joys and our sorrows. The whole immense effort of civilisation has for its end the beautifying of life. Realism is quite inhuman since it wants to undo this work of the entire human race. It pulls off the adornments, it tears away the veils, it humiliates the flesh which was triumphing by spiritualising itself, it leads us back to primitive barbarism, to the brutishness of the caverns and the lake-dwellings.

There may, perhaps, be a decadent pleasure in doing this. But it would be dangerous to enjoy it with too much self-will, for it leads to an irremediable grossness, to the ruin of everything which gives charm and grace to existence. Madame Sand was a great artisan of the ideal; it is the reason why I love and venerate her. I am told that M. Caro's book is well received by the public, and that it is being rapidly carried away from the arcades of the Odéon. So much the better! We should have good ground for rejoicing if this success were the sign of a return towards idealism in art.

I am also told that George Sand's novels, too forgotten to-day, will yet find readers. I desire it. I would like people to read not only the wisest and the most tranquil of them, but also the most ardent, those of her first period, "Lélia" and "Jacques." They doubtless contain a very audacious vindication of the rights of passion. There is in them, as Chateaubriand said when he had grown old, an offence against uprightness of life. But had not the author of "René" also sown burning words throughout the world? Besides, what is the good of denying the

rights of passion? Passion does not merely ask its share from society; it robs it with the fury of desire and the calm of innocence. Nothing checks it; it has the feeling of its inevitable fatality. How could it be frightened? It gains additional joys from anguish and uneasiness. Even religion has not availed against it; it has merely given it one pleasure more, the pleasure of remorse. It is its own glory, its own happiness, and its own punishment. It scoffs at the books which either exalt it or repress it.

To exalt the passions is what the great poets have done long before the great novelists. Phædra, Dido, Francesca da Rimini, Juliet, Eriphyle, Velléda have preceded Lélia and the Fernande of "Jacques." There may be danger, doubtless, in stirring up their fires. Where is there not danger? And who can say, his day ended, "I have injured no one"? But these feelings touch the generous sides of human nature. To treat of them is to glorify man in his saddest and most touching joys. The novel that describes vice is far more fatal than the one which represents passion. Why? Because vice is easier to suggest than passion, because it is insinuated slowly and noiselessly, because, in short, it is within the reach of vulgar souls. The romance of vice has never been written by Madame Sand.

Madame Sand was always quite convinced that the great business of men is love. She was half right. Hunger and love are the two axes of the world. All humanity turns on love and hunger. What Balzac saw above all in man was hunger, that is to say the feeling for preservation and augmentation, avarice, cupidity, material ambitions, privations, fasts, indigestions, the pomps and grossnesses of the flesh. He showed with extreme precision all the

functions of the claw, the jaw, and the stomach, all the habits of the man of prey.

George Sand is not the less great for having shown us only lovers. Carlyle says, in a passage quoted by Arvède Barine, that "the whole business of love is a miserable futility, which in an heroic epoch no one would give himself the trouble of thinking about." Old Carlyle is very detached, for it seems that all nature has no other end than to throw two beings into each other's arms, and to make them enjoy, between two infinities of nothingness, the ephemeral intoxication of a kiss.

"MENSONGES," BY M. PAUL BOURGET

"Converse not much with the young, nor with strangers.

"Flatter not the rich: neither do thou appear willingly before the great. . . .

"Be not familiar with any woman; but commend all good women in general to God. . . .

"Sometimes it falleth out that a person unknown to us is much esteemed of, from the good report given by others; whose presence notwithstanding is not grateful to the eyes of those who see him."

"The Imitation," Book I., chap. viii.

AVING read eagerly to its last page, but not without dejection, M. Bourget's melancholy book, I immediately glanced at that page in my "Imitation of Jesus Christ" which opens by itself, and I repeated with fervour the verses I have just transcribed. Each of these verses corresponds to a chapter in the new novel. Each of these maxims is a balsam and an electuary for one of the wounds which the able writer has pointed out. Is it not wonderful that the "Imitation," written in an age of faith, by a humble ascetic, for pious and solitary souls, should be admirably suited to-day to sceptics and fashionable people? A pure deist or a peaceful atheist can make it his bedside book. Further,

I myself feel that this delightful writing can be appreciated better, at least in some of its parts, by those who doubt or deny than by those who believe and worship. In truth, the lonely monk, whose work it is, joined to his celestial hopes a human prudence which the man of little faith is particularly fitted to enjoy. He knew life profoundly. He had penetrated to the secrets of the soul and of the senses. Nothing in the world of appearances amid which we struggle with cruel weakness and touching illusions was hidden from him. He knew the passions better than those who feel them, for he knew their entire vanity. His sentences are psychological jewels before which adepts remain astounded. His book is the book of the best of men, since it is the book of the unhappy. There is no surer counsellor and no more intimate consoler.

Ah! if M. Paul Bourget's hero, if the young poet, René Vinci, had read over every morning in his little room in the Rue Coëtlogon, the eighth chapter of the "Imitation;" if he had steeped himself in the full meaning of these words: "Do not desire to appear before the great. . . . Be not familiar with any woman"; if he had sought his joy in sadness and his pleasure in renunciation, he would not have tasted the worst of all sorrows, the only sorrow which is truly evil, the sorrow which does not purify, but defiles; and he would not have endeavoured to die the death of the despairing. René Vinci is a poor young man, a poet twenty-five years of age, who successfully produces at the Théâtre-Français a delightful farce, another "Passant." The world of foreigners and Parisians, the drawing-rooms where people talk and play comedies, in a word what is called *the* world, suddenly opened before this young celebrity.

He threw himself into it with a childish ardour, and was immediately seduced by what Pascal calls the pomps or grossnesses of the flesh. The brilliance of these luxurious existences dazzled him. Perhaps he was no great philosopher. I have heard people speaking lightly of him in this respect. They ought rather to have pitied him. Luxury has an irresistible attraction for elegant and delicate natures. A friend of mine, born poor like René Vinci, was also admitted, when his time came, into the assembly of the rich and powerful. He looked at their luxury with a cold and impassive eye. When I congratulated him upon this, he answered: "I used to go to the Louvre and to cathedrals before I went to drawing-rooms." But I should not quote my friend as an example, for he has a great fund of disdain. René Vinci is younger and more candid. A drop of white-rose perfume is enough to intoxicate him; he loves all the luxury of women. If that is a fault forgive him for it: he is in love and he suffers. Yes, he is in love with a Madame Moraines, of whom M. Bourget has drawn a terribly true portrait. We see her, we feel her, we breathe her, this woman with her delicate features, with her intellectual mouth, with her form at once refined and strong, this woman who conceals the ardent richness of her nature beneath the grace of an apparent fragility. We see her so well that we would almost quarrel over this or that detail with the man who painted her. Every one of us would be tempted, I wager, to change something, a little here or a little there, the shade of her hair, the colour of her eyes, in order to adapt this figure to some memory, or, at the very least, to some confidence.

When I speak of a portrait, you will of course

understand that I mean above all a moral portrait, for the artist is M. Paul Bourget. This portrait is a true one, it is true with that great veracity which at once attests itself. What do you say of this, for example?

"She belonged, doubtless by heredity, for she was the daughter of a statesman, to that great race of people of action whose dominant trait is, if we may use the expression, the distributive faculty. These people have the power of exploiting fully the present hour without the past or the coming hour either troubling their feeling or putting a check upon it. The slang of the day has found a good phrase to designate the special power of momentary forgetfulness; it calls it *getting through the traffic.* ("Mensonges," p. 317.) Madame Moraines was perfect at getting through the traffic. She had arranged her existence very sensibly, with an infatuated, credulous husband and a lover, old but elegant, selfish yet liberal, who helped to provide the luxury of the house. Between these two she made a small place for the young poet, who had inspired in her an inclination at once sensual and sentimental. Ever since the evening he met her, René Vinci believed in the unalterable purity of Suzanne Moraines. He had still less doubt of it after she had given herself to him. She knew this; she loved to tell a falsehood; she deceived him, and he was divinely happy. The falsehood of the woman one loves is the sweetest of benefits, as long as we believe it. But we do not believe it for long. In every falsehood, even the subtlest, there are secret impossibilities which soon bring it to light. False words burst like soap-bubbles. In spite of all her knowledge, little Madame Moraines was ignorant of one thing, and that is that you cannot deceive

those who truly love. They would like to be deceived, they ask to be deceived, and when she whom they love, either from contempt or from cruelty, does not deign any longer to pretend, they basely beg of her the alms of a last falsehood. They say to her: "For pity's sake deceive me, lie to me, so that I may still hope!" But the wretched beings retain their fatal clear-sightedness even in their delirium. René Vinci soon knew that a falsehood had been told him. That saying of the ascetic was verified in his case: "Sometimes it falleth out that a person unknown to us is much esteemed of, from the good report given by others; whose presence destroys the good opinion we had formed." René Vinci saw that he had been betrayed. And, as he suffered greatly, he wished to deceive himself. "Who is there," M. Paul Bourget then asks, "who is there that can love and be betrayed without listening to that voice which reasons against all reason, which tells us to hope against all hope? Belief has come to an end, and for ever. How one would like to be able at least to doubt!" One day Vinci can doubt no longer. He becomes horribly jealous. Jealousy produces on us the effect of salt on ice—it accomplishes with frightful rapidity the total dissolution of our being. And, as is the case with ice, when one is jealous one melts into mud. It is a torture and a shame. We are condemned to the punishment of knowing and seeing everything. Yes! to see everything, alas! for to imagine is to see; it is to see without even having the resource of shutting one's eyes.

Vinci was twenty-five—it is the age when everything is easy, even death. Certain of not being able to possess Suzanne for himself alone, he aims a

revolver at his own heart. . . . Reassure yourself, he will not die of it. The bullet passes through his lung and the doctors answer for his recovery. He will come slowly back to life. He will feel that he is weak. A great pity for himself will come over him. He will love himself in the melting manner of invalids, and he will love you no longer, Suzanne.

This book by M. Paul Bourget is a fine and scholarly study. Never before has the author of "Cruelle Enigme," though he has long been a philosopher and a psychologist, shown so great a talent for analysis. Do not forget that there are far more things in "Mensonges" than I have indicated. I have spoken only of Madame Moraines, for I am not here making a study of the book. I only chat, and chatting is a matter of chance. In "Mensonges" there is Colette, an actress of the Comédie-Française who inspires a man of letters with a passion "based upon hatred and sensuality." Above all, there are also in this book some observations of a stern reality. Doubtless they are not new, and it is long since they were made for the first time. But does not each generation necessarily do again what those preceding it have done already? What is life except beginning again? Do we not all make, each of us in our own turn, the same saddening discoveries? And have we not a bitter need for a young voice, a new speech, to relate our sorrows and our humiliations? When M. Paul Bourget says: "There are women who have a heavenly fashion of not perceiving the familiarities which we allow ourselves with them," does he not once more unveil an eternal artifice? When he says: "It is a divine pleasure to women to repeat, with certain smiles, truths which those to whom they

say them do not believe ; they thus give themselves a little of that feeling of danger which deliciously excites their nerves," does he not felicitously renew a precious observation ? When he says : "The less women deserve pity the more they love to inspire it," does he not lay bare an important little bit of feminine psychology ?

His book, in which we hear the accent of inimitable truth, is despairing from end to end. One tastes in it something more bitter than death. It leaves ashes in one's mouth. That is why I went to the fountain of life. That is why I opened the "Imitation" and read its salutary words. But we do not like to be saved. On the contrary, we are afraid that we are being deprived of the pleasure of ruining ourselves. The best among us are like Rachel, who refused to be comforted.

EXOTIC LOVE*

INETY-SIX years ago to-day, a young Breton nobleman who was visiting the tribes of the Creeks and the Natchez, beguiled his longings and vexations by toying with the hair of two young Floridans whose copper tint, large eyes, and wild beauty remained thenceforward fixed in his dreams. That Breton was Chateaubriand; out of his two Floridans he made Atala and Céluta. It was thus that exotic love entered into literature. It is true that the eighteenth century had already depicted Americans on the stage and in novels. We had had "Alzire" and "les Incas." Our philosophical writers had made no concealment of their inclination for savages. But they knew little about them and made no pretence of describing them exactly. They were, in truth, only anxious to show the innocence of nature. Chateaubriand saw what no one had ever seen before him. When he cast the enchanted glance of a lover and a poet upon his two Floridans, he discovered a strange beauty. He was the first to infuse exoticism into poetry and make it ferment there, and in doing so he compounded a new poison which the youth of the age drank with delight. However, the two daughters of his dreams, Atala and Céluta,

* "Madame Chrysanthème." Par Pierre Loti.

are far from being true savages. Those figures are given classical proportions; their bosoms are moulded according to the antique formula, and their utterance borrows its rhythm from the verses of Racine. Atala, with her hands clasped upon her crucifix, follows, without difficulty, the long tradition of the tragic lovers of the Christian West. She has Spanish blood in her veins. And this noble blood has devoured that which flows from "Simaghan with the golden bracelets." Beyond question she has betrayed "the old genii of the cabin." Such as she is she is adorable, but she is not a primitive being, she is not a simple creature.

It was reserved for Pierre Loti to make us taste to intoxication, to delirium, even to stupor, the acrid savour of exotic loves.

It is a lucky thing for him and for us that M. Pierre Loti entered the navy and that he has travelled a great deal, for nature gave him that eager and fickle temperament which requires a crowd of images. She gave him, moreover, exquisite senses to feel the beauty of this amorous universe, a simple and comprehensive intelligence, and that rare artist's faculty which sees, hears, observes, and crystallises its memories. He was expressly fitted to bring to us fantastic beauty and strange delights. And beyond question he has not proved false to his destiny.

Pierre Loti's women—Azyadé, Rarahu, Fatou-Gaye—are indeed true savages, redolent of the brute animal. We approach them as if they were an unknown fruit. Loti loves them, he loves them with a childish and perverse love that is infinitely gentle and infinitely cruel.

Those unions of the daughters of men with the

sons of God which were overwhelmed by the waters of the deluge, were neither so impious nor so full of anguish. To marry Loti to Rarahu, the spahi to Fatou-Gaye, to unite white men and little yellow or black animals, this is a thing which Chateaubriand did not fully imagine, when, in his melancholy flirtations, he loosened the dark tresses of the two Floridans who had three parts Spanish blood in their veins.

For Fatou-Gaye is a true negress. She reproduces the Khassonké type in all its horrible purity—the smooth and black skin, the dazzlingly white teeth, the two large jet-black eyeballs in unceasing movement. And the headdress is as strange as the type. The head is shaven except for five quite small tufts which, tied up and gummed, are planted at regular intervals from the forehead to the back of the neck, and each of which ends in a coral bead. And the soul is in keeping with the rest—the poor darkened soul of a thieving and lustful monkey. If Fatou-Gaye is a regular savage, Rarahu is quite primitive. Her flowery island of Tahiti is, as Loti describes it, a new Arcadia. Commander Rivière had less fondness for this New-Cytherea, for its fountains, its woods, and its women. He said they were all ugly. Perhaps he was not, like Loti, a poet always on the alert. I will take good care not to look through the eyes of a disenchanted traveller as long as a poet lends me his magic glass. Yes, I want to believe that Tahiti is still Arcadia, and I want to believe in Maori beauty. I persuade myself that Rarahu was beautiful as she bathed and sang in the fountain of Apiré. And I see clearly that she was charming, when, to go to the temple of the Protestant missionaries at Papeete on Sundays,

she fastened in her dark hair, above her ear, a large hibiscus flower, "whose glowing redness gave a transparent pallor to her copper-coloured cheeks." And Loti married her, by advice of Queen Pomaré, in the fashion of the country. And the story is a mournful tale of love. They did not understand each other. How can a white man read the tender gloom of a Maori's thought? There is a story that at the beginning of the present century, there lived in these charming islands an Oceanic Dido, but a Dido resigned to her fate, who died without complaining. That Dido had no Virgil. An unknown poet wrote the following verses about her:

"Cependant qu'à travers l'océan Pacifique
Un Anglais naviguait, morose et magnifique,
Dans un île odorante où son brick aborda
Une reine, une enfant qui se nommait Ti-Da,
Lui jeta ses colliers de brillants coquillages,
Prête à le suivre, esclave, en ses lointains voyages.
Et, pendant trente nuits, son jeune sein cuivré
Battit d'amour joyeux près de l'hôte adoré,
Dans des murs de bambou, sur la natte légère.
Mais, avant que finît cette lune si chère,
Pour l'abandon prévu, douce, d'un cœur égal,
Elle avait fait dresser un bûcher de sandal,
Et du brick qui lofait, lui pâle, sans surprise,
Vit la flamme, et sentit le parfum dans la brise."

* "As a splenetic and splendid Englishman was sailing through the Pacific Ocean, from an island at which his brig touched, a queen, a child whose name was Ti-Da, threw him her collar of brilliant shells, for she was ready to follow him in his travels as a slave. And, for thirty nights, her tawny young bosom beat with joyous love beside her worshipped guest, upon the thin mat within the bamboo walls. But, before that dear honeymoon ended and the departure she foresaw took place, sweetly, and with an untroubled mind, she built a funeral pyre of sandal-wood, and he, pale but unsurprised, saw the flame from his brig and smelt the perfume on the breeze."

Alas! Rarahu was not a queen, and she did not end with that tragic simplicity. Unhappily for her, she survived her marriage with Loti. Dying of the malady that ravages her race, she placed crowns of fresh flowers on the little head which death claimed. At the end, she no longer had a home, and took about with her her infirm old cat, who wore rings in his ears and whom she tenderly loved. All the sailors had a great affection for her although she had become skin and bones and she wanted them all. She was dying of consumption, and, as she had begun to drink brandy, her disease made rapid strides.

Thus ended the little yellow creature who had given to Loti the most precious thing in the world, the only thing that gives this unhappy life enough value to make it worth living—an ideal moment. What a charming and sad book this is! And how voluptuous and singular! There is no love without dissonance. In vain do two hearts beat one against the other; they never beat alike. But in Loti's exotic marriages, hearts never, never beat in unison. Rarahu and Loti feel and understand nothing in the same way. Hence an infinite melancholy.

I am speaking here only of Loti and of his black or yellow women; I say nothing of his two great masterpieces, "Mon frère Yves" and "Pêcheur d'Islande," which carry us into another world of feeling and sensation. And there is hardly time even to come to the latest marriage of Rarahu's fugitive spouse. You know that M. Pierre Loti married Mademoiselle Chrysanthème for the length of a spring, before the authorities at Nagasaki, and that forthwith out of that marriage he made a capital volume which appears this week from the house of Calmann-Lévy. Neither jealousy nor love troubled that peaceful union. After