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English Literature and Its Backgrounds

Book II

English Literature
and its
Backgrounds



EDITED BY BERNARD D. N. GREBANIER, BROOKLYN COLLEGE, AND

JTITH THOMPSON, INDIANA UNIVERSITY · A CORDON BOOK

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TO

DONALD G. WHITESIDE

Homo multarum literarum

Preface

In preparing a new kind of anthology, we have thought of our work less as pioneering than as supplying an important want. Even the proudest of Englishmen who has resisted

"all temptations
To belong to other nations,"

cannot be unaware, if he is at all familiar with it, that his country's literature has constantly gained new energy from fertilization by the literature of other lands. The fact that English literature is not autogenous is certainly no novelty to teachers of English literature, most of whom have, by their lectures, identified for their students the European or Oriental progenitors of English books. But though meant to encourage students to personal investigation, such information is likely to leave them satisfied with a set of names and titles, to be discussed glibly enough no doubt, without the substantiation of solid knowledge. The material in question has, thus far, been scattered through too many volumes to inspire any beginner but the most devout to hunt for it. Moreover, since there is never any intention of requiring a student to familiarize himself with the literature of the world while he is mastering the outlines of English literature, he stands in no need of more than an introduction to background prose and verse. It is very desirable, in short, to give the student of English literature enough of a view of its background to make him aware both of the existence of the latter and of its general character. This is the problem which the present work undertakes to meet by presenting in the same volume the great achievements of English writers and specimens of foreign works by which they have been influenced. Here, for example, when a student learns of Chaucer's indebtedness to *The Romance of the Rose*, he can read enough in that work to form a conception of the nature of Chaucer's debt.

In editing the first work of its kind, we naturally have found the gravest task that of making a choice of material. The present selections were fixed upon only after months of discussion and alteration. The very nature of the undertaking made it important to agree at last that whereas merit was a great consideration in the choice of the English pieces, it was influence rather than quality which must determine the inclusion of the others. Thus, while we are proud to have Sappho, Aristotle, Aeschylus, Dante, or Montaigne grace our pages, they are forced to keep company with Guevara and an immature Goethe. No one will assert that *The Diall of Princes* or *The Sorrows of Young Werther* is a great book; but no one can deny, either, that each exerted a powerful influence in its time, sometimes on greater writings—and so we have included it. Another consideration we faced was the necessity of printing only such "foreign" literature as would be comprehensible to a student entering upon his studies of English literature. We felt obliged, therefore, to exclude such important writings as those of the German transcendental philosophers who strongly impressed Carlyle's generation. Moreover, we deemed ourselves duty bound to print such background material as helped explain numerous English works rather than a single English book. We wished, on the whole, to represent *streams of influence*; only in a few cases will there be found a piece (always short) that makes plain the background of but a single English work (e.g. *Il Filostrato*). Finally, since this is an anthology of *English* literature, the translated selections have had to be limited to a small proportion of the total presented. The scholar will think of many European pieces that might have been included; we assure him that we did too.

A question which may arise is: "Though the influence of Vasari upon Browning is easy enough to establish, who can undertake to be as definite for most English writers?" To that our answer is that we find no need of proving a direct connection between a particular "foreign" and a particular English work here included. It would be, for example, beside the point to demonstrate that Burns read Rousseau. Rousseau's ideas were in the air when Burns was writing, and directly or indirectly he imbibed them, as his songs patently exhibited. And hence, the inclusion of Rousseau is justified for the light it throws not only on Burns, but on Blake, Wordsworth. Coleridge, Byron, and Shelley as well. We feel confident

that the acquaintance of the student with our carefully selected background material is certain to give him a firmer grasp of the English literature he is studying. On the other hand, who so chooses to ignore any or all of these translations may do so, for we offer a full and rich anthology of English literature.

While we were busy planning this book, we seized the opportunity of introducing some variations into the traditions of anthology-making. Aware that many teachers prefer to present a comprehensive survey of English literature, we have offered selections from the minor as well as the major writers. But we feel that it is urgent for the student to develop a sense of proportion, to understand which writers occupy the front ranks and which follow behind, and to this end we have deliberately decreased the representation of works by minor figures and *increased* the representation of works by major figures. The reader will find a wider selection than is usual of the works of Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Johnson, Blake, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Lamb, Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold. Such teachers, therefore, as desire to deal only with the masters (i.e. in a "masterpieces" course) will find the quantity and variety they demand.

In the choice of the English selections, we have tried to inject some freshness. The bulk of our material, of course, is common to most anthologies, as it should be because of the sanction of long usage and experience. Our compression of the minor authors, however, has made it possible to include, besides the *indispensables*, a number of long complete works usually not admitted to anthologies, and never, we believe, all collected in any survey anthology before: e.g. *Samson Agonistes, Absalom and Achitophel, An Essay on Criticism, Manfred, Prometheus Unbound, Saul,* and *Thyrsis.* From the major writers enumerated we have also introduced what we hope are pleasant additions: Book II of Chaucer's *Troilus, April* from Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*, a selection from Milton's *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, the conclusion to Pope's *Dunciad*, selections from Johnson's *Dictionary* and from *Rasselas*, a part of Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, all three *Yarrow* poems of Wordsworth, several of Keats's letters, three of Lamb's *Popular Fallacies* and two of his letters. Other novel inclusions may also be welcome: Old English *Riddles, The Dream of the Rood,* the lively ballad *Our Goodman*, the selections from Lyly, a song by Queen Elizabeth, representative pieces from the Bible of 1611, poems by Crashaw and by Traherne, Characters by Earle, a selection from Paine and one from Godwin, a collection of eighteenth century letters, a piece from *Fingal*, selections from Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal* and from Landor's *Pentameron*, Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*, an essay by Thackeray, poems by Christina Rossetti, a fresh poem each by Browning and Morris, Swinburne's *Ave Atque Vale*, a selection from Darwin, fresh poems of Meredith, poems by Lewis Carroll and by W. S. Gilbert, Wilde's *Ballad of Reading Gaol*—and poems by Dowson and by Gerard M. Hopkins.

We have also tried to give a significant collection of English drama—each play printed in entirety—to afford a true picture of the development of an important literary form. From each period we have taken a play in itself estimable and also representative. The Medieval period is represented by *Everyman*, the Elizabethan by *Doctor Faustus*, the Restoration by *The Way of the World*, the Eighteenth Century by *The School for Scandal*, and the Nineteenth Century by *The Importance of Being Earnest*; *Samson Agonistes* represents classic drama; and *Manfred* and *Prometheus Unbound* exhibit the "literary" or closet-drama of the Nineteenth Century. Besides these, *The Misanthrope* and *Prometheus Bound* are printed complete for background. Shakespeare as a dramatist is not represented because nearly everyone owns a reprint of his plays; whoever does not should be required to possess one. Moreover no single play can adequately indicate Shakespeare's scope. We have tried to atone for this enforced omission by printing a large number of his songs and sonnets, and by assigning a generous introduction to them.

As for the introductions to period, authors, and particular works, we have intended them to be informative enough to make superfluous the purchase of a survey history of English literature. Convinced that no sufficient understanding of a literature can be had when it is presented in a historical and social vacuum, we have tried to give enough of the history and social setting of each period to afford the student some perspective in his reading and a sense of the continuity of our literature. For the same reason we have, in our general summaries (proportioned according to the importance of the subject), dealt with works and writers that could not be represented in the anthology itself. The connections between the background and the English literature have been indicated throughout the study. The introductions to the authors and to particular works are biographical and critical; while avoiding the

rhapsodic, we have thought it well to attempt to communicate something of our enthusiasm for the treasures of English literature. Remembering how valuable the contagion of honest affection proved to us in our student days, we agree that icy statistical objectivity, however it may steer clear of error, profits no undergraduate. Also we have tried to make good an omission in many anthologies by appending a small but highly selected bibliography to each period and author.

Wherever feasible we have used translations of the "foreign" literature made by notable English writers. Among the translators here presented will be found Cowper, Byron, Shelley, Landor, E. B. Browning, Rossetti, Swinburne, and Dowson. It is with pleasure that we here express our indebtedness to Miss Frances Winwar for her splendid renditions of Dante and of Baudelaire and to Dr. Isabel Gordon for her fine translation of Flaubert—both made especially for our text. Other translations will be found by our own humble hands. In addition, we are happy to be permitted to include a brilliant essay on *The Literary Medium* by Prof. Ralph Gordon of City College, himself a poet and an authority on his subject.

We acknowledge with thanks the careful criticism and valuable suggestions of Prof. Carleton Brown on the Old English material; of Prof. Thomas A. Knott, of the University of Michigan, on the Middle English; of Prof. Hoyt H. Hudson, of Princeton University, on the Renaissance; of Prof. James H. Hanford, of Western Reserve University, on the Seventeenth Century; of Prof. Theodore Zunder, of Brooklyn College, on the Eighteenth Century; of Prof. Russell Noyes, of Indiana University, on the Pre-Romantic and Romantic; and of Prof. E. L. Beck, of Ohio State University and Mrs. Eva A. Williamson of Brooklyn College, on the Victorian. We desire also to thank colleagues at Brooklyn College for many kindnesses: Prof. Donald G. Whiteside for his sympathetic interest in the progress of the work, Prof. Joseph F. Wickham for advice on Newman, Prof. Stanley Rypins for advice on Chaucer, Prof. Charlotte E. Morgan for advice on Milton, and Mr. Tom Waage and Miss Dorothy Cerino for help in proofreading galleys. Thanks are also due to Prof. C. J. Reynolds of the University of Maine for certain bibliographical verifications. It is a further pleasure to express our gratitude for the assistance of Mr. Wilbur Gaffney in the editorial production of these volumes. Finally we are grateful for the invaluable services of that prince of typists, Mr. Sanford Wolf, and of Mrs. J. C. Guggenheimer, who caught in page-proof errata that everyone else had overlooked. The editors take this opportunity of thanking Mrs. Ruth B. McJimsey, Mr. Louis B. Salomon, and Mr. Phillip B. Shaw, all of Brooklyn College, for several valuable suggestions.

B. D. N. G.
S. T.

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English Literature
and
Its Backgrounds

Book II

THE REVOLT AGAINST CLASSICISM

WE HAVE thus far (Vol. I, pp. 616-873) considered those eighteenth-century writers whose works, however differing from one another in some respects, have in common their conformity to the accepted literary creed of the Augustans. Pope, Swift, Addison, Steele, Johnson, Boswell, Goldsmith, Burke, and Sheridan—all chose to walk in the paths indicated by Dryden: they acknowledged the primacy of Reason, relegated to an inferior position the imaginative faculty, venerated Greek and Roman classics as models for imitation, set a high value on form, and demanded balance and proportion of their arts. When they wrote poetry it was usually cast into the mold of the heroic couplet, and their compositions in verse or prose were always concerned with the manners and institutions of their contemporaries. All but Boswell and Burke were satirists, and even the latter penned a satire in his early days. As for Paine and Godwin, although their political philosophy brought them close to the romantic poets of the nineteenth century, they belong to the Age of Reason because of their strictly rational approach to speculation.

Human emotions will not, of course, be suppressed entirely, and some of these men found an outlet for their feelings by lapses into sheer sentimentality (cf. Vol. I, pp. 626, 629, 712-713, 793-794, 809, 817, etc.). But, in general, they were proudly logical—even in their religion. The free-thinking of Bolingbroke and the deists, the commonplaces of which Pope had raised to poetry in *An Essay on Man* (cf. Vol. I, p. 659), subjected Christianity to the test of credibility. Such men, however, had no monopoly on "rational theology." Most Augustans who preferred to remain orthodox Christians, particularly the Anglican divines, based their faith on logical grounds, and would have scorned to defend their Christianity by any mystical argument. They wrote voluminously to prove that their religion was "reasonable" (a favorite adjective of theirs) and founded on common sense.

But there lived in eighteenth-century England men, not representative of established opinion, who were rebelling against Augustan ways. Individualized and not at first of significance, their reactions gradually gathered adherents as the century progressed toward the cataclysm of its final years, the French Revolution.

In the sphere of religion the revolt centered around the teachings of John Wesley (1703-1791), the founder of Methodism, who completely repudiated the rational view of religion. True religion, he taught, comes from the heart. Desirous of bringing, as he said, "the life of God in the souls of men," he revived the old Puritan feeling of

the personal relation between God and every individual. Only by faith can we be saved, he preached, and his conviction that we are all sinfully corrupt implied that we need much faith. He denounced the Augustan attitude which held that man possesses dignity and worth, and he asserted that without the saving grace of Christ man is lost. He particularly attacked those who thought they could live with honor and virtue without throwing themselves upon the mercy of God. He dethroned reason, in short, and invited reliance on the emotions alone. Under his influence a new style of evangelical preaching arose. As Prof. Preserved Smith notes: "John Wesley recorded in his diary, with satisfaction, the violent effects of his sermons, effects which he esteemed as signs of God's approving intervention. During the years 1739 to 1743 he reported that his preaching had caused 234 cases of hysteria, manifested in convulsive tearings, tremblings, crying, groans, tears and occasionally much more serious symptoms. Eighty-five of his hearers, he reported, had 'dropped as dead'; two had developed psychogenic blindness, fourteen had been made temporarily insane, and nine had been driven into incurable madness." If his teachings led to such distressing orgies, they had the merit, among the more balanced followers, of affording emotional relief. More important, they opened a door of hope to every individual, for salvation could be found by all who sought it. Thus, finally, Methodism was democratic in implication, and contributed its share toward those growing tendencies in the direction of humanitarianism and equality which found their expression in the French Revolution. The new evangelicalism was not confined to the Methodists, but was taken up by some Anglican preachers who were dissatisfied with the rationalism of their colleagues. It was by members of that group that the poet, William Cowper (cf. *below*), was powerfully impressed.

Dissatisfaction with the purely rational, the urbane, the classic, and the elegant was expressed in the work of certain writers. Most of them had not to pay any penalty for their revolt since it was only partial; if they made occasional detours, they did not stray too far from the highroad. They had the wisdom to retain something of the favored didactic tone, and made no great innovations in the language and tone of their poetry. Such were Thomson, Gray, Collins, and Cowper.

The town was the focus of interest for the Augustans: one did not live, one merely existed in the country. But James Thomson (cf. *below*) had drunk deeply of nature in his native Roxburghshire in Scotland, and made a sensation in London with his four poems constituting *The Seasons* (1726-30). This was the earliest poetical work to take as its subject matter the changing aspects and sounds of nature. With men's attention thus turned toward ignored beauties, natural description began to appear more insistently in the lines of poets. Admirable examples are to be noted in Gray's *Elegy*, Collins's *Ode to Evening*, Cowper's *The Task*, and in most of the poetry of Blake and Burns. By the time we come to nineteenth-century poets, we look for depictions of nature as a matter of course.

This new appreciation of natural scenery led to the chief avenue of escape from the restrictions of neoclassical conformity: the veneration of Nature as a great teacher. Of this doctrine the chief propounder in Europe was Rousseau (cf. *below*), who exercised an enormous influence on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thought. Taking the extreme position that civilization and social institutions had corrupted man from

his original benevolence, he taught that only in a state of nature would man find happiness again. He deified the "natural man" and did much to evoke admiration for the simple peasant. Hence in the uneventful life of the country William Cowper found illimitable inspiration for his major work, *The Task* (cf. *below*). Thomas Gray, in his *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, expressed profound sympathy for the unsung humble, just as George Crabbe (cf. *below*), in a number of poems, recorded their stark lives and bitter tragedies. Among such folk Wordsworth later chose to live so that he might come closer to what he believed to be the fundamental truth. Burns was of them, and he sang of no others unless to heap scorn upon the proud and lofty.

Interest in the simple and the rustic co-operated with a desire to find inspiration from other than classical fountains. Gray (cf. *below*) turned to ancient Celtic lore in *The Bard*, as did Collins in his *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland*, and opened new channels for poetry. In the resulting enthusiasm for primitive and medieval remains, James Macpherson (cf. *below*) made an astonishing success with what purported to be his translations of the ancient Celtic bard, Ossian.

The term "Gothic," which ever since the Renaissance had been a term of contempt, commenced to assume a respectable connotation. It began to be understood that the Middle Ages had not indeed been barbarous merely because they had fostered an unclassical art. When Thomson, in imitation of Spenser, had attempted to recapture the interest of the public in medieval magic and imaginativeness with his *Castle of Indolence*, his work at first was given little attention. But a few years later, Gray and his friend Horace Walpole (cf. Vol. I, p. 831) were busy with their researches in the medieval. The latter, in fact, not only wrote a "Gothic" novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, but also erected on his Strawberry Hill estate what he conceived to be a medieval building, which established a new fashion in architecture. Thomas Warton's *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* (1754) and Bishop Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) did much to rehabilitate the "Gothic." But, of greater importance, in 1765 Thomas Percy, Bishop of Dromore, a member of Johnson's circle, published his collection of the *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, which restored to the public the almost forgotten treasure-house of the old ballads and furnished poetic stimulation to Wordsworth and Coleridge for their epochal *Lyrical Ballads*. The increasing excitement over the medieval encouraged the boy-wonder, Thomas Chatterton (cf. *below*), his head stuffed with romantic visions and Elizabethan lyrics, to perpetrate his bold hoax of "forging" fifteenth-century manuscripts.

All these endeavors were so many escapes from the conformity of the Age of Reason. From the sharp light of Augustan criticism and social strictures, some poets escaped to antisocial solitude and pensiveness, under the influence of Milton's minor poems. *Il Penseroso*, in particular, was misread by them as a hymn to Melancholy. There developed a kind of group, the so-called "graveyard school," of poets who sang of night, death, solitude, and the grave. The chief works in this kind were: *To the Nightingale* and *A Nocturnal Reverie*, by Lady Winchelsea (1661-1720); *Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality*, by Edward Young (1683-1765); *The Grave*, by Robert Blair (1699-1746); Collins's *Ode to Evening*; *Retirement*, by Thomas Warton the elder (1688-1745); *The Pleasures of Melancholy*, by Thomas

Warton the younger (1728-1790); *Ode to Solitude*, by Joseph Warton (1722-1800); and *A Night-Piece on Death*, by Thomas Parnell (1679-1718). Gray's *Elegy*, which usually strikes those unfamiliar with this literature as novel, is actually a more inspired summation of the whole graveyard school. And a certain amount of Macpherson's vast success is attributable to the lugubrious measures of the Ossianic poems.

On the formal side, the heroic couplet by degrees lost its prestige. Thomson wrote *The Seasons*, as did Cowper *The Task*, in Miltonic blank verse. In the hands of Collins and Gray the ode took a new lease on life. Chatterton's forgeries recaptured the lovely lightness of the Elizabethan lyric. Thomson's *Castle of Indolence* revived the Spenserian stanza, which was to be employed for great purposes by the romantic poets. And Gray's *Elegy* is symptomatic of a reversion to the simple quatrain.

To sum up this manifold revolt against classicism, we may list as preparatory for the coming romantic movement:

(1) the revulsion against the authority of Reason,
(2) the appreciation of natural beauty,
(3) the interest in the country and country-folk,
(4) the interest in the past, primitive and medieval,
(5) the interest in other lands,
(6) the element of melancholy, and
(7) the introduction of verse-forms other than the heroic couplet.

What is missing in all this to make the perfect romantic poet is the presence of strong individualism. The breakdown of neoclassicism was complete when each writer, unmindful of social conformity, made his own rules for social and literary conduct. Toward the end of the century we come upon two such poets, Robert Burns and William Blake. Burns (cf. *below*), son of the soil, began to compose his wonderful songs not for a literary public but for his fellow peasants in the neighborhood. He scandalized the respectable and the rigid by everything he did: his love of the lasses, his drinking, his contempt for orthodox Calvinism, and his enthusiasm for the French Revolution. His art was spontaneous and free, and at its best when he employed not classical English but the dialect of his native Lowlands.

But it remained for Blake (cf. *below*) to institute the completest of revolts against his century. Foe of compromise, moderation, and every kind of restraint (though his private life was simple and outwardly uneventful), he recommended a life of energy and excess. Nothing is more representative of his distaste for his century than his naming the principle of Evil in his system, "Reason." For the communication of a point of view truly volcanic for his times he employed in his best poems the lyric, almost childlike in its apparent artlessness but eloquent in its limpid music and concentrated imagery. When one reads him, it is as though the whole line from Dryden through Pope to Johnson had never existed, and he were carrying the rare Elizabethan art of song to new heights of mystical insight. But Blake was largely unknown to his contemporaries, and his influence has been exerted only in more recent times since his rediscovery.

In addition to the bibliography already suggested for the eighteenth century (cf. Vol. I, p. 630), we recommend as valuable for study in the pre-romantic writers:

I. Babbitt, *The New Laocoön* (1910); H. Beers, *A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century* (1898); E. Bernbaum, *Guide through the Romantic Movement* (1930); K. Clark, *The Gothic Revival* (1928); H. G. De Maar, *A History of Modern English Romanticism,* Vol. I (1924); J. W. Draper, *The Funeral Elegy and the Rise of English Romanticism* (1929); H. N. Fairchild, *The Noble Savage* (1928); R. D. Havens, *The Influence of Milton on English Poetry* (1922); H. Read, *Reason and Romanticism* (1928); A. L. Reed, *The Background of Gray's Elegy* (1924); M. Reynolds, *The Treatment of Nature in English Poetry between Pope and Wordsworth* (1909); J. G. Robertson, *Studies in the Genesis of Romantic Theory on the Eighteenth Century* (1923); and L. P. Smith, *Four Words: Romantic, Originality, Creative, Genius* (1924).

James Thomson

(1700-1748)

The pages of no English poet are more uneven than those of James Thomson. He was something of a phenomenon in his time—the man who rediscovered a feeling for natural beauty—but he had the eighteenth-century faith in British commerce and politics, the complacent philosophy of the Augustans, and a strong neoclassical love of the didactic. His father was a Presbyterian minister in Roxburghshire, Scotland, at Ednam, where the poet was born. Soon the family moved to another parish of the same county. His ramblings through the untamed border country filled the boy's mind with those impressions he was to record in *The Seasons.* With the intention of entering the Church, he studied at Edinburgh University, but gave up his plans and came to London (1725) to try his fortunes there as an author. The appearance of his *Winter* (1726) established him at once as a prominent poet. "What are we commonly entertained with . . . save forced, unaffecting fancies; little, glittering prettinesses?" he protested in the second edition which was soon called for. "I know no subject more elevating, more amusing, more ready to awake the poetical enthusiasm . . . than the works of nature. Where can we meet such variety, such beauty, such magnificence? All that enlarges, and transports, the soul? . . . In every dress nature is greatly charming! whether she puts on the crimson robes of the morning! the strong effulgence of noon! the sober suit of the evening! or the deep sables of blackness and tempest!" Though Lady Winchelsea (1661-1720) and Thomas Parnell (1679-1718) had written stray pieces with subdued pictures of natural scenery, Thomson was the first poet of the century to step boldly forth as an advocate of nature poetry. There was something fresh and yet much that was familiar in the work of this young man, and the Augustans, Pope among them, were charmed.

The success of *Winter* encouraged Thomson to add to it *Summer* (1727) and *Spring* (1728); and when he had concluded *Autumn* he issued the four poems as *The Seasons* (1730). Thomson was an amiable, easy-going man who knew how to avoid quarrels and was assiduous in cultivating the acquaintance of his patrons for the small sinecures they granted him. He was a social being, his ideas were conventional enough, and he was readily accepted into the company of the Augustan wits. His post as a tutor to young Talbot enabled him to travel for a while on the Continent (1730-31). A long, barren, and tedious panegyric in blank verse, *Liberty* (1736), which varies long stretches of platitudinizing with some vivid descriptions, is the fruit of his travels. He wrote a number

of undistinguished tragedies much to neoclassical taste, of which the best known, because of Fielding's parody of it, is *Sophonisba* (1730). His *Poem Sacred to the Memory of Sir Isaac Newton* (1727), though no longer read, is interesting for his appreciation of the value of science to the poetic imagination. Most Englishmen know Thomson best by his chauvinistic *Rule, Britannia!* (1740) with its refrain:

Rule, Britannia, rule the waves;
Britons never will be slaves.

—originally part of the masque *Alfred.* Thomson spent much of his abundant leisure in the company of his aristocratic friends; his last years were devoted to lazy retirement at Richmond, where he lingered over his last work, *The Castle of Indolence* (1748), almost to the time of his death. Of his writings only the first, *The Seasons,* and the last, *The Castle of Indolence,* have importance to us.

The Seasons is the first English poem of any pretensions to make its subject the description of nature. At his best Thomson is excellent as a painter of landscape and the changing aspects of weather; in such passages his command over concrete image is a forecast of the romantic poets of a later time. His preference for the blank verse of Milton as against the heroic couplet of the Augustans is the first notable departure from that form; and he exhibits greater skill in fluency and melody than any early imitator of Milton. *The Seasons,* therefore, forms a significant link with Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* (cf. *below*). But the influence of Milton upon Thomson was not an unmitigated blessing. Latinisms which suited the temperament of Milton and the subject of *Paradise Lost* are curiously misplaced in the depiction of a landscape. Such phrases as "ruminate in the contiguous shade," "on the passive main descends the ethereal force," "the conscious heifer," "the fond sequacious herd"—seem ludicrous today. Nor are the baleful influences of Pope's *Homer* absent in many a periphrasis: "plumy race," "brown inhabitants," "bleating kind," etc. Moreover, *The Seasons* is interlarded with many digressions (as in Pope's *Windsor Forest*) of a panegyric and pseudo-philosophical character. With all these faults, Thomson achieves a new and stimulating poetry when he is content to describe nature. It is as a painter of varied Nature that he is justly admired as a pioneer. In the feeling of inspiration which he found in woods and pastures, Thomson is Wordsworth's most important forerunner.

The Castle of Indolence possesses the same general limitations and virtues, but has a different historical importance. The *Faerie Queene* had had a number of inadequate imitators before Thomson wrote, in this poem, the best imitation of Spenser's subject and manner. But that profound admiration of Spenser which was to bring inspiration to many nineteenth-century poets was still in its infancy. The magic, the romanticism, the imaginativeness, and the subtle music of the Elizabethan master were too much at variance with Augustan standards to find favor with the neoclassicists. *The Castle of Indolence,* therefore, was fully appreciated only later; and it is significant that Samuel Johnson, who liked *The Seasons,* makes only passing mention of Thomson's last work in his *Life* of him. But the poem is of considerable importance as bringing to the notice of the public the potentialities of the Spenserian stanza, and as adding greatly to the slowly growing interest in the "Gothic" atmosphere of the medieval and the unreal.

J. L. Robertson has edited Thomson's poems (1908). G. C. Macaulay's (1907) and W. Bayne's (1898) biographies are authoritative.

The Seasons

From *Winter*

See, Winter comes, to rule the varied year,
Sullen and sad, with all his rising train—
Vapors, and clouds, and storms. Be these my theme,
These, that exalt the soul to solemn thought,
And heavenly musing. Welcome, kindred glooms!
Congenial horrors, hail! with frequent foot,
Pleased have I, in my cheerful morn of life,
When nursed by careless solitude I lived,
And sung of Nature with unceasing joy,
Pleased have I wandered through your rough domain;
Trod the pure virgin-snows, myself as pure;
Heard the winds roar, and the big torrent burst;
Or seen the deep-fermenting tempest brewed,
In the grim evening-sky. Thus passed the time,
Till through the lucid chambers of the south
Looked out the joyous Spring, looked out, and smiled.

To thee, the patron of this first essay,
The Muse, O Wilmington![1] renews her song.
Since has she rounded the revolving year:
Skimmed the gay Spring; on eagle-pinions borne,
Attempted through the Summer-blaze to rise;
Then swept o'er Autumn with the shadowy gale;
And now among the Wintry clouds again,
Rolled in the doubling storm, she tries to soar;
To swell her note with all the rushing winds;
To suit her sounding cadence to the floods;
As is her theme, her numbers wildly great:
Thrice happy, could she fill thy judging ear
With bold description, and with manly thought.
Nor art thou skilled in awful schemes alone,
And how to make a mighty people thrive;
But equal goodness, sound integrity,
A firm, unshaken, uncorrupted soul
Amid a sliding age, and burning strong,
Not vainly blazing, for thy country's weal,
A steady spirit, regularly free—
These, each exalting each, the statesman's light
Into the patriot; these, the public hope
And eye to thee converting, bid the Muse
Record what envy dares not flattery call.

Now when the cheerless empire of the sky
To Capricorn the Centaur-Archer yields,
And fierce Aquarius[2] stains the inverted year—
Hung o'er the farthest verge of heaven, the sun
Scarce spreads o'er ether the dejected day.
Faint are his gleams, and ineffectual shoot
His struggling rays in horizontal lines
Through the thick air, as, clothed in cloudy storm,
Weak, wan, and broad, he skirts the southern sky,
And, soon descending, to the long dark night,
Wide-shading all, the prostrate world resigns.
Nor is the night unwished; while vital heat,
Light, life and joy the dubious day forsake.
Meantime, in sable cincture, shadows vast,
Deep tinged and damp, and congregated clouds,
And all the vapory turbulence of heaven,
Involve the face of things. Thus Winter falls,
A heavy gloom oppressive o'er the world,
Through Nature shedding influence malign,
And rouses up the seeds of dark disease.
The soul of man dies in him, loathing life,
And black with more than melancholy views.
The cattle droop; and o'er the furrowed land,
Fresh from the plough, the dun discolored flocks,
Untended spreading, crop the wholesome root.
Along the woods, along the moorish fens,
Sighs the sad genius of the coming storm;
And up among the loose disjointed cliffs,
And fractured mountains wild, the brawling brook,
And cave, presageful, send a hollow moan,
Resounding long in listening fancy's ear.

Then comes the father of the tempest forth,
Wrapt in black glooms. First, joyless rains obscure
Drive through the mingling skies with vapor foul,
Dash on the mountain's brow, and shake the woods,
That grumbling wave below. The unsightly plain
Lies a brown deluge; as the low-bent clouds
Pour flood on flood, yet unexhausted still
Combine, and deepening into night, shut up
The day's fair face. The wanderers of heaven,
Each to his home, retire, save those that love
To take their pastime in the troubled air,
Or skimming flutter round the dimply pool.
The cattle from the untasted fields return
And ask, with meaning low, their wonted stalls,
Or ruminate in the contiguous shade.
Thither the household feathery people crowd—

[1] Sir Spencer Compton (1673?-1743), Speaker of the House of Commons and created Earl of Wilmington in 1730, to whom the poem is dedicated.

[2] the three signs of the Zodiac mentioned all come in the winter months.

The crested cock with all his female train,
Pensive and dripping; while the cottage-hind
Hangs o'er the enlivening blaze, and taleful there
Recounts his simple frolic. Much he talks,
And much he laughs, nor recks the storm that blows
Without, and rattles on his humble roof.
Wide o'er the brim, with many a torrent swelled,
And the mixed ruin of its banks o'erspread,
At last the roused-up river pours along:
Resistless, roaring, dreadful, down it comes,
From the rude mountain and the mossy wild,
Tumbling through rocks abrupt, and sounding far;
Then o'er the sanded valley floating spreads,
Calm, sluggish, silent; till again, constrained
Between two meeting hills, it bursts away,
Where rocks and woods o'erhang the turbid stream;
There gathering triple force, rapid and deep,
It boils, and wheels, and foams, and thunders through.
Nature! great parent! whose unceasing hand
Rolls round the seasons of the changeful year,
How mighty, how majestic, are thy works!
With what a pleasing dread they swell the soul,
That sees astonished! and astonished sings!
Ye too, ye winds! that now begin to blow
With boisterous sweep, I raise my voice to you.
Where are your stores, ye powerful beings! say,
Where your aerial magazines reserved,
To swell the brooding terrors of the storm?
In what far-distant region of the sky,
Hushed in deep silence, sleep ye when 'tis calm?
When from the pallid sky the Sun descends,
With many a spot, that o'er his glaring orb
Uncertain wanders, stained; red fiery streaks
Begin to flush around. The reeling clouds
Stagger with dizzy poise, as doubting yet
Which master to obey; while, rising slow,
Blank in the leaden-colored east, the moon
Wears a wan circle round her blunted horns.
Seen through the turbid, fluctuating air,
The stars obtuse emit a shivering ray;
Or frequent seem to shoot athwart the gloom,
And long behind them trail the whitening blaze.
Snatched in short eddies, plays the withered leaf;
And on the flood the dancing feather floats.
With broadened nostrils to the sky upturned,
The conscious heifer snuffs the stormy gale.
E'en as the matron, at her nightly task,
With pensive labor draws the flaxen thread,
The wasted taper and the crackling flame
Foretell the blast. But chief the plumy race,
The tenants of the sky, its changes speak.
Retiring from the downs, where all day long
They picked their scanty fare, a blackening train
Of clamorous rooks thick-urge their weary flight,
And seek the closing shelter of the grove;
Assiduous, in his bower, the wailing owl
Plies his sad song. The cormorant on high
Wheels from the deep, and screams along the land.
Loud shrieks the soaring hern; and with wild wing
The circling sea-fowl cleave the flaky clouds.
Ocean, unequal pressed, with broken tide
And blind commotion heaves; while from the shore,
Eat into caverns by the restless wave,
And forest-rustling mountains, comes a voice
That, solemn sounding, bids the world prepare.
Then issues forth the storm with sudden burst,
And hurls the whole precipitated air
Down in a torrent. On the passive main
Descends the ethereal force, and with strong gust
Turns from its bottom the discolored deep.
Through the black night that sits immense around,
Lashed into foam, the fierce conflicting brine
Seems o'er a thousand raging waves to burn:
Meantime the mountain-billows, to the clouds
In dreadful tumult swelled, surge above surge,
Burst into chaos with tremendous roar,
And anchored navies from their stations drive,
Wild as the winds, across the howling waste
Of mighty waters: now the inflated wave
Straining they scale, and now impetuous shoot
Into the secret chambers of the deep,
The wintry Baltic thundering o'er their head.
Emerging thence again, before the breath
Of full-exerted heaven they wing their course,
And dart on distant coasts—if some sharp rock,
Or shoal insidious, break not their career,
And in loose fragments fling them floating round.
Nor less at hand the loosened tempest reigns:
The mountain thunders; and its sturdy sons
Stoop to the bottom of the rocks they shade.
Lone on the midnight steep, and all aghast,
The dark wayfaring stranger breathless toils,
And, often falling, climbs against the blast.
Low waves the rooted forest, vexed, and sheds
What of its tarnished honors yet remain—
Dashed down and scattered, by the tearing wind's
Assiduous fury, its gigantic limbs.
Thus, struggling through the dissipated grove,
The whirling tempest raves along the plain,

And, on the cottage thatched or lordly roof
Keen-fastening, shakes them to the solid base.
Sleep, frighted, flies; and round the rocking dome,
For entrance eager, howls the savage blast.
Then too, they say, through all the burdened air
Long groans are heard, shrill sounds, and distant sighs,
That, uttered by the demon of the night,
Warn the devoted wretch of woe and death.
Huge uproar lords it wide. The clouds, commixed
With stars swift-gliding, sweep along the sky.
All nature reels: till nature's King, who oft
Amid tempestuous darkness dwells alone,
And on the wings of the careering wind
Walks dreadfully serene, commands a calm;
Then straight air, sea, and earth are hushed at once.
As yet 'tis midnight deep. The weary clouds,
Slow-meeting, mingle into solid gloom.
Now, while the drowsy world lies lost in sleep,
Let me associate with the serious Night
And Contemplation, her sedate compeer;
Let me shake off the intrusive cares of day,
And lay the meddling senses all aside.
Where now, ye lying vanities of life!
Ye ever-tempting, ever-cheating train!
Where are you now? and what is your amount?
Vexation, disappointment, and remorse.
Sad, sickening thought! and yet deluded man,
A scene of crude disjointed visions past,
And broken slumbers, rises still resolved,
With new-flushed hopes, to run the giddy round.
Father of light and life! thou Good Supreme!
O teach me what is good! teach me thyself!
Save me from folly, vanity, and vice,
From every low pursuit; and feed my soul
With knowledge, conscious peace, and virtue pure—
Sacred, substantial, never-fading bliss!
The keener tempests come: and fuming dun
From all the livid east, or piercing north,
Thick clouds ascend—in whose capacious womb
A vapory deluge lies, to snow congealed.
Heavy they roll their fleecy world along;
And the sky saddens with the gathered storm.
Through the hushed air the whitening shower descends,
At first thin wavering; till at last the flakes
Fall broad, and wide, and fast, dimming the day
With a continual flow. The cherished fields
Put on their winter-robe of purest white.
'Tis brightness all; save where the new snow melts
Along the mazy current. Low, the woods
Bow their hoar head; and ere the languid sun
Faint from the west emits his evening ray,
Earth's universal face, deep-hid and chill,
Is one wild dazzling waste, that buries wide
The works of man. Drooping, the laborer-ox
Stands covered o'er with snow, and then demands
The fruit of all his toil. The fowls of heaven,
Tamed by the cruel season, crowd around
The winnowing store,[8] and claim the little boon
Which Providence assigns them. One alone,
The redbreast, sacred to the household gods,
Wisely regardful of the embroiling sky,
In joyless fields and thorny thickets leaves
His shivering mates, and pays to trusted man
His annual visit. Half-afraid, he first
Against the window beats; then, brisk, alights
On the warm hearth; then, hopping o'er the floor,
Eyes all the smiling family askance,
And pecks, and starts, and wonders where he is—
Till, more familiar grown, the table-crumbs
Attract his slender feet. The foodless wilds
Pour forth their brown inhabitants. The hare,
Though timorous of heart, and hard beset
By death in various forms, dark snares, and dogs,
And more unpitying men, the garden seeks,
Urged on by fearless want. The bleating kind
Eye the bleak heaven, and next the glistening earth
With looks of dumb despair; then, sad dispersed,
Dig for the withered herb through heaps of snow.
Now, shepherds, to your helpless charge be kind:
Baffle the raging year, and fill their pens
With food at will; lodge them below the storm,
And watch them strict; for from the bellowing east,
In this dire season, oft the whirlwind's wing
Sweeps up the burden of whole wintry plains
In one wide waft, and o'er the hapless flocks,
Hid in the hollow of two neighboring hills,
The billowy tempest whelms; till, upward urged,
The valley to a shining mountain swells,
Tipped with a wreath high-curling in the sky.
As thus the snows arise, and, foul and fierce,
All Winter drives along the darkened air,
In his own loose-revolving fields, the swain
Disastered stands: sees other hills ascend,
Of unknown joyless brow; and other scenes,
Of horrid prospect, shag the trackless plain:

[8] grain.

Nor finds the river nor the forest, hid
Beneath the formless wild: but wanders on
From hill to dale, still more and more astray—
Impatient flouncing through the drifted heaps,
Stung with the thoughts of home; the thoughts of home
Rush on his nerves, and call their vigor forth
In many a vain attempt. How sinks his soul!
What black despair, what horror fills his heart,
When, for the dusky spot which fancy feigned
His tufted cottage rising through the snow,
He meets the roughness of the middle waste,
Far from the track and blest abode of man;
While round him night resistless closes fast,
And every tempest, howling o'er his head,
Renders the savage wilderness more wild.
Then throng the busy shapes into his mind,
Of covered pits, unfathomably deep,
A dire descent! beyond the power of frost;
Of faithless bogs; of precipices huge,
Smoothed up with snow; and, what is land, unknown,
What water, of the still unfrozen spring,
In the loose marsh or solitary lake,
Where the fresh fountain from the bottom boils.
These check his fearful steps; and down he sinks
Beneath the shelter of the shapeless drift,
Thinking o'er all the bitterness of death,
Mixed with the tender anguish nature shoots
Through the wrung bosom of the dying man—
His wife, his children, and his friends unseen.
In vain for him the officious wife prepares
The fire fair-blazing, and the vestment warm;
In vain his little children, peeping out
Into the mingling storm, demand their sire,
With tears of artless innocence. Alas!
Nor wife, nor children, more shall he behold;
Nor friends, nor sacred home. On every nerve
The deadly Winter seizes, shuts up sense,
And, o'er his inmost vitals creeping cold,
Lays him along the snows, a stiffened corse!
Stretched out and bleaching in the northern blast.

(1726; 1746)

The Sheep-Washing

From *Summer*

Or rushing thence, in one diffusive band,
They drive the troubled flocks, by many a dog
Compelled, to where the mazy-running brook
Forms a deep pool; this bank abrupt and high,
And that, fair-spreading in a pebbled shore.
Urged to the giddy brink, much is the toil,
The clamor much, of men, and boys, and dogs,
Ere the soft, fearful people to the flood
Commit their woolly sides. And oft the swain,
On some impatient seizing, hurls them in:
Emboldened then, nor hesitating more,
Fast, fast, they plunge amid the flashing wave,
And panting labor to the farther shore.
Repeated this, till deep the well-washed fleece
Has drunk the flood, and from his lively haunt
The trout is banished by the sordid stream,
Heavy and dripping, to the breezy brow
Slow move the harmless race; where, as they spread
Their swelling treasures to the sunny ray,
Inly disturbed, and wondering what this wild
Outrageous tumult means, their loud complaints
The country fill—and, tossed from rock to rock,
Incessant bleatings run around the hills.
At last, of snowy white, the gathered flocks
Are in the wattled pen innumerous pressed,
Head above head; and ranged in lusty rows
The shepherds sit, and whet the sounding shears.
The housewife waits to roll her fleecy stores,
With all her gay-drest maids attending round.
One, chief, in gracious dignity enthroned,
Shines o'er the rest, the pastoral queen, and rays
Her smiles, sweet-beaming, on her shepherd-king;
While the glad circle round them yield their souls
To festive mirth, and wit that knows no gall.
Meantime, their joyous task goes on apace:
Some mingling stir the melted tar, and some,
Deep on the new-shorn vagrant's heaving side,
To stamp his master's cypher ready stand;
Others the unwilling wether drag along;
And, glorying in his might, the sturdy boy
Holds by the twisted horns the indignant ram.
Behold where bound, and of its robe bereft,
By needy man, that all-depending lord,
How meek, how patient, the mild creature lies!
What softness in its melancholy face,
What dumb complaining innocence appears!
Fear not, ye gentle tribes, 'tis not the knife
Of horrid slaughter that is o'er you waved;
No, 'tis the tender swain's well-guided shears,
Who having now, to pay his annual care,
Borrowed your fleece, to you a cumbrous load,
Will send you bounding to your hills again.

(1746)

Thomas Gray

(1716-1771)

Through the efforts of his mother, Gray, the son of a brutal London "money-scrivener," was enabled to study at Eton, where he became a close friend of Richard West and of the Prime Minister's son, Horace Walpole (cf. Vol. I). From Eton he went to Cambridge but left without his degree to make a tour of Italy and France with young Walpole (1739-41). His letters from the Continent to his mother and to West show an appreciation for wild Alpine scenery not to have been expected in a younger contemporary of Addison. On his return he remained for some two years with his mother at the village of Stoke Poges. It was here, in 1742, that he wrote his first important poems, *Ode on the Spring, Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College,* and *Hymn to Adversity,* and may have begun the composition of the *Elegy*. Later in the same year he returned to Cambridge to live first at his old college, Peterhouse, and then at Pembroke, carrying on his studies in literature, science, history, and music. His life thereafter was the uneventful one of a scholar who left his books at Cambridge only to read others at the British Museum or to take a short vacation. The fruit of ten years was given to the public in a volume, *Six Poems* (1753), and four years later he was offered the honor of the Laureateship, which he declined. In 1768 he accepted the title of Professor of History and Modern Languages at Cambridge. He never married, and found his chief emotional outlet in a long series of letters, among the choicest ever written, to a few friends. When he died he was buried, as he had requested, by his mother's side in the churchyard of Stoke Poges, thought to be the site described in his *Elegy*.

The volume of Gray's complete poetical works is one of the slenderest ever offered to posterity by a distinguished poet. The bulk of his letters, which are a treasured part of our literature, many times exceeds that of his verse. And the fact is that Gray was by preference a scholar and a critic; poetry was his avocation and recreation. "His mind had a large grasp," as Samuel Johnson said of him, "his curiosity was unlimited, and his judgment cultivated." Although his *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751) is the most celebrated of all pre-romantic poems, Gray was essentially a man of the eighteenth century and, in true Augustan fashion, approached life and learning in the critical spirit. It is, indeed, as a critic that he served to open up fresh fields for the coming age of romanticism rather than through any revolt on his own part. His verse shows everywhere the strenuous discipline of the scholar. "Extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical, is one of the grand beauties of lyric poetry," he wrote to his friend Mason. Certainly no neoclassic poet was more loving in the use of the file than was Gray. The *Elegy* is said to have taken seven years to finish, and if any charge can be made against that best-known of English lyrical poems it is that it bears too much evidence of long care. Gray's subject matter may be very different from Pope's, but the two men are very similar in the self-conscious artistry of their poetry. This is not to say that a romantic poet like Shelley will be less desirous of perfection than an Augustan. But Shelley will constantly reshape a poem in the furnace of his imagination until it partakes of magnificence, while Gray and Pope engage in another process—that of endlessly polishing, refining, and smoothing the rough edges of a poem until it lies perfectly within the elegant mold they have set for it.

"In the character of his *Elegy*," said Johnson, "I rejoice to concur with the common reader. . . . The *Church-yard* abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind,

and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo." Johnson did not like others of Gray's poems, but he said of this one: "Had Gray written often thus, it had been vain to blame, and useless to praise him." Every English bosom seems to have returned an echo to the *Elegy*, and perhaps Oliver Elton's clue is correct: "The poem speaks to every one, for it expresses what every one feels, who does not feel too much." Recent investigation has proved that little, if anything, in the poem is original, and that some of its very phrases were commonplaces among the "graveyard" poets; Gray has merely unified gleanings from the pages of many others. And the poem presents some particularly unprepossessing examples of empty neoclassical abstractions: Knowledge, Penury, Memory, Honor, Flattery, Forgetfulness, Contemplation, Luxury, and Pride. To point out these flaws may deprive the *Elegy* of its title to being called a great poem, but cannot obliterate either its real merits or its historical importance. Its deep and sincere sympathy for the common man and for common humanity sounds a note beyond the gamut of orthodox Augustans, and predicts the coming of Wordsworth and his successors. This vital element in the *Elegy* and the care with which Gray modulated the poem's subdued harmonies have insured its universality of appeal. There are few pieces in English poetry more satisfying than this one.

After his publication of 1753, Gray abandoned the moral generalizations of his earlier works and began to prepare himself, by historical researches, for the composition of two ambitious Pindaric odes, *The Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard*, both published from the private printing press of his friend Walpole in 1757. His studies at this time proved of particular significance to later poets. For the Augustans the fountain-heads of inspiration had been Greece, Rome, Renaissance Italy and England, and neoclassical France. *The Bard* is a pioneer poem in three respects: its going back to the Middle Ages for a subject, its centering around Celtic lore, and its setting of wild mountain scenery. Gray's later odes, *The Fatal Sisters* (1761) and *The Descent of Odin* (1761), find him going back to an even remoter past and to Icelandic lore for his subject. Interest in the past, in remote places, and in wild nature was to be characteristic of the romantic poets of the next century.

The Bard is thus a curious cross between romanticism and classicism. Its subject and setting are highly romantic; its form is severely classic. There is no better poem in which to study the pure form of the ode as Pindar (cf. *below*) perfected it. Moreover, despite the romantic figure of the old bard with his beard streaming in the wind, and the rugged rocks, strong curse, bloody deeds, and the admiration for Spenser expressed near the end, there are, again, several examples of neoclassical abstractions (Conquest, Youth, Pleasure, Thirst, and Famine). But the total effect of *The Bard* upon Augustan taste was antipathetic, if we are to judge by Johnson's strictures: "To select a singular event, and swell it to a giant's bulk by fabulous appendages of spectres and predictions, has little difficulty, for he that forsakes the probable may always find the marvelous. . . . I do not see that *The Bard* promotes any truth, moral or political."

Gray's incomparable letters have been edited in three volumes by P. Toynbee and L. Whibley (1935). The four-volume *Works* were collected by E. Gosse (1884; rev. 1902-06). Two convenient volumes of selected works have been edited respectively by W. L. Phelps (1894) and J. Crofts (1926). E. Gosse's biography (1882), D. Tovey's *Gray and His Friends* (1890), and W. H. Hudson's *Gray and His Poetry* (1911) should be consulted.

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such, as wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a moldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe[1] has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry,[2] the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour.
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

[1] sod.
[2] the science of recording genealogies, here used as a symbol of family pride.

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,
If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault[3]
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honor's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village Hampden,[4] that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

The applause of listening senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

[3] of a great cathedral.
[4] John Hampden (1594-1643), who resisted unjust taxes imposed by King Charles I.

Yet even these bones from insult to protect,
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by the unlettered muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply;
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who mindful of the unhonored dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

"There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

"Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

"One morn I missed him on the customed hill,
Along the heath and near his favorite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

"The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne.
Approach and read (for thou can'st read) the lay,
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn."

THE EPITAPH

Here rests his head upon the lap of earth
A youth to fortune and to fame unknown.
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy marked him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,
He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wished) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)
The bosom of his Father and his God.

(1750)

PINDAR (522?-443? B.C.)

Not much more is known of the poet Pindar than that he was born near Thebes, was educated at Athens, spent some time at the court of Hiero at Syracuse (for whom he wrote the first of his Olympic odes), and died at Argos. The forty-four extant odes of Pindar were occasioned by the Olympic games, each winner of which was entitled to the crown of victory and an ode in his honor. Pindar made a practice of extending poetic glory to the myths surrounding the ancestors or birthplace of the particular hero celebrated.

The form of his odes, widely admired by the poets of the world, was adapted by Pindar from the choric passages of ancient drama, the unit being the three stanzas known respectively as *strophe, antistrophe,* and *epode.* The strophe and antistrophe are identical in structure; the epode has its own metrical pattern. The Greek odes were accompanied by music, and the singers (who danced as they sang) would move to one side for the *strophe* (i.e. the *turn*), retrace their steps for the *antistrophe* (i.e. the *counter-turn*), and remain stationary for the *epode.* The ear and the eye were thus supplied, in true Greek fashion, with classic symmetry and balance.

In English the word *ode* has a very general meaning and has been used to signify "a lyric poem expressive of exalted or enthusiastic emotion." Ben Jonson was the first to introduce the pure Pindaric form into English, and he was for a long time the only man to

employ it. Congreve pointed out that many so-called Pindaric odes were not in the least like those of Pindar. It remained for Gray in his *Progress of Poesy* and *The Bard* to create the most notable examples of the true Pindaric ode in English. The reader will remark the perfect symmetry of *The Bard* (cf. *below*); there are three distinct divisions in the thought, and each division has its strophe, antistrophe, and epode, making the nine stanzas of the poem.

The odes of Cowley (cf. Vol. I)—which he miscalled "Pindaric" and which are now known as "irregular" or "Cowleyan" odes—formed for almost a century the chief resort of poets who attempted an escape from the heroic couplet. This kind of ode is completely free, and has only its exalted tone to bear resemblance with Pindar. Wordsworth in his *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* (cf. *below*) employed the Cowleyan ode. Such, too, are Dryden's *Ode for St. Cecilia's Day* and *Alexander's Feast* (cf. Vol. I).

Certain poems written in imitation of the neat stanzas of Horace have also been called odes because of the custom of calling his *carmina* (which really means "songs") loosely "odes."

OLYMPIAN ODE I

TO HIERO[1] THE SYRACUSAN

Victor in the Horse-race

(Translated by Abraham Moore)

STROPHE I

Water the first of elements we hold;
And, as the flaming fire at night
Glows with its own conspicuous light,
Above proud treasure shines transcendent gold:
But if, my soul, 'tis thy desire
For the Great Games[2] to strike thy lyre,
Look not within the range of day
A star more genial to descry
Than yon warm sun, whose glittering ray
Dims all the spheres that gild the sky;
Nor loftier theme to raise thy strain
Than famed Olympia's crowded plain:
From whence, by gifted minstrels richly wove,
Th' illustrious hymn, at glory's call,
Goes forth to Hiero's affluent hall,
To hail his prosperous throne and sing Saturnian Jove.

[1] Hiero was ruler of Syracuse from 478 to 466 B.C. The horse-race celebrated in this ode is usually assigned to the year 476 B.C.

[2] The Olympic games were celebrated every four years at Olympia in Elis, a part of the Peloponnesus. All of the Greek states participated.

ANTISTROPHE I

Hiero the just, that rules the fertile field,
Where fair Sicilia's pastures feed
Unnumber'd flocks, and for his meed
Culls the sweet flowers that all the virtues yield;
Nor less renown'd his hand essays
To wake the Muse's choicest lays,
Such as the social feast around
Full oft our tuneful band inspire—
But wherefore sleeps the thrilling sound?
Pluck from the peg thy Dorian[3] lyre,
If Pisa's[4] palms have charms for thee,
If Pherenicus'[5] victory
Hath roused thee to the rapturous cares of song;
Tell us how swift the ungoaded steed
By Alpheus[6] urged his furious speed,
And bore the distant prize from all the panting throng.

EPODE I

Proud of his stud, the Syracusan king
Partook the courser's triumph. Through the plain
By Lydian Pelops won[7] his praises ring—
Pelops of Neptune loved (whose watery reign
Bounds the wide earth, that trembles at his might),
Pelops, whose form the plastic Fate replaced,
And from the caldron bright
Drew forth with ivory shoulder graced.[8]
Life teems with wonders: yet, in Reason's spite,
O'er the fond fascinating fiction, warm
From Fancy's pencil, hangs a charm
That more than Nature's self her painted dreams delight.

STROPHE II

For Taste, whose softening hand hath power to give

[3] a lyre tuned in the Dorian scale, similar to our A-minor scale.

[4] a town already at that time in ruins, somewhat east of Olympia.

[5] Hiero's successful horse.

[6] the principal river of the Peloponnesus.

[7] the Peloponnesus is named from its supposed conqueror, Pelops.

[8] This refers to the story of Tantalus, who served a banquet to the gods consisting of the severed members of his son Pelops. But only Demeter took a portion, whereas the others, observing that the flesh was human, restored the boy to life. Instead of the shoulder which she had eaten, Demeter inserted a piece of ivory, a physical characteristic which was inherited by his descendants.

Sweetness and grace to rudest things,
And trifles to distinction brings,
Makes us full oft the enchanting tale receive
In Truth's disguise as Truth. The day
Yet comes, Time's test, that tears away
The veil each flattering falsehood wears.
Beseems us then (for less the blame)
Of those that heed us from the spheres
Becoming marvels to proclaim.
Great son of Tantalus, thy fate
Not as the fablers I relate.
Thee with the Gods thy Sire's Sipylian[9] guest,
When they in turn beneath his bower
Purest repast partook, the Power
That wields the Trident,[10] seized, and ravished from the feast.

ANTISTROPHE II

Desire his breast had conquered. Up he drove
His trembling prize of mortal mold
In radiant car with steeds of gold
To th' highest mansion of all-honored Jove;
With whom the Boy,[11] from wondering Ide
Rapt long before, like place supplied.
Her Pelops lost, her vanished son
Soon roused the frantic mother's care;
No tidings came; the search begun
In mystery ended in despair.
Forthwith some envious foe was found
Whispering th' unseemly slander round,
How all into the bubbling caldron cast
Thy mangled limbs were seethed, and shred
In fragments on the table spread,
While circling Gods looked on and shared th' abhorred repast.

EPODE II

Far be from me and mine the thought profane,
That in foul feast celestials could delight!
Blasphemous tale! Detraction finds its bane
E'en in the wrong it works—If mortal wight
Heaven e'er hath honored, 'twas this Tantalus;
But soon from ill-digested greatness sprung
Presumption and abuse:
Thence from his towering fortunes flung
(Frightful reverse!) he fell.[12] A ponderous rock
High o'er his head hung threatening (angry Jove
So judged him for his crimes above):
Where day and night he waits, dreading th' expected shock.

STROPHE III

Thus doomed is he life's hopeless load to bear,
Torment unceasing! Three[13] beside,
Delinquents there, like pains abide.
He from th' Immortals their ambrosial fare,
The nectarous flood that crowned their bowl,
To feast his earth-born comrades, stole;
Food, that, by their celestial grace,
Eternal youth to him had given.
Vain hope, that guilt by time or place
Can 'scape the searching glance of heaven!
For this the blameless Son[14] once more
Back to man's short-lived race they bore;
There, when fresh youth its blooming flower had blown,
And round his chin th' umbrageous beard
Mature its manlier growth had reared,
From Pisa's Prince he sought, his nuptial couch to crown

ANTISTROPHE III

The famed Hippodamè;[15] whose charms to gain,
The fond and furious father's pride,
At night's dark hour alone he hied
To the rough shore of the loud-bellowing main,
And called the Trident-sceptered God,
Whose form forthwith beside him stood:
"Oh! if th' endearing gifts," said he,
"The Cyprian sea-born Queen[16] bestows,
Have still, great Neptune, grace with thee,
Propitiate now thy suppliant's vows.
Arrest Œnomaus' brazen spear,
To Elis guide my prompt career,
And bear me on thy swiftest chariot's wheel
Victorious to the goal; for he,
Slayer of suitors ten and three,
Still from his daughter's hope withholds the bridal seal.

[9] Sipylos was the home of Tantalus.
[10] Neptune, or Poseidon.
[11] Ganymede, whom Jove had stolen from Mount Ida.
[12] Tantalus received his punishment for revealing the secrets of the gods.
[13] The other sufferers were Tituos, Ixion, and Sisyphus.
[14] Pelops.
[15] Pelops contested for the hand of Hippodamè in a horse-race with her father, Œnomaus. He won the race by trickery.
[16] Aphrodite.

EPODE III

"Majestic Danger calls but for the brave,
Trusts not the dastard's arm: then why should man,
By life's hard lot predestined to the grave,
Waste in the dark th' unprofitable span,
And crouch in Age's corner unrenowned,
Heav'n's noblest gifts untasted? Power divine!
Grant thou th' event be crowned,
This peril shall at least be mine."
Thus he, with zeal not unregarded, speeds
His ardent prayer. The God his prayer embraced,
Gave him his car with gold enchased,
And roused th' unwearied plumes that winged the immortal steeds.

STROPHE IV

Œnomaus' power th' exulting youth o'erthrows:
The virgin spouse his arms entwine;
From whose soft intercourse, a line
By all the virtues nursed, six warriors rose.
Now in rich pomp and solemn state
His dust heroic honors wait.
Where Alpheus laves the hallowed glade,
His tomb its ample range displays,
And gifts by many a stranger laid
High on his crowded altar blaze;
But most from proud Olympia's drome,[17]
On distant realms, on times to come,
Shines Pelops' fame. There Speed demands his crown,
Toil-mastering Strength the muscle strains,
And conquerors pass life's proud remains
On Virtue's tranquil couch, the slumber of renown.

ANTISTROPHE IV

Such is the Champion's meed: the constant good,
That lives beyond the transient hour,
Of all that Heaven on man can shower,
Most fires his hope, most wakes his gratitude:
But now 'tis mine, the strain to raise,
And swell th' Equestrian Hero's praise,
To crown with loud Æolian song
A Prince, whose peer the spacious earth
Holds not its noblest chiefs among,
Boasts not in wisdom, power and worth,
A host more gifted, to display,
Through all the mazes of the lay.
Hiero, some guardian god thy fame sustains
And makes thee his peculiar care;
If long thy deeds his smiles shall share,
A loftier flight I'll soar, and warble sweeter strains.

EPODE IV

Then high on Cronium's[18] peak my post shall be;
There, as a poet's glance informs my soul,
First in the burning race thy steeds to see,
Thy bounding chariot whirl thee to the goal.
Then shall the Muse her strongest javelin fling;
'Bove all the ranks of greatness at the top
Shines the consummate king—
Beyond that height lift not thy hope.
Be thine in that bright station long to bear
Thy upright course; mine, with the conquering band,
To take my honorable stand,
And 'mong the bards of Greece the palm of genius wear.

[17] race-course.

The Bard

A PINDARIC ODE

I

The Strophe

"Ruin seize thee, ruthless King!
Confusion on thy banners wait,
Tho' fann'd by Conquest's crimson wing
They mock the air with idle state.
Helm, nor Hauberk's twisted mail,
Nor even thy virtues, Tyrant, shall avail
To save thy secret soul from nightly fears,
From Cambria's[1] curse, from Cambria's tears!"
Such were the sounds, that o'er the crested pride
Of the first Edward[2] scatter'd wild dismay,
As down the steep of Snowdon's[3] shaggy side
He wound with toilsome march his long array.
Stout Glo'ster stood aghast in speechless trance;

[18] Mount Olympus.
[1] the old name for Wales.
[2] Edward I of England, conqueror of Wales.
[3] the highest mountain in Wales.

To arms! cried Mortimer,[4] and couch'd his quiv'ring lance.

The Antistrophe

On a rock, whose haughty brow
Frowns o'er old Conway's[5] foaming flood,
Robed in the sable garb of woe,
With haggard eyes the Poet stood;
(Loose his beard, and hoary hair
Stream'd, like a meteor, to the troubled air)
And with a Master's hand, and Prophet's fire,
Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre:
"Hark, how each giant-oak, and desert cave,
Sighs to the torrent's awful voice beneath!
O'er thee, O King! their hundred arms they wave,
Revenge on thee in hoarser murmurs breathe;
Vocal no more, since Cambria's fatal day,
To high-born Hoel's harp,[6] or soft Llewellyn's lay.

The Epode

"Cold is Cadwallo's tongue,
That hush'd the stormy main;
Brave Urien sleeps upon his craggy bed:
Mountains, ye mourn in vain
Modred, whose magic song
Made huge Plinlimmon[7] bow his cloud-topp'd head.
On dreary Arvon's shore[8] they lie,
Smear'd with gore, and ghastly pale:
Far, far aloof th' affrighted ravens sail;
The famish'd Eagle screams, and passes by.
Dear lost companions of my tuneful art,
Dear, as the light that visits these sad eyes,
Dear, as the ruddy drops that warm my heart,
Ye died amidst your dying country's cries—
No more I weep. They do not sleep.
On yonder cliffs, a griesly band,
I see them sit, they linger yet,
Avengers of their native land:
With me in dreadful harmony they join,
And weave with bloody hands the tissue of thy line:—

II

The Strophe

"'Weave the warp, and weave the woof,
The winding sheet of Edward's race.
Give ample room, and verge enough
The characters of hell to trace.
Mark the year, and mark the night,
When Severn shall re-echo with affright
The shrieks of death, thro' Berkley's roofs that ring,
Shrieks of an agonising King![9]
She-Wolf of France,[10] with unrelenting fangs,
That tear'st the bowels of thy mangled Mate,
From thee be born, who o'er thy country hangs
The scourge of Heav'n. What Terrors round him wait!
Amazement in his van, with Flight combined,
And Sorrow's faded form, and Solitude behind.

The Antistrophe

"'Mighty Victor, mighty Lord,[11]
Low on his funeral couch he lies!
No pitying heart, no eye, afford
A tear to grace his obsequies.
Is the sable Warrior fled?[12]
Thy son is gone. He rests among the Dead.
The Swarm, that in thy noon-tide beam were born?
Gone to salute the rising Morn.
Fair laughs the Morn, and soft the Zephyr blows,[13]
While proudly riding o'er the azure realm
In gallant trim the gilded Vessel goes;
Youth on the prow, and Pleasure at the helm;
Regardless of the sweeping Whirlwind's sway,
That, hush'd in grim repose, expects his evening prey.

The Epode

"'Fill high the sparkling bowl,
The rich repast prepare;

[4] Gloucester and Mortimer were leaders in Edward's army.
[5] a river in northern Wales.
[6] There follows here a list of real or imagined Welsh bards.
[7] a mountain in Wales.
[8] the Welsh shore opposite the island of Anglesey.
[9] Edward II, who reigned from 1307 to 1327, was murdered in Berkeley Castle.
[10] Isabella, wife of Edward II, who was suspected of complicity in his death.
[11] Edward III, who reigned from 1327 to 1377.
[12] the Black Prince, son of Edward III and hero of the early years of the Hundred Years' War. He died before his father.
[13] a description of the reign of Richard II, from 1377 to 1399.

Reft of a crown, he yet may share the feast.
Close by the regal chair
Fell Thirst and Famine scowl
A baleful smile upon their baffled Guest.
Heard ye the din of battle bray,
Lance to lance, and horse to horse?
Long Years of havoc[14] urge their destined course,
And thro' the kindred squadrons mow their way.
Ye Towers of Julius,[15] London's lasting shame,
With many a foul and midnight murther fed,
Revere his Consort's faith, his Father's fame,
And spare the meek Usurper's holy head.[16]
Above, below, the rose of snow,
Twined with her blushing foe,[17] we spread:
The bristled Boar[18] in infant-gore
Wallows beneath the thorny shade.
Now, brothers, bending o'er the accursed loom
Stamp we our vengeance deep, and ratify his doom.

III

The Strophe

"'Edward, lo! to sudden fate
(Weave we the woof. The thread is spun)
Half of thy heart we consecrate.
(The web is wove. The work is done.)'—
Stay, oh stay! nor thus forlorn
Leave me unbless'd, unpitied, here to mourn!
In yon bright track, that fires the western skies,
They melt, they vanish from my eyes.
But oh! what solemn scenes on Snowdon's height
Descending slow their glitt'ring skirts unroll?
Visions of glory, spare my aching sight,
Ye unborn Ages, crowd not on my soul!
No more our long-lost Arthur[19] we bewail.
All-hail, ye genuine Kings, Britannia's Issue,[20] hail!

The Antistrophe

"Girt with many a baron bold
Sublime their starry fronts they rear;
And gorgeous Dames, and Statesmen old
In bearded majesty, appear.
In the midst a Form divine![21]
Her eye proclaims her of the Briton-Line;
Her lion-port, her awe-commanding face,
Attemper'd sweet to virgin-grace.
What strings symphonious tremble in the air,
What strains of vocal transport round her play!
Hear from the grave, great Taliessin,[22] hear;
They breathe a soul to animate thy clay.
Bright Rapture calls, and soaring, as she sings,
Waves in the eye of Heav'n her many-color'd wings.

The Epode

"The verse adorn again
Fierce War and faithful Love,
And Truth severe, by fairy Fiction drest.[23]
In buskin'd[24] measures move
Pale Grief, and pleasing Pain,
With Horror, Tyrant of the throbbing breast.
A Voice, as of the Cherub-Choir,
Gales from blooming Eden bear;[25]
And distant warblings lessen on my ear,
That lost in long futurity expire.
Fond impious Man, think'st thou, yon sanguine cloud,
Rais'd by thy breath, has quench'd the Orb of day?
To-morrow he repairs the golden flood,
And warms the nations with redoubled ray.
Enough for me: With joy I see
The different doom our Fates assign.
Be thine Despair, and scept'red Care,
To triumph, and to die, are mine."——
He spoke, and headlong from the mountain's height
Deep in the roaring tide he plung'd to endless night.

(1757)

[14] the Wars of the Roses, which occupied much of the fifteenth century.
[15] the Tower of London, part of which is popularly said to have been built by Julius Caesar.
[16] Henry VI.
[17] the white and the red roses of York and Lancaster.
[18] the insignia of Richard III.
[19] The Welsh believed that Arthur would return and again rule over Britain.
[20] the House of Tudor, beginning with the reign of Henry VII in 1485. This family was descended from Owen Tudor, a Welshman.
[21] Queen Elizabeth.
[22] a famous Welsh bard of the sixth century.
[23] Spenser's *Faerie Queene*; cf. Vol. I, p. 263.
[24] the buskin was the shoe worn by tragic actors in the Greek theater; hence it refers here to the great Elizabethan tragedies.
[25] Milton, with his *Paradise Lost*; cf. Vol. I, p. 440.

To Richard West

LONDON, *April, Thursday* [1742]

You are the first who ever made a Muse of a cough; to me it seems a much more easy task to versify in one's sleep (that indeed you were of old famous for) than for want of it. Not the wakeful nightingale, when she had a cough, ever sung so sweetly. I give you thanks for your warble, and wish you could sing yourself to rest. These wicked remains of your illness will sure give way to warm weather and gentle exercise; which I hope you will not omit as the season advances. Whatever low spirits and indolence, the effect of them, may advise to the contrary, I pray you add five steps to your walk daily for my sake; by the help of which, in a month's time, I propose to set you on horseback.

I talked of the *Dunciad*[1] as concluding you had seen it; if you have not, do you choose I should get and send it you? I have myself, upon your recommendation, been reading *Joseph Andrews*.[2] The incidents are ill laid and without invention; but the characters have a great deal of nature, which always pleases even in her lowest shapes. Parson Adams is perfectly well; so is Mrs. Slipslop, and the story of Wilson; and throughout he shows himself well read in stage-coaches, country squires, inns, and inns of court. His reflections upon high people and low people, and misses and masters, are very good. However the exaltedness of some minds (or rather, as I shrewdly suspect, their insipidity and want of feeling or observation) may make them insensible to these light things (I mean such as characterize and paint nature), yet surely they are as weighty and much more useful than your grave discourses upon the mind, the passions, and what not. Now as the paradisaical pleasures of the Mahometans consist in playing upon the flute and lying with houris, be mine to read eternal new romances of Marivaux[3] and Crébillon.[4]

You are very good in giving yourself the trouble to read and find fault with my long harangues. Your freedom (as you call it) has so little need of apologies that I should scarce excuse your treating me any otherwise; which, whatever compliment it might be to my vanity, would be making a very ill one to my understanding. As to matter of style, I have this to say: the language of the age is never the language of poetry, except among the French, whose verse, where the thought or image does not support it, differs in nothing from prose. Our poetry, on the contrary, has a language peculiar to itself; to which almost every one that has written has added something by enriching it with foreign idioms and derivatives—nay sometimes words of their own composition or invention. Shakespeare and Milton have been great creators this way; and no one more licentious than Pope or Dryden, who perpetually borrow expressions from the former. Let me give you some instances from Dryden, whom everybody reckons a great master of our poetical tongue.—Full of *museful mopings*—unlike the *trim of love*—a pleasant *beverage*—a *roundelay* of love—stood silent in his *mood*—with knots and *knares* deformed—his *ireful mood*—in proud *array* —his *boon* was granted—and *disarray* and shameful rout—*wayward* but wise—*furbished* for the field—the *foiled dodderd* oaks—*disherited*—*smouldering* flames—*retchless* of laws—*crones* old and ugly—the *beldam* at his side—the *grandam-hag*—*villanize* his father's fame.—But they are infinite; and our language not being a settled thing (like the French) has an undoubted right to words of an hundred years old, provided antiquity have not rendered them unintelligible. In truth, Shakespeare's language is one of his principal beauties; and he has no less advantage over your Addisons and Rowes[5] in this than in those other great excellences you mention. Every word in him is a picture. Pray put me the following lines into the tongue of our modern dramatics:

But I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass:
I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph;
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deform'd, unfinish'd, sent before my time
Into this breathing world, scarce half made up—

and what follows. To me they appear untranslatable; and if this be the case, our language is greatly degenerated. However, the affectation of imitating Shakespeare may doubtless be carried too far; and is no sort of excuse for sentiments ill-suited or speeches ill-timed, which I believe is a

[1] a satirical poem by Alexander Pope.
[2] a novel by Henry Fielding (1707-1754)
[3] a French dramatist and novelist (1688-1763).
[4] French novelist (1707-1777).
[5] Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718), English dramatist, poet, and Poet Laureate.

little the case with me. I guess the most faulty expressions may be these: *silken* son of dalliance—*drowsier* pretensions—wrinkled *beldams*—*arched* the hearer's brow and *riveted* his eyes in *fearful ecstasy*. These are easily altered or omitted; and, indeed, if the thoughts be wrong or superfluous, there is nothing easier than to leave out the whole. The first ten or twelve lines are, I believe, the best; and as for the rest, I was betrayed into a good deal of it by Tacitus. Only what he has said in five words, I imagine I have said in fifty lines. Such is the misfortune of imitating the inimitable. Now, if you are of my opinion, *una litura*[6] may do the business better than a dozen; and you need not fear unravelling my web. I am a sort of spider; and have little else to do but spin it over again, or creep to some other place and spin there. Alas! for one who has nothing to do but amuse himself, I believe my amusements are as little amusing as most folks'. But no matter; it makes the hours[7] pass; and it is better than ἐν ἀμαθίᾳ καὶ ἀμουσίᾳ αταβιῶνα. Adieu.

William Collins

(1721-1759)

The volume of Collins's poetry is, like that of Gray, very slender. But whereas the stately form and sculptured lines of Gray won admiration from the public, Collins, a subtler and more delicate singer, had no success in his brief lifetime. Though his faults are glaringly those of his age—abstractions and generalized diction—his merits were not those to be appreciated by the Augustans. He loved the Greeks, but he also worshiped Shakespeare and Milton; he is the first eighteenth-century poet to recapture the shadowy delicacy and airy imaginativeness of the Elizabethans. He was born in Sussex at Chichester, famous for its cathedral, and was educated at Winchester School and at Oxford, where he took his B.A. degree in 1743. A year earlier he had already published a volume of *Persian Eclogues* (cf. Vol. I, p. 728) which was to be retitled *Oriental Eclogues* (1757). In 1744 he came to London with many plans of a scholarly or literary nature, but was unable to carry them through because of ill-health and impatience.

Under the influence of Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, Collins and his friend Joseph Warton elaborated a new kind of ode of description and allegory; taking a personified abstraction as a subject, they dealt with it in a series of pictures. Warton's *Odes on Various Subjects* appeared almost at the same time as Collins's *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegorical Subjects* (1746). Collins failed to achieve any notice; in a fit of wrath at his failure he burned the unsold copies of the edition. His last published work was the *Ode Occasioned by the Death of Mr. Thomson* (1749). In the same year he wrote his beautiful *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland*, which remained unprinted till long after his death. Before many more months had passed, poor Collins felt the ravages of a disease which, beginning in extreme melancholia, ended in violent insanity. For a time he was confined in a madhouse. His last years were spent in neglected retirement in which he alternated short periods of intellectual clarity with others of mental blankness. His poetic career had ended before his twenty-ninth birthday.

The qualities which make Collins one of the most original poets of his age are difficult to point out. Mixed with some very bad instances of abstraction and artificial diction are, of course, various non-classical interests: his feeling for landscape, his affection for gloom, his depiction of nature in its duskier robes. But, more than anything else, it is imaginativeness and sensitivity that distinguish Collins from his contemporaries. The sweet thoughtful music of *How Sleep the Brave* and the Keats-like emotional intoxication of the *Ode to*

[6] one erasure.

[7] to live one's life without knowledge or refinement.

Evening are prophetic of romantic poetry in a sense quite beyond the reach of Thomson, Gray, or any other man of his generation. He is sometimes careless; the exact meaning of the thirty-second line of the *Ode to Evening*, for example (*Reflect its last cool gleam*), defies grammatical analysis. But the delicately modulated music of his unrhymed lines delivers the message even when logic cannot follow his sentence structure.

The best edition of Collins is that of W. C. Bronson (1898); new material will be found in that of E. Blunden (1929). The most ambitious study made of his work is E. G. Ainsworth's *Poor Collins* (1937). H. W. Garrod's *Collins* (1928) is unsympathetic but stimulating.

Ode to Evening

If aught of oaten stop, or pastoral song,
May hope, chaste Eve, to soothe thy modest ear,
  Like thy own solemn springs,
  Thy springs and dying gales;

O nymph reserved—while now the bright-haired sun
Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,
  With brede[1] ethereal wove,
  O'erhang his wavy bed;

Now air is hushed, save where the weak-eyed bat
With short shrill shriek flits by on leathern wing,
  Or where the beetle winds
  His small but sullen horn,

As oft he rises, 'midst the twilight path
Against the pilgrim borne in heedless hum—
  Now teach me, maid composed,
  To breathe some softened strain,

Whose numbers, stealing through thy darkening vale,
May not unseemly with its stillness suit,
  As, musing slow, I hail
  Thy genial loved return!

For when thy folding-star arising shows
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp
  The fragrant Hours, and elves
  Who slept in buds the day,

And many a nymph who wreathes her brows with sedge,
And sheds the freshening dew, and, lovelier still,
  The pensive Pleasures sweet,
  Prepare thy shadowy car.

Then lead, calm votaress, where some sheety lake
Cheers the lone heath, or some time-hallowed pile,
  Or upland fallows gray
  Reflect its last cool gleam.

But when chill blustering winds, or driving rain,
Prevent my willing feet, be mine the hut
  That from the mountain's side
  Views wilds and swelling floods,

And hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires,
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all
  Thy dewy fingers draw
  The gradual dusky veil.

While Spring shall pour his show'rs, as oft he wont,
And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest Eve!
  While Summer loves to sport
  Beneath thy lingering light;

While sallow Autumn fills thy lap with leaves,
Or Winter, yelling through the troublous air,
  Affrights thy shrinking train,
  And rudely rends thy robes;

So long, regardful of thy quiet rule,
Shall Fancy, Friendship, Science, rose-lipped Health,
  Thy gentlest influence own,
  And hymn thy favorite name!

(1746)

[1] embroidery.

Ode Written in the Beginning of the Year 1746

How sleep the brave who sink to rest
By all their country's wishes blest!
When Spring, with dewy fingers cold,

Returns to deck their hallowed mold,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

By fairy hands their knell is rung;
By forms unseen their dirge is sung.
There Honor comes, a pilgrim gray,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay;
And Freedom shall awhile repair,
To dwell a weeping hermit there!

William Cowper

(1731-1800)

Cowper's considerable gifts as a poet have been dimmed by the brightness of his successors'. But of all pre-romantic poets his influence was the greatest in helping to change the taste of the public in the directions that the nineteenth century was to take. Moreover, if his poetry cannot rival the productions of men for whom he paved the way, his letters are still accounted by many to be the finest in our literature.

He was the son of the rector of Great Berkhamstead, a man who wrote verses but whose lack of understanding drove the boy to be utterly dependent on his mother. When the lad was but six his mother died; later in life he said of her: "Not a week passes (perhaps I might with equal veracity say a day), in which I do not think of her." Near the close of his life he wrote the touching poem *On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture* (1798), wherein the reader can estimate how great her loss had been to him. At Westminster School, to which he was sent, his boyhood, never happy or healthy, was further blighted by the brutality of a bully among his schoolmates. He studied law and was called to the bar in 1754. Various minor government positions enabled him to live comfortably, write pleasant light verses, and enjoy the friendship of his two cousins, Theodora and Harriet, the latter of whom became the Lady Hesketh of his letters. His mid-twenties were comparatively cheerful years, the only cheerful ones he was to know.

When he was about thirty he was preparing himself for an examination before the House of Lords for a government post. As the time approached his fear of not being able to pass became an obsession that drove him from a severe melancholia, during which he tried to commit suicide, into insanity. He was confined for a year to an asylum where his physician, Dr. Cotton, by his intellectual as well as physical concern for his patient, gradually brought him back to sanity. Cowper's conviction that he had committed the unpardonable sin cost him a veritable hell of mental anguish, and he was never to be free from the darkness in which he had lived for a year. He had, however, found some sort of peace through his conversion to the new evangelism then current (cf. Vol. II, p. 1).

On his release from Dr. Cotton's hospital, he retired to the village of Huntington, not far from Cambridge, in order to escape the temptations of London. He became acquainted with the Unwins, and presently went to live with them. Mrs. Unwin, a number of years his senior, became his "second mother," and her tender care made her entirely necessary to him. After the death of her husband Mrs. Unwin moved to the village of Olney to be near the Rev. John Newton, a popular evangelist of rude power, and Cowper accompanied her. It was at Olney and later at Weston, where Mrs. Unwin and he removed in 1786, that Cowper's enduring works were written. Undoubtedly Cowper would have married Mrs. Unwin had not a temporary relapse into insanity in 1773 canceled all plans for matrimony. His debt to her devotion to his well-being he acknowledged in his moving lines *To Mary*. It was she who urged him to write verse again and who, during his many periods of mental retrogression, nursed him back to health. When she was seventy she suffered two paralytic strokes, and Cowper watched over her with an anguish that probably hastened the intel-

lectual chaos of his own last years. It is said that when she died, he looked once at her, turned away with a sob, and never uttered her name again.

In 1782 Cowper published the results of Mrs. Unwin's literary encouragement, *Table Talk, Conversation, and Retirement.* His own tastes had led him to detest the "inflated and strutting phraseology" of Pope's *Homer* and its many imitators; and Samuel Johnson, because of his deafness to Milton, he disliked as a "literary cossack." Cowper, utterly unsympathetic to the poetic practice of the elegant Augustans, had one great love: Milton. In the texture of Cowper's most original blank verse the cadences and language are often Miltonic. Of this volume, the poem *Retirement* is the most significant; in it Cowper explained his escape from the city as a desire for "divine communion," and thus prepared the way for Wordsworth's treatment of the theme in *The Excursion.*

Cowper's association with Newton had resulted in their collaboration in the *Olney Hymns* (1779). The clergyman's narrow and dark theology was instrumental, too, in intensifying the morbidity in Cowper's nature and in increasing his periods of hopeless depression. His intense need for spiritual comfort can be read in the hymn *Walking with God*:

Oh! for a closer walk with God,
A calm and heavenly frame;
A light to shine upon the road
That leads me to the Lamb!

Cowper fought valiantly against the terror within him, and was often gay and fond of fun. It was in such a mood that he wrote *The Diverting History of John Gilpin* (1782), in rollicking ballad-form, which as soon as published brought fame to the poet.

"From thirty-three to sixty I have spent my time in the country, where my reading has been only an apology for idleness, and where, when I had not either a magazine or review in my hand, I was sometimes a carpenter, at others a bird-cage maker, or a gardener, or a drawer of landscapes. At fifty years of age I commenced an author. It is a whim that has served me longest and best, and which will probably be my last." So wrote Cowper to a friend. He might have added that it was the advent of the lovely Lady Austen to the vicarage at Olney that had fired him to do his best work. It was she, charming and high-spirited woman, who told him the tale of John Gilpin which he at once composed into the gay ballad. And it was she who was the cause of his embarking on his most celebrated work. One day while she was urging him to write another poem in blank verse, he asked her for a subject. "Write upon this sofa," she commanded. And he began. As he wrote, associations crowded in on him until he had produced a whole volume which he playfully entitled *The Task* (1785). Its purpose, as he explained, was "to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue." Cowper was, thus, the first pre-romantic to relish the country for its own sake. His moral intent does nothing to obscure the vivid detail, the appreciative eye, and the whimsical humor of his lines. The poem is highly autobiographical in tone, for as the poet takes us on a round of country life and country scenery we are always conscious of his presence. Many passages of his blank verse give a foretaste of Wordsworth, and he is far more interested in vivid description than the later poet. If Cowper is never ecstatic his famous poem is none the less congenial with warmth, sweetness, humor, and kindliness. The greatest appeal of *The Task* is in a quality strictly unclassical: the easy intimacy and self-revelation of the author.

The last years of Cowper's life were devoted to a translation of Homer in which he tried to recover something of the original after Pope's transformation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey.* He left unfinished at his death one of his finest pieces, *Yardley Oak* (1804), in which he passes from his objective observation of nature very close to the romantic aim of self-identification with her.

Oliver Elton has so well summed up Cowper's place as a poet that it would be a pity

not to quote his estimate here: "Go forward some twenty years to Shelley and his companions, and Cowper seems like one of those half-forgotten old water-color masters of exquisite line, in the dim blue of whose English low skies and blotted distances there is not much sunlight, and whom it may not be best to hang among the Turners. But we should put him in the ante-room, and study him first before going forward. We are sure to come back to him, even after Shelley, for a while."

That is the Cowper of *The Task* and of *Yardley Oak*. But the Cowper whose days were haunted by spiritual torture may be read in *The Castaway* (cf. *below*), written one year before his death; the analogy he there draws between his own state and that of a drowning sailor affords a powerful insight into his sufferings. It was in his wonderful letters (cf. *below*), however, with their amazing variety of mood and their complete candor, that the whole man was revealed to the world, when they were at last published.

A good one-volume edition of his poetry is edited by H. S. Milford (third edition, 1926). The letters have been admirably collected by T. Wright (1904) in four volumes, and supplemented by the same editor with an additional volume (1925). Of biographies the following are highly to be recommended: G. Smith's (1901), T. Wright's (1892), D. Cecil's (1929), and H. Fausset's (1928).

The Task, Book IV

THE WINTER EVENING

Hark! 't is the twanging horn! O'er yonder bridge
That with its wearisome but needful length
Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright,
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,
With spattered boots, strapped waist, and frozen locks,
News from all nations lumbering at his back.
True to his charge, the close-packed load behind,
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern
Is to conduct it to the destined inn,
And, having dropped the expected bag, pass on.
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,
Cold and yet cheerful; messenger of grief
Perhaps to thousands, and of joy to some;
To him indifferent whether grief or joy.
Houses in ashes, and the fall of stocks,
Births, deaths, and marriages, epistles wet
With tears that trickled down the writer's cheeks
Fast as the periods from his fluent quill,
Or charged with amorous sighs of absent swains,
Or nymphs responsive, equally affect
His horse and him, unconscious of them all.
But oh the important budget! ushered in
With such heart-shaking music, who can say
What are its tidings? have our troops awaked?
Or do they still, as if with opium drugged,
Snore to the murmurs of the Atlantic wave?[1]
Is India free? and does she wear her plumed
And jewelled turban with a smile of peace?
Or do we grind her still? The grand debate,
The popular harangue, the tart reply,
The logic, and the wisdom, and the wit,
And the loud laugh—I long to know them all;
I burn to set the imprisoned wranglers free,
And give them voice and utterance once again.
Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud-hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups[2]
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in.
Not such his evening, who with shining face
Sweats in the crowded theatre, and squeezed
And bored with elbow-points through both his sides,
Outscolds the ranting actor on the stage:
Nor his, who patient stands till his feet throb,
And his head thumps, to feed upon the breath
Of patriots bursting with heroic rage,
Or placemen[3] all tranquillity and smiles.
This folio of four pages, happy work!
Which not even critics criticise; that holds
Inquisitive attention, while I read,
Fast bound in chains of silence, which the fair,
Though eloquent themselves, yet fear to break;
What is it, but a map of busy life,
Its fluctuations, and its vast concerns?
Here runs the mountainous and craggy ridge
That tempts ambition. On the summit see

[1] This refers to the British soldiers in the American Revolution.

[2] of tea.

[3] politicians in search of a position.

The seals of office glitter in his eyes;
He climbs, he pants, he grasps them! At his heels,
Close at his heels, a demagogue ascends,
And with a dexterous jerk soon twists him down,
And wins them, but to lose them in his turn.
Here rills of oily eloquence in soft
Meanders lubricate the course they take;
The modest speaker is ashamed and grieved
T' engross a moment's notice, and yet begs,
Begs a propitious ear for his poor thoughts,
However trivial all that he conceives.
Sweet bashfulness! it claims at least this praise,
The dearth of information and good sense
That it foretells us always comes to pass.
Cataracts of declamation thunder here;
There forests of no meaning spread the page,
In which all comprehension wanders, lost;
While fields of pleasantry amuse us there
With merry descants on a nation's woes.
The rest appears a wilderness of strange
But gay confusion; roses for the cheeks,
And lilies for the brows of faded age,
Teeth for the toothless, ringlets for the bald,
Heaven, earth, and ocean, plundered of their sweets,
Nectareous essences, Olympian dews,
Sermons, and city feasts, and favorite airs,
Æthereal journeys, submarine exploits,
And Katterfelto,[4] with his hair on end
At his own wonders, wondering for his bread.
'Tis pleasant through the loop-holes of retreat
To peep at such a world; to see the stir
Of the great Babel, and not feel the crowd;
To hear the roar she sends through all her gates
At a safe distance, where the dying sound
Falls a soft murmur on th' uninjured ear.
Thus sitting, and surveying thus at ease
The globe and its concerns, I seem advanced
To some secure and more than mortal height,
That liberates and exempts me from them all.
It turns submitted to my view, turns round
With all its generations; I behold
The tumult, and am still. The sound of war
Has lost its terrors ere it reaches me;
Grieves, but alarms me not. I mourn the pride
And avarice that make man a wolf to man;
Hear the faint echo of those brazen throats
By which he speaks the language of his heart,
And sigh, but never tremble at the sound.
He travels and expatiates, as the bee
From flower to flower, so he from land to land;
The manners, customs, policy of all
Pay contribution to the store he gleans;
He sucks intelligence in every clime,
And spreads the honey of his deep research
At his return—a rich repast for me.
He travels, and I too. I tread his deck,
Ascend his topmast, through his peering eyes
Discover countries, with a kindred heart
Suffer his woes, and share in his escapes;
While fancy, like the finger of a clock,
Runs the great circuit, and is still at home.
Oh Winter, ruler of th' inverted year,
Thy scattered hair with sleet like ashes filled,
Thy breath congealed upon thy lips, thy cheeks
Fringed with a beard made white with other snows
Than those of age, thy forehead wrapt in clouds,
A leafless branch thy sceptre, and thy throne
A sliding car, indebted to no wheels,
But urged by storms along its slippery way,
I love thee, all unlovely as thou seem'st,
And dreaded as thou art! Thou hold'st the sun
A prisoner in the yet undawning east,
Shortening his journey between morn and noon,
And hurrying him, impatient of his stay,
Down to the rosy west; but kindly still
Compensating his loss with added hours
Of social converse and instructive ease,
And gathering, at short notice, in one group
The family dispersed, and fixing thought,
Not less dispersed by day-light and its cares.
I crown thee king of intimate delights,
Fire-side enjoyments, home-born happiness,
And all the comforts that the lowly roof
Of undisturbed retirement, and the hours
Of long uninterrupted evening, know.
No rattling wheels stop short before these gates;
No powdered pert proficient in the art
Of sounding an alarm, assaults these doors
Till the street rings; no stationary steeds
Cough their own knell, while, heedless of the sound,
The silent circle fan themselves, and quake:
But here the needle plies its busy task,
The pattern grows, the well-depicted flower,
Wrought patiently into the snowy lawn,
Unfolds its bosom; buds, and leaves, and sprigs,
And curling tendrils, gracefully disposed,
Follow the nimble finger of the fair;
A wreath that cannot fade, of flowers that blow
With most success when all besides decay.
The poet's or historian's page, by one

[4] a sleight-of-hand performer who advertised with the words "Wonders! Wonders! Wonders!"

Made vocal for th' amusement of the rest;
The sprightly lyre, whose treasure of sweet sounds
The touch from many a trembling chord shakes out;
And the clear voice symphonious, yet distinct,
And in the charming strife triumphant still,
Beguile the night, and set a keener edge
On female industry: the threaded steel
Flies swiftly, and, unfelt, the task proceeds.
The volume closed, the customary rites
Of the last meal commence. A Roman meal;
Such as the mistress of the world once found
Delicious, when her patriots of high note,
Perhaps by moonlight, at their humble doors,
And under an old oak's domestic shade,
Enjoyed—spare feast!—a radish and an egg!
Discourse ensues, not trivial, yet not dull,
Nor such as with a frown forbids the play
Of fancy, or proscribes the sound of mirth:
Nor do we madly, like an impious world,
Who deem religion frenzy, and the God
That made them an intruder on their joys,
Start at his awful name, or deem his praise
A jarring note. Themes of a graver tone,
Exciting oft our gratitude and love,
While we retrace with memory's pointing wand,
That calls the past to our exact review,
The dangers we have 'scaped, the broken snare,
The disappointed foe, deliverance found
Unlooked for, life preserved and peace restored—
Fruits of omnipotent eternal love.
Oh evenings worthy of the gods! exclaimed
The Sabine bard.[5] Oh evenings, I reply,
More to be prized and coveted than yours,
As more illumined, and with nobler truths,
That I, and mine, and those we love, enjoy.
Is winter hideous in a garb like this?
Needs he the tragic fur, the smoke of lamps,
The pent-up breath of an unsavory throng,
To thaw him into feeling; or the smart
And snappish dialogue, that flippant wits
Call comedy, to prompt him with a smile?
The self-complacent actor, when he views
(Stealing a side-long glance at a full house)
The slope of faces, from the floor to th' roof,
(As if one master-spring controlled them all)
Relaxed into an universal grin,
Sees not a countenance there that speaks a joy
Half so refined or so sincere as ours.
Cards were superfluous here, with all the tricks
That idleness has ever yet contrived
To fill the void of an unfurnished brain,
To palliate dulness and give time a shove.
Time, as he passes us, has a dove's wing,
Unsoiled and swift and of a silken sound.
But the world's time is time in masquerade.
Theirs, should I paint him, has his pinions fledged
With motley plumes, and, where the peacock shows
His azure eyes, is tinctured black and red
With spots quadrangular of diamond form,
Ensanguined hearts, clubs typical of strife,
And spades, the emblem of untimely graves.
What should be, and what was an hour-glass once,
Becomes a dice-box, and a billiard mast
Well does the work of his destructive scythe.
Thus decked he charms a world whom fashion blinds
To his true worth, most pleased when idle most,
Whose only happy are their wasted hours.
Even misses, at whose age their mothers wore
The back-string and the bib, assume the dress
Of womanhood, sit pupils in the school
Of card-devoted time, and night by night,
Placed at some vacant corner of the board,
Learn every trick, and soon play all the game.
But truce with censure. Roving as I rove,
Where shall I find an end, or how proceed?
As he that travels far, oft turns aside
To view some rugged rock, or moldering tower,
Which seen delights him not; then coming home,
Describes and prints it, that the world may know
How far he went for what was nothing worth;
So I, with brush in hand and pallet spread
With colors mixed for a far different use,
Paint cards and dolls, and every idle thing
That fancy finds in her excursive flights.
Come, Evening, once again, season of peace,
Return, sweet Evening, and continue long!
Methinks I see thee in the streaky west,
With matron-step slow moving, while the night
Treads on thy sweeping train; one hand employed
In letting fall the curtain of repose
On bird and beast, the other charged for man
With sweet oblivion of the cares of day;
Not sumptuously adorned, nor needing aid,
Like homely-featured night, of clustering gems,
A star or two just twinkling on thy brow
Suffices thee; save that the moon is thine
No less than hers, not worn indeed on high
With ostentatious pageantry, but set
With modest grandeur in thy purple zone,
Resplendent less, but of an ampler round.

[5] a reference to Horace's phrase, "O noctes cœnaeque deum" (O nights and banquets of the gods).

Come, then, and thou shalt find thy votary calm,
Or make me so. Composure is thy gift;
And whether I devote thy gentle hours
To books, to music, or the poet's toil;
To weaving nets for bird-alluring fruit;
Or twining silken threads round ivory reels,
When they command whom man was born to please;
I slight thee not, but make thee welcome still.
Just when our drawing-rooms begin to blaze
With lights, by clear reflection multiplied
From many a mirror, in which he of Gath,
Goliath,[6] might have seen his giant bulk
Whole without stooping, towering crest and all,
My pleasures too begin. But me, perhaps,
The glowing hearth may satisfy a while
With faint illumination, that unlifts
The shadow to the ceiling, there by fits
Dancing uncouthly to the quivering flame.
Not undelightful is an hour to me
So spent in parlor twilight; such a gloom
Suits well the thoughtful or unthinking mind,
The mind contemplative, with some new theme
Pregnant, or indisposed alike to all.
Laugh ye, who boast your more mercurial powers,
That never feel a stupor, know no pause,
Nor need one; I am conscious and confess,
Fearless, a soul that does not always think.
Me oft has fancy, ludicrous and wild,
Soothed with a waking dream of houses, towers,
Trees, churches, and strange visages expressed
In the red cinders, while with poring eye
I gazed, myself creating what I saw.
Nor less amused have I quiescent watched
The sooty films that play upon the bars,
Pendulous, and foreboding, in the view
Of superstition, prophesying still
Though still deceived, some stranger's near approach.
'T is thus the understanding takes repose
In indolent vacuity of thought,
And sleeps and is refreshed. Meanwhile the face
Conceals the mood lethargic with a mask
Of deep deliberation, as the man
Were tasked to his full strength, absorbed and lost.
Thus oft, reclined at ease, I lose an hour
At evening, till at length the freezing blast,
That sweeps the bolted shutter, summons home
The recollected powers, and snapping short
The glassy threads with which the fancy weaves
Her brittle toys, restores me to myself.

[6] the Philistine giant whom David defeated; cf. *I Samuel* 17:4-54.

How calm is my recess, and how the frost,
Raging abroad, and the rough wind, endear
The silence and the warmth enjoyed within!
I saw the woods and fields at close of day
A variegated show; the meadows green
Though faded; and the lands where lately waved
The golden harvest, of a mellow brown,
Upturned so lately by the forceful share.
I saw far off the weedy fallows smile
With verdure not unprofitable, grazed
By flocks, fast feeding and selecting each
His favorite herb; while all the leafless groves
That skirt the horizon, wore a sable hue,
Scarce noticed in the kindred dusk of eve.
To-morrow brings a change, a total change!
Which even now, though silently performed
And slowly, and by most unfelt, the face
Of universal nature undergoes.
Fast falls a fleecy shower; the downy flakes
Descending, and with never-ceasing lapse
Softly alighting upon all below,
Assimilate all objects. Earth receives
Gladly the thickening mantle, and the green
And tender blade, that feared the chilling blast,
Escapes unhurt beneath so warm a veil.
In such a world, so thorny, and where none
Finds happiness unblighted, or if found,
Without some thistly sorrow at its side,
It seems the part of wisdom, and no sin
Against the law of love, to measure lots
With less distinguished than ourselves, that thus
We may with patience bear our moderate ills,
And sympathize with others, suffering more.
Ill fares the traveler now, and he that stalks
In ponderous boots beside his reeking team;
The wain goes heavily, impeded sore
By congregating loads adhering close
To the clogged wheels, and, in its sluggish pace,
Noiseless appears a moving hill of snow.
The toiling steeds expand the nostril wide,
While every breath, by respiration strong
Forced downward, is consolidated soon
Upon their jutting chests. He, formed to bear
The pelting brunt of the tempestuous night,
With half-shut eyes, and puckered cheeks, and teeth
Presented bare against the storm, plods on;
One hand secures his hat, save when with both
He brandishes his pliant length of whip,
Resounding oft, and never heard in vain.
Oh, happy, and, in my account, denied
That sensibility of pain with which
Refinement is endued, thrice happy thou!

Thy frame, robust and hardy, feels indeed
The piercing cold, but feels it unimpaired;
The learned finger never need explore
Thy vigorous pulse, and the unhealthful East,
That breathes the spleen, and searches every bone
Of the infirm, is wholesome air to thee.
Thy days roll on exempt from household care,
Thy wagon is thy wife; and the poor beasts,
That drag the dull companion to and fro,
Thine helpless charge, dependent on thy care.
Ah, treat them kindly! rude as thou appearest,
Yet show that thou hast mercy, which the great,
With needless hurry whirled from place to place,
Humane as they would seem, not always show.

Poor, yet industrious, modest, quiet, neat,
Such claim compassion in a night like this,
And have a friend in every feeling heart.
Warmed, while it lasts, by labor, all day long
They brave the season, and yet find at eve,
Ill-clad and fed but sparely, time to cool.
The frugal housewife trembles when she lights
Her scanty stock of brushwood, blazing clear,
But dying soon, like all terrestrial joys.
The few small embers left she nurses well;
And while her infant race, with outspread hands
And crowded knees, sit cowering o'er the sparks,
Retires, content to quake, so they be warmed.
The man feels least, as more inured than she
To winter, and the current in his veins
More briskly moved by his severer toil;
Yet he too finds his own distress in theirs.
The taper soon extinguished, which I saw
Dangled along at the cold finger's end
Just when the day declined, and the brown loaf
Lodged on the shelf, half eaten, without sauce
Of savory cheese, or butter costlier still,
Sleep seems their only refuge: for, alas!
Where penury is felt the thought is chained,
And sweet colloquial pleasures are but few.
With all this thrift they thrive not. All the care
Ingenious parsimony takes but just
Saves the small inventory, bed, and stool,
Skillet, and old carved chest, from public sale.
They live, and live without extorted alms
From grudging hands; but other boast have none
To soothe their honest pride, that scorns to beg,
Nor comfort else, but in their mutual love.
I praise you much, ye meek and patient pair,
For ye are worthy; choosing rather far
A dry but independent crust, hard earned,
And eaten with a sigh, than to endure
The rugged frowns and insolent rebuffs
Of knaves in office, partial in the work
Of distribution; liberal of their aid
To clamorous importunity in rags,
But oft-time deaf to suppliants, who would blush
To wear a tattered garb however coarse,
Whom famine cannot reconcile to filth:
These ask with painful shyness, and, refused
Because deserving, silently retire!
But be ye of good courage! Time itself
Shall much befriend you. Time shall give increase;
And all your numerous progeny, well-trained,
But helpless, in few years shall find their hands,
And labor too. Meanwhile ye shall not want
What, conscious of your virtues, we can spare,
Nor what a wealthier than ourselves may send.
I mean the man, who, when the distant poor
Need help, denies them nothing but his name.

But poverty, with most who whimper forth
Their long complaints, is self-inflicted woe;
Th' effect of laziness or sottish waste.
Now goes the nightly thief prowling abroad
For plunder; much solicitous how best
He may compensate for a day of sloth
By works of darkness and nocturnal wrong.
Woe to the gardener's pale, the farmer's hedge,
Plashed neatly, and secured with driven stakes
Deep in the loamy bank. Uptorn by strength,
Resistless in so bad a cause, but lame
To better deeds, he bundles up the spoil—
An ass's burden—and, when laden most
And heaviest, light of foot, steals fast away.
Nor does the boarded hovel better guard
The well-stacked pile of riven logs and roots
From his pernicious force. Nor will he leave
Unwrenched the door, however well secured,
Where Chanticleer amidst his harem sleeps
In unsuspecting pomp. Twitched from the perch,
He gives the princely bird, with all his wives,
To his voracious bag, struggling in vain,
And loudly wondering at the sudden change.—
Nor this to feed his own! 'Twere some excuse
Did pity of their sufferings warp aside
His principle, and tempt him into sin
For their support, so destitute.—But they
Neglected pine at home; themselves, as more
Exposed than others, with less scruple made
His victims, robbed of their defenceless all.
Cruel is all he does. 'Tis quenchless thirst
Of ruinous ebriety[7] that prompts
His every action, and imbrutes the man.
Oh for a law to noose the villain's neck
Who starves his own; who persecutes the blood
He gave them in his children's veins, and hates

[7] drunkenness.

And wrongs the woman he has sworn to love!
Pass where we may, through city or through town,
Village, or hamlet, of this merry land,
Though lean and beggared, every twentieth pace
Conducts th' unguarded nose to such a whiff
Of stale debauch, forth-issuing from the styes
That law has licensed, as makes temperance reel.
There sit, involved and lost in curling clouds
Of Indian fume,[8] and guzzling deep, the boor,
The lackey, and the groom: the craftsman there
Takes a Lethean[9] leave of all his toil;
Smith, cobbler, joiner, he that plies the shears,
And he that kneads the dough; all loud alike,
All learned, and all drunk! The fiddle screams
Plaintive and piteous, as it wept and wailed
Its wasted tones and harmony unheard:
Fierce the dispute, whate'er the theme; while she,
Fell Discord, arbitress of such debate,
Perched on the sign-post, holds with even hand
Her undecisive scales. In this she lays
A weight of ignorance; in that, of pride;
And smiles, delighted with th' eternal poise.
Dire is the frequent curse, and its twin sound
The cheek-distending oath, not to be praised
As ornamental, musical, polite,
Like those which modern senators employ,
Whose oath is rhetoric, and who swear for fame!
Behold the schools in which plebeian minds,
Once simple, are initiated in arts
Which some may practise with politer grace,
But none with readier skill!—'tis here they learn
The road that leads, from competence and peace,
To indigence and rapine; till at last
Society, grown weary of the load,
Shakes her encumbered lap, and casts them out.
But censure profits little: vain th' attempt
To advertise in verse a public pest,
That, like the filth with which the peasant feeds
His hungry acres, stinks, and is of use.
Th' excise[10] is fattened with the rich result
Of all this riot; and ten thousand casks,
For ever dribbling out their base contents,
Touched by the Midas finger of the state,
Bleed gold for ministers to sport away.
Drink, and be mad, then; 'tis your country bids!
Gloriously drunk, obey th' important call!
Her cause demands th' assistance of your throats;—
Ye all can swallow, and she asks no more.
Would I had fallen upon those happier days
That poets celebrate; those golden times,
And those Arcadian[11] scenes, that Maro[12] sings,
And Sidney,[13] warbler of poetic prose.
Nymphs were Dianas then, and swains had hearts
That felt their virtues: innocence, it seems,
From courts dismissed, found shelter in the groves;
The footsteps of simplicity, impressed
Upon the yielding herbage, (so they sing)
Then were not all effaced: then speech profane,
And manners profligate, were rarely found;
Observed as prodigies, and soon reclaimed.
Vain wish! those days were never: airy dreams
Sat for the picture; and the poet's hand,
Imparting substance to an empty shade,
Imposed a gay delirium for a truth.
Grant it:—I still must envy them an age
That favored such a dream; in days like these
Impossible, when virtue is so scarce,
That to suppose a scene where she presides,
Is tramontane,[14] and stumbles all belief.
No: we are polished now! the rural lass,
Whom once her virgin modesty and grace,
Her artless manners, and her neat attire,
So dignified, that she was hardly less
Than the fair shepherdess of old romance,
Is seen no more. The character is lost!
Her head, adorned with lappets pinned aloft,
And ribbands streaming gay, superbly raised,
And magnified beyond all human size,
Indebted to some smart wig-weaver's hand
For more than half the tresses it sustains;
Her elbows ruffled, and her tottering form
Ill propped upon French heels, she might be deemed
(But that the basket dangling on her arm
Interprets her more truly) of a rank
Too proud for dairy work, or sale of eggs.
Expect her soon with foot-boy at her heels,
No longer blushing for her awkward load,
Her train and her umbrella all her care!
The town has tinged the country; and the stain
Appears a spot upon a vestal's robe,
The worse for what it soils. The fashion runs
Down into scenes still rural; but, alas,
Scenes rarely graced with rural manners now!
Time was when, in the pastoral retreat,
Th' unguarded door was safe; men did not watch
T' invade another's right, or guard their own.
Then sleep was undisturbed by fear, unscared

[8] tobacco smoke.
[9] referring to Lethe, the river of forgetfulness.
[10] the tax on alcoholic drinks.
[11] Arcadia, in Greece, where many pastoral poems have had their setting.
[12] Virgil; cf. Vol. I, pp. 247-8. [13] Cf. Vol. I, pp. 288 ff.
[14] foreign; literally, living beyond the mountains.

By drunken howlings; and the chilling tale
Of midnight murder was a wonder heard
With doubtful credit, told to frighten babes.
But farewell now to unsuspicious nights,
And slumbers unalarmed! Now, ere you sleep,
See that your polished arms be primed with care,
And drop the night-bolt;—ruffians are abroad;
And the first larum of the cock's shrill throat
May prove a trumpet, summoning your ear
To horrid sounds of hostile feet within.
Even daylight has its dangers; and the walk
Through pathless wastes and woods, unconscious once
Of other tenants than melodious birds
Or harmless flocks, is hazardous and bold.
Lamented change! to which full many a cause
Inveterate, hopeless of a cure, conspires.
The course of human things from good to ill,
From ill to worse, is fatal, never fails.
Increase of power begets increase of wealth;
Wealth luxury, and luxury excess;
Excess, the scrofulous and itchy plague
That seizes first the opulent, descends
To the next rank contagious, and in time
Taints downward all the graduated scale
Of order, from the chariot to the plough.
The rich, and they that have an arm to check
The licence of the lowest in degree,
Desert their office; and themselves intent
On pleasure, haunt the capital, and thus
To all the violence of lawless hands
Resign the scenes their presence might protect.
Authority herself not seldom sleeps,
Though resident, and witness of the wrong.
The plump convivial parson often bears
The magisterial sword in vain, and lays
His reverence and his worship both to rest
On the same cushion of habitual sloth.
Perhaps timidity restrains his arm;
When he should strike he trembles, and sets free,
Himself enslaved by terror of the band,
The audacious convict, whom he dares not bind.
Perhaps, though by profession ghostly pure,
He too may have his vice, and sometimes prove
Less dainty than becomes his grave outside
In lucrative concerns. Examine well
His milkwhite hand; the palm is hardly clean—
But here and there an ugly smutch appears.
Foh! 't was a bribe that left it: he has touched
Corruption! Whoso seeks an audit[15] here
Propitious, pays his tribute, game or fish,
Wild-fowl or ven'son,—and his errand speeds.

[15] hearing.

But faster far, and more than all the rest,
A noble cause, which none who bears a spark
Of public virtue ever wish'd remov'd,
Works the deplor'd and mischievous effect.
'Tis universal soldiership has stabb'd
The heart of merit in the meaner class.
Arms, through the vanity and brainless rage
Of those that bear them, in whatever cause,
Seem most at variance with all moral good,
And incompatible with serious thought.
The clown, the child of nature, without guile,
Blest with an infant's ignorance of all
But his own simple pleasures—now and then
A wrestling-match, a foot-race, or a fair—
Is balloted, and trembles at the news;
Sheepish he doffs his hat, and, mumbling swears
A Bible-oath to be whate'er they please,
To do he knows not what! The task perform'd,
That instant he becomes the sergeant's care,
His pupil, and his torment, and his jest.
His awkward gait, his introverted toes,
Bent knees, round shoulders, and dejected looks,
Procure him many a curse. By slow degrees,
Unapt to learn, and form'd of stubborn stuff,
He yet by slow degrees puts off himself,
Grows conscious of a change, and likes it well:
He stands erect; his slouch becomes a walk;
He steps right onward, martial in his air,
His form and movement; is as smart above
As meal and larded locks can make him; wears
His hat, or his plum'd helmet, with a grace;
And, his three years of heroship expir'd,
Returns indignant to the slighted plough.
He hates the field in which no fife or drum
Attends him, drives his cattle to a march,
And sighs for the smart comrades he has left.
'T were well if his exterior change were all,
But with his clumsy port the wretch has lost
His ignorance and harmless manners too.
To swear, to game, to drink; to show at home
By lewdness, idleness, and sabbath-breach,
The great proficiency he made abroad;
To astonish and to grieve his gazing friends;
To break some maiden's and his mother's heart;
To be a pest where he was useful once;
Are his sole aim, and all his glory now.

Man in society is like a flower
Blown in its native bed; 't is there alone
His faculties, expanded in full bloom,
Shine out; there only reach their proper use.
But man associated and leagued with man
By regal warrant, or self-joined by bond
For interest sake, or swarming into clans

Beneath one head for purposes of war,
Like flowers selected from the rest, and bound
And bundled close to fill some crowded vase,
Fades rapidly, and by compression marred,
Contracts defilement not to be endured.
Hence chartered boroughs are such public plagues;
And burghers, men immaculate perhaps
In all their private functions, once combined,
Become a loathsome body, only fit
For dissolution, hurtful to the main.
Hence merchants, unimpeachable of sin
Against the charities of domestic life,
Incorporated, seem at once to lose
Their nature, and, disclaiming all regard
For mercy and the common rights of man,
Build factories with blood, conducting trade
At the sword's point, and dyeing the white robe
Of innocent commercial justice red.
Hence, too, the field of glory, as the world
Misdeems it, dazzled by its bright array,
With all its majesty of thundering pomp,
Enchanting music, and immortal wreaths,
Is but a school where thoughtlessness is taught
On principle, where foppery atones
For folly, gallantry for every vice.
But, slighted as it is, and by the great
Abandoned, and, which still I more regret,
Infected with the manners and the modes
It knew not once, the country wins me still.
I never framed a wish, or formed a plan,
That flattered me with hopes of earthly bliss,
But there I laid the scene. There early strayed
My fancy, ere yet liberty of choice
Had found me, or the hope of being free.
My very dreams were rural; rural, too,
The first-born efforts of my youthful muse,
Sportive, and jingling her poetic bells
Ere yet her ear was mistress of their powers.
No bard could please me but whose lyre was tuned
To Nature's praises. Heroes and their feats
Fatigued me, never weary of the pipe
Of Tityrus,[16] assembling, as he sang,
The rustic throng beneath his favorite beech.
Then Milton had indeed a poet's charms:
New to my taste, his Paradise surpassed
The struggling efforts of my boyish tongue
To speak its excellence. I danced for joy.
I marvelled much that, at so ripe an age
As twice seven years, his beauties had then first
Engaged my wonder; and, admiring still,
And still admiring, with regret supposed
The joy half lost because not sooner found.
Thee too, enamored of the life I loved,
Pathetic in its praise, in its pursuit
Determined, and possessing it at last
With transports such as favored lovers feel,
I studied, prized, and wished that I had known,
Ingenious Cowley![17] and, though now reclaimed
By modern lights from an erroneous taste,
I cannot but lament thy splendid wit
Entangled in the cobwebs of the schools.
I still revere thee, courtly though retired;
Though stretched at ease in Chertsey's[18] silent bowers,
Not unemployed; and finding rich amends
For a lost world in solitude and verse.
'Tis born with all: the love of Nature's works
Is an ingredient in the compound man,
Infused at the creation of the kind.
And, though th' Almighty Maker has throughout
Discriminated each from each, by strokes
And touches of his hand, with so much art
Diversified, that two were never found
Twins at all points—yet this obtains in all,
That all discern a beauty in his works,
And all can taste them: minds that have been formed
And tutored, with a relish more exact,
But none without some relish, none unmoved.
It is a flame that dies not even there,
Where nothing feeds it: neither business, crowds,
Nor habits of luxurious city-life;
Whatever else they smother of true worth
In human bosoms; quench it, or abate.
The villas with which London stands begirt,
Like a swarth Indian with his belt of beads,
Prove it. A breath of unadulterate air,
The glimpse of a green pasture, how they cheer
The citizen, and brace his languid frame!
Even in the stifling bosom of the town,
A garden, in which nothing thrives, has charms
That soothe the rich possessor; much consoled,
That here and there some sprigs of mournful mint,
Of nightshade, or valerian, grace the well
He cultivates. These serve him with a hint
That Nature lives; that sight-refreshing green
Is still the livery she delights to wear,
Though sickly samples of the exuberant whole.
What are the casements lined with creeping herbs,
The prouder sashes fronted with a range
Of orange, myrtle, or the fragrant weed,
The Frenchman's darling? are they not all proofs
That man immured in cities, still retains

[16] the shepherd in Virgil's *Eclogues*; cf. Vol. I, pp. 247-8.

[17] Cf. Vol. I, pp. 393-4.

[18] the town in Surrey where Cowley died in 1667.

His inborn inextinguishable thirst
Of rural scenes, compensating his loss
By supplemental shifts, the best he may?
The most unfurnished with the means of life,
And they that never pass their brick-wall bounds
To range the fields and treat their lungs with air,
Yet feel the burning instinct: over-head
Suspend their crazy boxes, planted thick,
And watered duly. There the pitcher stands
A fragment, and the spoutless teapot there;
Sad witnesses how close-pent man regrets
The country, with what ardor he contrives
A peep at Nature, when he can no more.
  Hail, therefore, patroness of health and ease
And contemplation, heart-consoling joys
And harmless pleasures, in the thronged abode
Of multitudes unknown! hail, rural life!
Address himself who will to the pursuit
Of honors, or emolument, or fame,
I shall not add myself to such a chase,
Thwart his attempts, or envy his success.
Some must be great. Great offices will have
Great talents. And God gives to every man
The virtue, temper, understanding, taste,
That lifts him into life, and lets him fall
Just in the niche he was ordained to fill.
To the deliverer of an injured land
He gives a tongue to enlarge upon, a heart
To feel, and courage to redress her wrongs;
To monarchs dignity, to judges sense;
To artists ingenuity and skill;
To me an unambitious mind, content
In the low vale of life, that early felt
A wish for ease and leisure, and ere long
Found here that leisure and that ease I wished.

(1785)

The Castaway[1]

Obscurest night involved the sky,
  Th' Atlantic billows roared,
When such a destined wretch as I,
  Washed headlong from on board,
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,
His floating home for ever left.

No braver chief could Albion[2] boast
  Than he with whom he went.
Nor ever ship left Albion's coast,
  With warmer wishes sent.
He loved them both, but both in vain,
Nor him beheld, nor her again.

Not long beneath the whelming brine,
  Expert to swim, he lay;
Nor soon he felt his strength decline,
  Or courage die away;
But waged with death a lasting strife,
Supported by despair of life.

He shouted: nor his friends had failed
  To check the vessel's course,
But so the furious blast prevailed,
  That, pitiless perforce,
They left their outcast mate behind,
And scudded still before the wind.

Some succor yet they could afford;
  And, such as storms allow,
The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
  Delayed not to bestow.
But he (they knew) nor ship, nor shore,
Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

Nor, cruel as it seemed, could he
  Their haste himself condemn,
Aware that flight, in such a sea,
  Alone could rescue them;
Yet bitter felt it still to die
Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

He long survives, who lives an hour
  In ocean, self-upheld;
And so long he, with unspent power,
  His destiny repelled;
And ever, as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cried—Adieu!

At length, his transient respite past,
  His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in every blast,
  Could catch the sound no more.
For then, by toil subdued, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

No poet wept him: but the page
  Of narrative sincere,
That tells his name, his worth, his age,
  Is wet with Anson's tear.
And tears by bards or heroes shed
Alike immortalize the dead.

[1] based upon an incident described by Admiral George Anson in his *A Voyage Round the World* (1748).
[2] England.

I therefore purpose not, or dream,
  Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
  A more enduring date:
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

No voice divine the storm allayed,
  No light propitious shone;
When, snatched from all effectual aid,
  We perished, each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.

(1799)

To the Rev. William Unwin

October 10, 1784

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

I send you four quires of verse, which having sent, I shall dismiss from my thoughts, and think no more of, till I see them in print. I have not after all found time or industry enough to give the last hand to the points.[1] I believe, however, they are not very erroneous, though in so long a work, and in a work that requires nicety in this particular, some inaccuracies will escape. Where you find any, you will oblige me by correcting them.

In some passages, especially in the second book, you will observe me very satirical. Writing on such subjects I could not be otherwise. I can write nothing without aiming at least at usefulness; it were beneath my years to do it, and still more dishonorable to my religion. I know that a reformation of such abuses as I have censured is not to be expected from the efforts of a poet; but to contemplate the world, its follies, its vices, its indifference to duty, and its strenuous attachment to what is evil, and not to reprehend, were to approve it. From this charge at least I shall be clear, for I have neither tacitly nor expressly flattered either its characters or its customs. I have paid one, and only one, compliment, which was so justly due that I did not know how to withhold it, especially having so fair an occasion;—I forget myself, there is another in the first book to Mr. Throckmorton, —but the compliment I mean is to Mr. Smith. It is, however, so managed that nobody but himself can make the application and you, to whom I disclose the secret,—a delicacy on my part, which so much delicacy on his obliged me to the observance of.

What there is of a religious cast in the volume I have thrown towards the end of it, for two reasons: first, that I might not revolt the reader at his entrance,—and secondly, that my best impressions might be made last. Were I to write as many volumes as Lope de Vega,[2] or Voltaire,[3] not one of them would be without this tincture. If the world like it not, so much the worse for them. I make all the concessions I can, that I may please them, but I will not please them at the expense of conscience.

My descriptions are all from nature—not one of them second-handed. My delineations of the heart are from my own experience—not one of them borrowed from books, or in the least degree conjectural. In my numbers, which I have varied as much as I could (for blank verse without variety of numbers is no better than bladder and string), I have imitated nobody, though sometimes perhaps there may be an apparent resemblance, because at the same time that I would not imitate, I have not affectedly differed.

If the work cannot boast a regular plan (in which respect however I do not think it altogether indefensible), it may yet boast that the reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceding passage, and that, except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency: to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue.

If it pleases you, I shall be happy, and collect from your pleasure in it an omen of its general acceptance.

Yours, my dear friend,
W. C.

Your mother's love. She wishes that you would buy her a second-hand cream-pot, small, either kit, jug, or ewer of silver.

I shall be glad of an immediate line to apprise me of its safe arrival.

[1] punctuation.

[2] Spanish dramatist (1562-1635).

[3] Cf. Vol. I, pp. 755 ff.

Thomas Chatterton

(1752-1770)

Considerable historical importance attaches to the poetry of Chatterton, "the marvelous boy," as Wordsworth called him. His *Rowley Poems* are a signal instance of the recrudescence of interest in the Middle Ages and are the first completely successful attempts in his century to recapture the free melody of the Elizabethans. Moreover, they exercised formative influence on the poetry of romantics like Blake and Coleridge. But, for all that, what Chatterton wrote has hardly been of greater significance than the story of his brief, ill-starred life. Though he died by his own hand in his seventeenth year the victim of neglect and callous undervaluation, he was to stand as a symbol for the poets of the nineteenth century. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Rossetti, and Swinburne were to pay him tribute, and Shelley was to place him high among the "inheritors of unfulfilled renown." His death has been an indictment of the unimaginativeness of his age and has damaged the reputation of the witty Horace Walpole beyond repair. For the romantic poets it was emblematic of the tragic destiny of a great-souled poet in a middle-class world.

Chatterton was born in the shadow of the church of St. Mary Redcliffe, built in Bristol in the fifteenth century, and derived most of his intellectual nourishment within its walls. His father, who had died four months before the birth of Thomas, had left a poverty-stricken family from whose squalor the boy escaped to find beauty within the old edifice. For seven years he attended the uninspiring charity school, where the only studies were reading, writing, and arithmetic; but at night, when other lads were in bed, he was secretly busy in his garret poring over *The Faerie Queene*, Drayton, the Elizabethan song-writers, Chaucer, Lydgate, and dictionaries of early English. He had first been inspired to read by the sight of the beautifully illuminated letters of some old manuscripts that had been discovered when several ancient chests had been broken open in the loft of St. Mary Redcliffe. When he was eleven he had written an amazing poem, *Elinoure and Juga,* on a piece of yellowed parchment, and he presented it to a schoolmate as a medieval literary relic. The success of his hoax led him to try it on his teacher, who was also impressed. From then on Chatterton's fertile fancy was inflamed by the possibilities of the game, and he began to "discover" astonishing numbers of literary antiquities, feverishly manufactured through the long hours of the night in his little garret room. Around the historical figure of William Canynge, Lord Mayor of Bristol who had rebuilt the church, and with the help of the inscriptions on the tombs and of dictionaries, Chatterton began to create an imaginary fifteenth-century world in which the leading person was one "Thomas Rowley," poet-monk and confessor to Canynge. The good citizens of Bristol, flattered to find their ancient lineage traced in the "unearthed" Rowley poems, only encouraged the boy by their credulity. He produced for their edification various historical documents glorifying Bristol and their families, and submitted to them what purported to be the original manuscripts. When, in 1767, Chatterton entered an attorney's office, he had more time for his literary labors, and began to send copies of the Rowley poems to Horace Walpole and to the publisher Dodsley. Walpole, who professed to be something of an amateur medievalist, was at first genuinely interested in what he believed to be the recovery of a forgotten poet. But when the sounder scholarship of his friend Gray pointed out the impossibility of the poems' being what Chatterton claimed them to be, he was furious at having been taken in. His letter to Chatterton (cf. Vol. I, p. 831) in answer to the boy's request for the return of the poems will strike the reader as brutally cold and

insensitive to the poet's precocious gifts. But Walpole was no more unkind than his contemporaries. It was the limitation of an Age of Reason that it should have seen only that the boy was an impostor and have missed entirely the fact that he was a remarkable genius.

Ambitious to try wider fields in London, Chatterton deliberately strove to convince his employer that he was insane, won his release, and set out in great optimism. As a writer he had a double personality: Thomas Chatterton who could write heroic couplets, pastorals, fables, and odes in the true Augustan manner; and Thomas Rowley who was a strange mixture of medievalist and Elizabethan. In London he hoped to capitalize on the eighteenth-century side of his talents, and he wrote rapidly in every kind of popular literary form. But editors and publishers were in no hurry to pay him for his work, often broke their promises to him, and had no interest in printing the works of Thomas Rowley. After starving for a few months, he decided that death was better than defeat or charity, and he took a dose of arsenic. Shortly before the end, he wrote his *Will*, in which truthfully enough he said:

For had I never known the antique lore,
I ne'er had ventured from my peaceful shore.

It takes no profound scholar today to recognize at once that the language and manner of the *Rowley Poems* are not those of the fifteenth century. Although the boy's fancy was smitten with medieval pageantry, he was far more familiar with Spenser than with Chaucer. The diction which he manufactured under the illusion that it looked Chaucerian is a strange medley of words that were never spelled as he spelled them, at any time in our literature. And the music of his verse is the fresh melodiousness of the Elizabethans. The discerning ear will also catch echoes of Collins, Gray, and even of Dryden and Pope, in the creations of Thomas Rowley. But such was the unfamiliarity of the eighteenth century with our literary past that these poems could actually create a long controversy as to their authenticity. In his *History of English Poetry* Thomas Warton actually included, with reservations, an account of them in his discussion of the fifteenth century. The tragedy is that if the eighteenth century had been better informed, Chatterton might have been moved to exercise boldly and under his own name his wonderful gifts. In the free assurance of his technique and the clarity of his music, Chatterton had, in effect, helped to restore the art of singing to English poetry. Had he lived our literature might have been vastly the richer.

The Complete Poetical Works have been edited with a Life by H. D. Roberts (1906). *The Rowley Poems* have been edited by M. E. Hare (1911). Good biographies have been written by D. Masson (1899), C. E. Russell (1908), J. H. Ingram (1910), and E. H. Meyerstein (1930).

From *Ælla: A Tragycal Enterlude*

MYNSTRELLES SONGE

O! synge untoe mie roundelaie,
O! droppe the brynie teare wythe mee,
Daunce ne moe atte hallie daie,[1]
Lycke a reynynge[2] ryver bee;
Mie love ys dedde,
Gon to hys death-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe tree.

Blacke hys cryne[3] as the wyntere nyghte,
Whyte hys rode[4] as the sommer snowe,
Rodde hys face as the mornynge lygthe,
Cale[5] he lyes ynne the grave belowe;
Mie love ys dedde,
Gon to hys death-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe tree.

Swote[6] hys tyngue as the throstles note,
Quycke ynn daunce as thoughte canne bee,
Defte hys taboure, codgelle stote,[7]

[1] holiday. [2] running. [3] locks. [4] complexion. [5] cold. [6] sweet. [7] stout.

O! hee lyes bie the wyllowe tree:
Mie love ys dedde,
Gonne to hys death-bedde,
Alle under the wyllowe tree.

Harke! the ravenne flappes hys wynge,
In the briered delle belowe;
Harke! the dethe-owle loude dothe syngg,
To the nyghte-mares as heie[8] goe;
Mie love ys dedde,
Gonne to hys death-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe tree.

See! the whyte moone sheenes onne hie;
Whyterre ys mie true loves shroude;
Whyterre yanne[9] the mornynge skie,
Whyterre yanne the evenynge cloude;
Mie love ys dedde,
Gon to hys death-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe tree.

Heere, uponne mie true loves grave,
Schalle the baren fleurs be layde,
Nee one hallie[10] Seyncte to save
Al the celness[11] of a mayde.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gonne to hys death-bedde,
Alle under the wyllowe tree.

Wythe mie hondes I'lle dente the brieres
Rounde his hallie corse to gre,[12]
Ouphante[13] fairie lyghte youre fyres,
Heere mie boddie stylle schalle bee.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gon to hys death-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe tree.

[8] they. [9] than. [10] holy.
[11] coldness. [12] grow. [13] elfin.

Comme, wythe acorne-coppe & thorne,
Drayne mie hartys blodde awaie;
Lyfe & all yttes goode I scorne,
Daunce bie nete,[14] or feaste by daie.
Mie love ys dedde,
Gon to hys death-bedde,
Al under the wyllowe tree.

Waterre wytches, crownede wythe reytes,[15]
Bere mee to yer[16] leathalle[17] tyde.
I die; I comme; mie true love waytes.
Thos[18] the damselle spake, and dyed.

(Pub. 1777)

The Accounte of W. Canynge's Feast

Thorowe the halle the belle han[1] sounde;[2]
Byelecoyle[3] doe the grave beseeme;[4]
The ealdermenne[5] doe sytte arounde,
Ande snoffelle[6] oppe the cheorte[7] steeme.[8]
Lyche[9] asses wylde ynne desarte waste
Swotelye the morneynge ayre doe taste.

Syche keene thie ate; the minstrels plaie,
The dynne of angelles doe theie keepe;
Heie stylle; the guestes ha ne to saie,[10]
Butte nodde yer[11] thankes ande falle aslape.
Thos echone[12] daie bee I to deene,[13]
Gyf[14] Rowley, Iscamm, or Tyb Gorges[15] be ne seene.

[14] night. [15] reeds. [16] their. [17] deadly. [18] thus.
[1] has. [2] sounded. [3] French *bel accueil*, "fair welcoming." [4] appear. [5] nobles. [6] snuff. [7] pleasant. [8] odors. [9] like. [10] have nothing to say. [11] their. [12] every. [13] worthy. [14] if.
[15] These were three friends of Mr. Canynge.—Tyrwhitt's edition.

James Macpherson

(1736-1796)

Only the student of literary history will be spared amazement at the fame and notoriety which James Macpherson achieved in the late eighteenth century. The spurious elements in his work are as patent today as the pathetic attempts of Chatterton (cf. *above*) to invent a medieval vocabulary. Yet for nearly a century a fierce controversy raged over the authenticity of what he presented as translations. Now that the problem of authorship of *The Poems of Ossian* has been fairly settled, we are free to shake our heads over the fact that works of such mediocre merits could create an international sensation. We can also, if we are wise, learn an important lesson in historical perspective from the extravagant prestige of these poems. For there is no better example of the difficulty of seeing the worth of a contemporary clearly.

It was Macpherson's good fortune and cleverness to crystallize for his times those interests of the literary public which were veering from neoclassicism toward romanticism. The imaginative stimulus for which the age was groping after the meridian of common sense had been passed in the pages of Pope, Swift, and Addison, was supplied by Macpherson, and supplied in a manner not too original to be unappreciated. Few writers have timed their work more perfectly than he. There had already been made some tentative efforts to escape from the domination of the classics. Gray's later odes (cf. *above*) exhibit a search for inspiration in Icelandic mythology. His ode, *The Bard,* and Collins's *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland* turn to Celtic lore for their materials. The quest for non-classical antiquities was on. In Edinburgh, soon to be called the "Modern Athens," scholars were particularly anxious to explore the Scottish past. The Rev. John Home, author of the popular tragedy, *Douglas,* was one of the chief of these; he was elated when, in 1759, he met a young Highland schoolmaster, James Macpherson, who showed him some transcripts he had made of Gaelic poems he had taken down from the recital of old natives of the north. Impressed with their beauty, Home sent copies to Dr. Hugh Blair, Professor of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres at Edinburgh University, who became equally enthusiastic. They both pressed Macpherson to make translations of the pieces he had collected, and in 1760 Blair published the *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland.* The volume immediately created a furor. The semblance to a heroic, wild, and strange primitive time which the poems possessed, and their heavily cadenced movement, appealed at once to the needs of the literary world. "I am gone mad about them," wrote Gray to a friend, little realizing how much *The Bard* may have had to do with the young schoolmaster's "translations." In Scotland they evoked such interest that professors and patrons of literature were determined to subsidize Macpherson so that he might institute a thorough search for other remains. Blair was convinced that the fragments pointed to the existence of a lost epic, and was rewarded, after Macpherson had made a tour of the Highlands, with *Fingal, an Ancient Epic,* which Macpherson published in 1761, and with *Temora, an Epic Poem,* two years later. Although he might well have been suspicious of his discovery, Blair pointed out with pleasure that *Fingal* entirely conformed to the Aristotelian canons for an epic poem. According to Macpherson, the epics were the creation of the ancient bard Ossian, and in 1773 he issued them again in a definitive edition as *The Poems of Ossian.*

But by this time the battle over their authorship was being waged furiously. There were many difficulties in the way of accepting Macpherson as a translator. The hero Finn, who

in the poems is a Scot, was actually Irish; he lived, moreover, in the third century, but he is made to come in contact with Cuchullin, who lived in the first. There are, in addition, astonishing resemblances between the language of Ossian and that of the Bible and of Milton. To these criticisms, later critics have been able to append the observation that whereas the authentic ballads on Ossian and Finn current in Ireland and Scotland were brilliant and vivid in their pictures of ancient manners and people, Macpherson's versions are all vague and his characters are all alike. Finally, the recurrence of stormy winds and waves, hoary rocks, and heavy mists is not in the taste of primitive peoples, but of an eighteenth century tired with the severe outlines and tamed nature of neoclassicism.

From the beginning, apparently, Samuel Johnson was convinced that the translations were forgeries; inevitably, too, he could see in them no literary quality. "Many men, many women, and many children" could write like that, he declared, and with his wonderful good sense accounted for the poems in a statement that has been confirmed by modern scholarship: "He has found names, and stories, and phrases, and with them has blended his own compositions, and so made what he gives to the world as a translation of an ancient poem." Ossian held no interest for him and he thought *Fingal* "a mere unconnected rhapsody, a tiresome repetition of the same images." Macpherson, angry with Johnson and worried because of his authority, threatened him, but Johnson, undaunted, replied (cf. Vol. I, p. 829): "What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still." Others, too, felt that Macpherson was deceiving the public. Hume, at first interested in the poems, soon became skeptical. And Gibbon always doubted their historicity. Gray remained puzzled: "The whole external evidence would make one believe these fragments counterfeit; but the internal is so strong on the other side, that I am resolved to believe them genuine, spite of the devil and the kirk. . . . This man is the very daemon of poetry, or he has lighted on a treasure hid for ages."

Johnson doggedly demanded to have the original manuscripts open to public inspection. "If the poems were really translated, they were certainly first written down. Let Mr. Macpherson deposit the manuscript in one of the colleges at Aberdeen." Macpherson countered with all kinds of evasions, even after his defenders had raised the money to print the originals. At his death he left a number of Gaelic manuscripts which do not belong to the vocabulary of any period, and are apparently only translations of his own English.

The truth, as we now see it, would seem to be that Macpherson, taking as his foundation a few fragments of authentic Gaelic remains, built upon them a superstructure of his own making. Well acquainted with the ancient names and some legends, and with an eye firmly fixed on Homer's epics, and the Bible's and Milton's style, he put together, just as Johnson guessed, the poems according to his own notions of what the Gaelic epics must have been like—and his notions were those of the eighteenth century. After a while, when he considered the success of his work, he began to take a certain pleasure in hinting that he might have been more than a translator. "Those who have doubted my veracity," he says in the preface to the 1773 edition, "have paid a compliment to my genius; and were even the allegation true, my self-denial might have atoned for my fault."

But interesting as it is to follow the disputes over his role in the Ossianic poems, the question of authorship is far overshadowed by their importance to world literature. Later, Macpherson went to Florida, wrote histories, translated the *Iliad*, was granted a pension, made much money, sat in Parliament, and was buried in Westminster Abbey; but no one is concerned with what he did after his *Ossian*. It is safe to say, however, that no single author did more to hasten the Romantic Movement in Western Europe than he, and that no one more greatly stirred the imagination of a whole generation. Blake never outgrew the influence of *The Poems of Ossian*; it was the favorite book of Napoleon, Chateaubriand, and Lamartine. And from Goethe's early novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (cf. *below*), we can understand its liberating power on young minds athirst for freedom from the shackles of neoclassical correctness: "Ossian has superseded Homer in my heart. To what a world does the illustrious bard carry me! To wander over pathless wilds,

surrounded by impetuous whirlwinds . . . mid the roar of torrents . . . etc." (cf. Vol. II, p. 197). The monotony of the melancholy, the false nobility, the endless exclamations, and the cadences imitative of Biblical prose may now seem very thin and shallow to us, but they were to impress themselves on later writings for a long time. Read Johnson or Sheridan and you will agree with Matthew Arnold that "you can see at this day what an apparition of newness and of power" *The Poems of Ossian* must have been to the late eighteenth century.

W. Sharp edited the *Works of Ossian* (1896). Valuable studies are: B. Saunders, *The Life and Letters of James Macpherson* (1894); A. Nutt, *Ossian and the Ossianic Literature* (1899); J. S. Smart, *James Macpherson: An Episode in Literature* (1905); and G. F. Black, *Macpherson's Ossian and the Ossianic Controversy* (1926).

From *Fingal: An Ancient Epic Poem*

"OSSIAN"

Cuthullin sat by Tura's wall: by the tree of the rustling sound. His spear leaned against a rock. His shield lay on grass by his side. Amid his thoughts of mighty Carbar, a hero slain by the chief in war; the scout of ocean comes, Moran the son of Fithil!

"Arise," says the youth, "Cuthullin, arise. I see the ships of the north! Many, chief of men, are the foe. Many the heroes of the sea-borne Swaran!" "Moran!" replied the blue-eyed chief, "thou ever tremblest, son of Fithil! Thy fears have increased the foe. It is Fingal, king of deserts, with aid to green Erin of streams." "I beheld their chief," says Moran, "tall as a glittering rock. His spear is a blasted pine. His shield the rising moon! He sat on the shore! like a cloud of mist on the silent hill! Many, chief of heroes! I said, many are our hands of war. Well art thou named, the Mighty Man; but many mighty men are seen from Tura's windy walls."

"He spoke, like a wave on a rock, who in this land appears like me? Heroes stand not in my presence: they fall to earth from my hand. Who can meet Swaran in fight? Who but Fingal, king of Selma of storms? Once we wrestled on Malmor; our heels overturned the woods. Rocks fell from their place; rivulets, changing their course, fled murmuring from our side. Three days we renewed the strife; heroes stood at a distance and trembled. On the fourth, Fingal says, that the king of the ocean fell! but Swaran says, he stood! Let dark Cuthullin yield to him, that is strong as the storms of his land!"

"No," replied the blue-eyed chief, "I never yield to mortal man! Dark Cuthullin shall be great or dead! Go, son of Fithil, take my spear. Strike the sounding shield of Semo. It hangs at Tura's rustling gate. The sound of peace is not its voice! My heroes shall hear and obey." He went. He struck the bossy shield. The hills, the rocks reply. The sound spreads along the wood: deer start by the lake of roes. Curach leaps from the sounding rock; and Connal of the bloody spear! Crugal's breast of snow beats high. The son of Favi leaves the dark-brown hind. It is the shield of war, said Ronnar! the spear of Cuthullin, said Lugar! son of the sea put on thy arms! Calmar lift thy sounding steel! Puno! dreadful hero, arise! Cairbar from thy red tree of Cromla! Bend thy knee, O Eth! descend from the streams of Lenna. Ca-olt stretch thy side as thou movest along the whistling heath of Mora: thy side that is white as the foam of the troubled sea, when the dark winds pour it on rocky Cuthon.

Now I behold the chiefs, in the pride of their former deeds! Their souls are kindled at the battles of old; at the actions of other times. Their eyes are flames of fire. They roll in search of the foes of the land. Their mighty hands are on their swords. Lightning pours from their sides of steel. They come like streams from the mountains; each rushes roaring from his hill. Bright are the chiefs of battle, in the armor of their fathers. Gloomy and dark their heroes follow, like the gathering of the rainy clouds behind the red meteors of heaven. The sounds of crashing arms ascend. The grey dogs howl between. Unequal bursts the song of battle. Rocking Cromla echoes round. On Lena's dusky heath they stand, like mist that shades the hills of autumn: when broken and dark it settles high, and lifts its head to heaven!

"Hail," said Cuthullin, "sons of the narrow

vales! hail, hunters of the deer! Another sport is drawing near: It is like the dark rolling of that wave on the coast! Or shall we fight, ye sons of war! or yield green Erin to Lochlin! O Connal, speak, thou first of men! thou breaker of the shields! thou hast often fought with Lochlin: wilt thou lift thy father's spear?"

"Cuthullin!" calm the chief replied, "the spear of Connal is keen. It delights to shine in battle; to mix with the blood of thousands. But though my hand is bent on fight, my heart is for the peace of Erin. Behold, thou first in Cormac's war, the sable fleet of Swaran. His masts are many on our coast, like reeds in the lake of Lego. His ships are forests clothed with mist, when the trees yield by turns to the squally wind. Many are his chiefs in battle. Connal is for peace! Fingal would shun his arm the first of mortal men! Fingal, who scatters the mighty, as stormy winds the heath; when streams roar through echoing Cona: and night settles with all her clouds on the hill!

"Fly, thou man of peace," said Calmar, "fly," said the son of Matha; "go, Connal, to thy silent hills, where the spear never brightens in war! Pursue the dark-brown deer of Cromla: stop with thine arrows the bounding roes of Lena. But, blue-eyed son of Semo, Cuthullin, ruler of the field, scatter thou the sons of Lochlin! roar through the ranks of their pride. Let no vessel of the kingdom of Snow bound on the dark-rolling waves of Inistore. Rise, ye dark winds of Erin, rise! roar whirlwinds of Lara of hinds! Amid the tempest let me die, torn, in a cloud, by angry ghosts of men; amid the tempest let Calmar die, if ever chase was sport to him, so much as the battle of shields!"

"Calmar!" Connal slow replied, "I never fled, young son of Matha! I was swift with my friends in fight; but small is the fame of Connal! The battle was won in my presence; the valiant overcame! But, son of Semo, hear my voice, regard the ancient throne of Cormac. Give wealth and half the land for peace, till Fingal shall arrive on our coast. Or, if war be thy choice, I lift the sword and spear. My joy shall be in the midst of thousands; my soul shall lighten through the gloom of the fight!"

"To me," Cuthullin replies, "pleasant is the noise of arms! pleasant as the thunder of heaven, before the shower of spring! But gather all the shining tribes, that I may view the sons of war! Let them pass along the heath, bright as the sunshine before a storm; when the west wind collects the clouds, and Morven echoes over all her oaks! But where are my friends in battle? The supporters of my arm in danger? Where art thou, white-bosomed Cathba? Where is that cloud in war, Duchomar? Hast thou left me, O Fergus! in the day of the storm? Fergus, first in our joy at the feast! son of Rossa! arm of death! comest thou like a roe from Malmor? Like a hart from thy echoing hills! Hail, thou son of Rossa! what shades the soul of war?"

"Four stones," replied the chief, "rise on the grave of Cathba. These hands have laid in earth Duchomar, that cloud in war! Cathba, son of Torman! thou wert a sunbeam in Erin. And thou, O valiant Duchomar! a mist of the marshy Lano; when it moves on the plains of autumn, bearing the death of thousands along. Morna! fairest of maids! calm is thy sleep in the cave of the rock! Thou hast fallen in darkness, like a star, that shoots across the desert; when the traveller is alone, and mourns the transient beam!"

"Say," said Semo's blue-eyed son, "say how fell the chiefs of Erin? Fell they by the sons of Lochlin, striving in the battle of heroes? Or what confines the strong in arms to the dark and narrow house?"

"Cathba," replied the hero, "fell by the sword of Duchomar at the oak of the noisy streams. Duchomar came to Tura's cave; he spoke to the lovely Morna. Morna, fairest among women, lovely daughter of strong-armed Cormac! Why in the circle of stones? in the cave of the rock alone? The stream murmurs along. The old tree groans in the wind. The lake is troubled before thee; dark are the clouds of the sky! But thou art snow on the heath; thy hair is the mist of Cromla; when it curls on the hill; when it shines to the beam of the west! Thy breasts are two smooth rocks seen from Branno of streams. Thy arms, like two white pillars, in the halls of the great Fingal."

"From whence," the fair-haired maid replied, "from whence, Duchomar, most gloomy of men? Dark are thy brows and terrible! Red are thy rolling eyes! Does Swaran appear on the sea? What of the foe, Duchomar?" "From the hill I return, O Morna, from the hill of the dark-brown hinds. Three have I slain with my bended yew. Three with my long-bounding dogs of the chase. Lovely daughter of Cormac, I love thee as my soul! I have slain one stately deer for thee. High was his branchy head; and fleet his feet of wind." "Duchomar!" calm the maid replied, "I love thee not, thou gloomy man! hard is thy heart of rock; dark is thy terrible brow. But Cathba, young son of

Torman, thou art the love of Morna. Thou art a sunbeam, in the day of the gloomy storm. Sawest thou the son of Torman, lovely on the hill of his hinds? Here the daughter of Cormac waits the coming of Cathba!"

"Long shall Morna wait," Duchomar said, "long shall Morna wait for Cathba! Behold this sword unsheathed! Here wanders the blood of Cathba. Long shall Morna wait. He fell by the stream of Branno! On Croma I will raise his tomb, daughter of blue-shielded Cormac! Turn on Duchomar thine eyes; his arm is strong as a storm." "Is the son of Torman fallen?" said the wildly-bursting voice of the maid. "Is he fallen on his echoing hills, the youth with the breast of snow? The first in the chase of hinds? The foe of the strangers of ocean? Thou art dark to me, Duchomar, cruel is thine arm to Morna! Give me that sword, my foe! I love the wandering blood of Cathba!"

He gave the sword to her tears. She pierced his manly breast! He fell, like the bank of a mountain-stream, and stretching forth his hand, he spoke: "Daughter of blue-shielding Cormac! Thou hast slain me in youth! The sword is cold in my breast: Morna, I feel it cold. Give me to Moina the maid. Duchomar was the dream of her night! She will raise my tomb; the hunter shall raise my fame. But draw the sword from my breast. Morna, the steel is cold!" She came, in all her tears, she came; she drew the sword from his breast. He pierced her white side! He spread her fair locks on the ground! Her bursting blood sounds from her side: her white arm is stained with red. Rolling in death she lay. The cave re-echoed to her sighs.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU (1712-1778)

It has been said that no man of the Christian era ever exerted a wider influence on the social and cultural history of Europe than Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Yet one hesitates to call him a thinker. Though most of what he wrote had philosophic intent, he presented no "system," and he was often inconsistent and illogical. Second to none in preparing the way for the French Revolution, he differed radically from revolutionary *philosophes* like Voltaire (cf. Vol. I), Montesquieu (cf. Vol. I), Diderot, and the Encyclopedists. They believed that, even though man is selfish, he can be led by the logic of self-interest to reform social institutions and government for the amelioration of all, through the exercise of rational criticism. Rousseau, on the contrary, thought that man, by nature benevolent, had been corrupted by society and its institutions; reason and what men call civilization, he believed, had warped mankind's true nature. The paradox of Rousseauistic thinking is that, despite its completely revolutionary tendency, it is in essence reactionary. The golden age to which the "perfectibilians" looked forward (cf. Vol. I, p. 817) had, according to Rousseau, already passed; to recapture it, he felt, one would have to turn back the clock to the patriarchal days of Abraham and Isaac.

The paradox and inconsistency which make all discussions of Rousseau difficult are to be explained chiefly by his distrust of reason and his worship of emotion. "Cold reason has never accomplished anything of significance," he says. The personification of the Man of Feeling, Rousseau boldly asserted that while reason often leads to error, only the emotions conduct us to truth. This point of departure accounts for his tremendous hold over a century of writers. Completely reacting against the Age of Reason in which he found himself, he gave what seemed to be a philosophic basis for those impatient of restraint or starving for emotional emancipation.

He was able so profoundly to impress French literature because he came to it a stranger. Born in Geneva, the cradle of Calvinism (he always referred to himself as "citizen of Geneva"), Rousseau possessed those qualities which had been notably absent from the writings of Frenchmen. Whereas their approach to life had been strictly social, he was an undisciplined individualist. As a man he was thoroughly unbalanced—a sufferer from megalomania and delusions of persecution. Sensitive, egotistical, happy most when intoxicated with emotion, he was constantly moving from the heights of ecstasy to the depths of depression. Though he was incapable of constancy or self-abnegation, he never felt himself done justice and conjured up enemies all about him. Like all sentimentalists of the age, he was much enamored of virtue and goodness in the abstract, though he seems to have lavished little considerateness on others. Thus, great champion of wronged childhood that he was, and author of the first humanitarian tract on education, he consigned his own five children, illegitimately born to him by the devoted Thérèse Levasseur, to a foundling hospital. His restless and romantic nature made him ever dissatisfied with his present circumstances and surroundings, and he was forever escaping from the realities around him in quest of better things which he found nowhere. Determined to be like no one else, he refused, after his first success in Paris, to dress or act the part of a

literary lion. It was in the seclusion of his "Hermitage" in the forest of Montmorency, near Paris, that he wrote his most important books. But his suspicions of his friends and protectors engendered quarrels which set him wandering again. For periods he lived in exile in Switzerland and England, and then returned to Paris. Everywhere he had felt himself wronged and persecuted, had wearied the most patient of his friends, and had found consolation only in his own pride and in nature. His *Confessions* (1781-88), one of the most passionate and candid pieces of self-revelation, is an amazing document and one of the earliest unadulterated pieces of Romanticism in European literature. Its preoccupation with self sounds one of the most insistent notes of nineteenth-century literature.

On the intellectual side, Rousseau owed little to the French classics, whose symmetry and elegance alienated him because, as he put it, "the passions of the human heart never speak [in them] but . . . in the third person." It was to England that he turned for affinities of taste. The rationalists, Voltaire and Montesquieu, had equally admired the English accomplishments in liberty and governmental reform. But Rousseau far exceeded the Anglomania of most of his contemporaries in France. "The only nation of *men*" is his description of Englishmen. Locke, Addison, *Robinson Crusoe,* the *Essay on Man,* and Richardson he worshiped. The beauty of nature, of which he was the great discoverer in his century, had been known to Shakespeare and Milton, and was being refound by Thomson, Gray, and Collins. The flourishing of the graveyard school of poets points to a strain in eighteenth-century England congenial to his own recurrent morbidity. His writings, in consequence, were saturated with concepts which were destined to alter the whole course of French letters.

Rousseau's influence on the Romantic Movement in Europe operated in three directions: individualism, sentimentalism, and the love of nature. His power to impress generations of authors, and to be thus more intimately connected with the romantic revival than any man of his time, is due to his wonderful gift of rhetoric, his genius for asserting his ideas in a startling and vivid manner. "The first man, who, after enclosing a piece of ground, took it into his head to say, 'This is mine,' and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society." The force of such a statement is greater than a whole treatise on economics. "Education begins at birth; before he can speak, before he can understand, man is learning." Such a declaration will do more to arrest attention than volumes on the existence or nonexistence of *a priori* ideas.

The first work to bring him notice was his *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts,* which won the prize of the Dijon Academy in 1750. It took the completely unclassical view of civilization which he continued to promulgate, a view best summed up in his famous sentences: "Man was born free; yet everywhere he is in chains. Nature has made him good and happy; society has made him evil and miserable." Opposing the artificial life required by society, he is the great pleader for the simple life. His *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men* (cf. *below*), published in 1755, is based upon the same fundamental conviction. This book has had an enormous effect, not only toward the French Revolution, but on much political speculation since, particularly that of a socialistic nature. It undertakes to trace the gradual degradation of humanity from the freedom and equality with which it was originally equipped. In a "state of nature" man was happy in his isolation, and cooperative with his neighbors, Rousseau believed. As society developed, man had to give up piece by piece his happiness. Private property is the root of the evil, for to protect it, Rousseau declares, mankind was shackled with every kind of restraint; thus the rich have been protected and the poor oppressed even to the point of slavery. There is much poor history and prophecy in all this, it is true; Rousseau, in his glorification of the "natural man" was certain, for instance, that the American Indians could never be overcome. But what was important in this book was its profound sympathy for the downtrodden masses, and its humanitarian insistence on the "natural rights" of all men. Tom Paine (cf. Vol. I), Godwin (cf. Vol. I), Burns, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and many of their contemporaries were committed to the same point of view. And while we cannot definitely establish that they were *directly* inspired by Rousseau, they were all plainly inheritors of Rousseauistic teaching. Moreover, most of the French *philosophes* had no thought of social revolution, while Rousseau sees no hope for society but by a general uprising. It was for this reason that "Jean-Jacques" was the hero of the French Revolution he did not live to see.

His political opinions were further expressed in *The Social Contract* (1762). Here, somewhat modifying his extreme and antisocial individualism, he bespeaks a society organized according to democratic principles. The idea of a hypothetical social contract was, of course, not new; but in Rousseau's hands it gained a currency it had never had before. He advanced the idea of popular sovereignty, which deeply affected the signers of the Declaration of Independence in America, and insisted that every individual in a state was at once a subject and a ruler in the body politic, and that the "general will" of citizens must be the "infallible" guide to law. *The Social Contract* exhibits Rousseau as a pioneering democrat and the direct predecessor of Tom Paine.

In 1762 appeared his revolutionary tract on education, *Émile* (cf. *below*), cast in the form of a novel. The originality of Rousseau's thinking can be appreciated by those who are familiar with the cruel and

inhuman discipline to which children were exposed in the eighteenth century. Convinced that nature is the best teacher, Rousseau removes his hero in infancy to the country, where he is to be taught nothing, and is to learn only from experience. He is to be made strong in body by physical exercise and encouraged to observe the operations of nature about him. As he evinces interest and desire to learn various subjects, they are to be taught him, but not before. When he learns to read, he is to be given such books as will develop his sentiments. The weaknesses of such a system are only too apparent, though many "modern" parents have followed it in its extremes. A child left to his own inclinations may very well learn nothing, nor is he always equal to knowing what he really desires and needs. But the great contribution of *Émile* has been its emphasis on cultivating the gifts of a child rather than on forcing upon him a development possibly unsuited to his talents. Modern education rests solidly on the fundamental concepts of this book, which is, however, curiously one-sided in its failure to recognize the claims of girls to equal opportunities. Wordsworth's cardinal interest in the importance to the adult man of the child's experiences ("The child is father of the man") originates, of course, in *Émile*. Indeed, the work has left its mark on writers and simple citizens everywhere. The fourth book of *Émile* contains in the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" Rousseau's religion, after he had vacillated between Calvinism and Catholicism; it is a kind of sentimental Deism, pantheistic in tendency, in which, like Wordsworth later, Rousseau sees the divine spirit moving through all things.

His long sentimental novel, *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) was excessively popular (cf. *below*), and its hero, St. Preux, has been synonymous with the unhappy, sensitive lover of nature, dear to the Romantic Movement. In writing it, Rousseau was greatly influenced by Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* (cf. Vol. I, p. 626), but even exceeded his original in the extravagance of its sentimentality. The story is mixed with a strange variety of rhapsody, morbidity, social criticism, individualism, and moralizing. What is important to note in it, however, are the dislike of the leisured class, a warm sympathy with simple peasant folk, a glowing enthusiasm for the wonders of mountains and the country, and a worship of emotion for its own sake. (The scene of the swooning [cf. *below*] can only strike modern readers as silly, but it must have struck eighteenth-century readers as sublime.) Again Rousseau had written about matters which were to occupy the attention of poets and authors for generations.

Among the innumerable books on Rousseau, the following may be recommended as particularly important to students of English literature: J. Lemaître, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau* (trans. 1907); J. Texte, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the Cosmopolitan Spirit in Literature* (trans. 1899); I. Babbitt, *Rousseau and Romanticism* (1919); and H. N. Fairchild, *The Noble Savage* (1928).

From A DISCOURSE ON INEQUALITY

The first man, who, after enclosing a piece of ground, took it into his head to say, "This is mine," and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society. How many crimes, how many wars, how many murders, how many misfortunes and horrors, would that man have saved the human species, who pulling up the stakes or filling up the ditches should have cried to his fellows: Be sure not to listen to this impostor; you are lost, if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong equally to us all, and the earth itself to nobody! But it is highly probable that things were now come to such a pass, that they could not continue much longer in the same way; for as this idea of property depends on several prior ideas which could only spring up gradually one after another, it was not formed all at once in the human mind: men must have made great progress; they must have acquired a great stock of industry and knowledge, and transmitted and increased it from age to age before they could arrive at this last term of the state of nature. Let us therefore take up things a little higher, and collect into one point of view, and in their most natural order, this slow succession of events and mental improvements.

The first sentiment of man was that of his existence, his first care that of preserving it. The production of the earth yielded him all the assistance he required; instinct prompted him to make use of them. Among the various appetites, which made him at different times experience different modes of existence, there was one that excited him to perpetuate his species; and this blind propensity, quite void of anything like pure love or affection, produced nothing but an act that was merely animal. The present heat once allayed, the sexes took no further notice of each other, and even the child ceased to have any tie in his mother, the moment he ceased to want her assistance.

Such was the condition of infant man; such was the life of an animal confined at first to pure sensations, and so far from harboring any thought of forcing her gifts from nature, that he scarcely availed himself of those which she offered to him of her own accord. But difficulties soon arose, and there was a necessity for learning how to surmount them: the height of some trees, which prevented his reaching their fruits; the competition of other animals equally

fond of the same fruits; the fierceness of many that even aimed at his life; these were so many circumstances, which obliged him to apply to bodily exercise. There was a necessity for becoming active, swift-footed, and sturdy in battle. The natural arms, which are stones and the branches of trees, soon offered themselves to his assistance. He learned to surmount the obstacles of nature, to contend in case of necessity with other animals, to dispute his subsistence even with other men, or indemnify himself for the loss of whatever he found himself obliged to part with to the strongest.

In proportion as the human species grew more numerous, and extended itself, its pain likewise multiplied and increased. The difference of soils, climates and seasons, might have forced men to observe some differences in their way of living. Bad harvests, long and severe winters, and scorching summers, which parched up all the fruits of the earth required extraordinary exertions of industry. On the sea shore, and the banks of rivers they invented the line and the hook, and became fishermen and ichthyophagous.[1] In the forests they made themselves bows and arrows, and became huntsmen and warriors. In the cold countries they covered themselves with the skins of the beasts they had killed; thunder, a volcano, or some happy accident made them acquainted with fire, a new resource against the rigors of winter: they discovered the method of preserving this element, then that of reproducing it, and lastly the way of preparing with it the flesh of animals, which heretofore they devoured raw from the carcass.

This reiterated application of various beings to himself, and to one another, must have naturally engendered in the mind of man the idea of certain relations. These relations, which we express by the words, great, little, strong, weak, swift, slow, fearful, bold, and the like, compared occasionally, and almost without thinking of it, produced in him some kind of reflection, or rather a mechanical prudence, which pointed out to him the precautions most essential to his preservation and safety.

The new lights resulting from this development increased his superiority over other animals, by making him sensible of it. He laid himself out to ensnare them; he played them a thousand tricks; and though several surpassed him in strength or in swiftness, he in time became the master of those that could be of any service to him, and a sore enemy to those that could do him any mischief. 'Tis thus, that the first look he gave into himself produced the first emotion of pride in him; 'tis thus that, at a time he scarce knew how to distinguish between the different ranks of existence, by attributing to his species the first rank among animals in general, he prepared himself at a distance to pretend to it as an individual among those of his own species in particular.

Though other men were not to him what they are to us, and he had scarce more intercourse with them than with other animals, they were not overlooked in his observations. The conformities, which in time he might discover between them, and between himself and his female, made him judge of those he did not perceive; and seeing that they all behaved as himself would have done in similar circumstances, he concluded that their manner of thinking and willing was quite conformable to his own; and this important truth, when once engraved deeply on his mind, made him follow, by a presentiment as sure as any logic, and withal much quicker, the best rules of conduct, which for the sake of his own safety and advantage it was proper he should observe towards them.

Instructed by experience that the love of happiness is the sole principle of all human actions, he found himself in a condition to distinguish the few cases, in which common interest might authorize him to build upon the assistance of his fellow, and those still fewer, in which a competition of interests might justly render it suspected. In the first case he united with them in the same flock, or at most by some kind of free association which obliged none of its members, and lasted no longer than the transitory necessity that had given birth to it. In the second case everyone aimed at his own private advantage, either by open force if he found himself strong enough, or by cunning and address if he thought himself too weak to use violence.

Such was the manner in which men might have insensibly acquired some gross idea of their mutual engagements and the advantage of fulfilling them, but this only as far as their present and sensible interest required; for as to foresight they were utter strangers to it, and far from troubling their heads about a distant futurity, they scarce thought of the day following. Was a deer to be taken? Everyone saw that to succeed he must faithfully stand to his post; but suppose a hare to have slipped by within reach of any one of them, it is not to be doubted but he pursued it without scruple, and when he had seized his prey never reproached himself with having made his companions miss theirs.

We may easily conceive that such an intercourse scarce required a more refined language than that of crows and monkeys, which flock together almost in the same manner. Inarticulate exclamations, a great many gestures, and some imitative sounds, must have

[1] eaters of fish.

been for a long time the universal language of mankind, and by joining to these in every country some articulate and conventional sounds, of which, as I have already hinted, it is not very easy to explain the institution, there arose particular languages, but rude, imperfect, and such nearly as are to be found at this day among several savage nations. My pen straightened by the rapidity of time, the abundance of things I have to say, and the almost insensible progress of the first improvements, flies like an arrow over numberless ages, for the slower the succession of events, the quicker I may allow myself to be in relating them.

At length, these first improvements enabled man to improve at a greater rate. Industry grew perfect in proportion as the mind became more enlightened. Men soon ceasing to fall asleep under the first tree, or take shelter in the first cavern, lit upon some hard and sharp kinds of stone resembling spades or hatchets, and employed them to dig the ground, cut down trees, and with the branches build huts, which they afterwards bethought themselves of plastering over with clay or dirt. This was the epoch of a first revolution, which produced the establishment and distinction of families, and which introduced a species of property, and along with it perhaps a thousand quarrels and battles. As the strongest, however, were probably the first to make themselves cabins, which they knew they were able to defend, we may conclude that the weak found it much shorter and safer to imitate than to attempt to dislodge them: and as to those who were already provided with cabins, no one could have any great temptation to seize upon that of his neighbor, not so much because it did not belong to him, as because it could be of no service to him; and as besides to make himself master of it, he must expose himself to a very sharp conflict with the present occupiers.

The first developments of the heart were the effects of a new situation, which united husbands and wives, parents and children, under one roof; the habit of living together gave birth to the sweetest sentiments the human species is acquainted with, conjugal and paternal love. Every family became a little society, so much the more firmly united, as a mutual attachment and liberty were the only bonds of it; and it was now that the sexes, whose way of life had been hitherto the same, began to adopt different manners and customs. The women became more sedentary, and accustomed themselves to stay at home and look after the children, while the men rambled abroad in quest of subsistence for the whole family. The two sexes likewise by living a little more at their ease began to lose somewhat of their usual ferocity and sturdiness; but if on the one hand individuals became less able to engage separately with wild beasts, they on the other were more easily got together to make a common resistance against them.

In this new state of things, the simplicity and solitariness of man's life, the limitedness of his wants, and the instruments which he had invented to satisfy them, leaving him a great deal of leisure, he employed it to supply himself with several conveniences unknown to his ancestors; and this was the first yoke he inadvertently imposed upon himself, and the first source of mischief which he prepared for his children; for besides continuing in this manner to soften both body and mind, these conveniences having through use lost almost all their aptness to please, and even degenerated into real wants, the privation of them became far more intolerable than the possession of them had been agreeable; to lose them was a misfortune, to possess them no happiness.

Here we may a little better discover how the use of speech insensibly commences or improves in the bosom of every family, and may likewise form conjectures concerning the manner in which divers particular causes might have propagated language, and accelerated its progress by rendering it every day more and more necessary. Great inundations or earthquakes surrounded inhabited districts with water or precipices, portions of the continent were by revolutions of the globe torn off and split into islands. It is obvious that among men thus collected, and forced to live together, a common idiom must have started up much sooner, than among those who freely wandered through the forests of the main land. Thus it is very possible that the inhabitants of the islands formed in this manner, after their first essays in navigation, brought among us the use of speech; and it is very probable at least that society and languages commenced in islands and even acquired perfection there, before the inhabitants of the continent knew anything of either.

Everything now begins to wear a new aspect. Those who heretofore wandered through the woods, by taking to a more settled way of life, gradually flock together, coalesce into several separate bodies, and at length form in every country distinct nations, united in character and manners, not by any laws or regulations, but by an uniform manner of life, a sameness of provisions, and the common influence of the climate. A permanent neighborhood must at last infallibly create some connection between different families. The transitory commerce required by nature soon produced, among the youth of both sexes living in contiguous cabins, another kind of commerce, which besides being equally agreeable is rendered more dur-

able by mutual intercourse. Men begin to consider different objects, and to make comparisons; they insensibly acquire ideas of merit and beauty, and these soon produce sentiments of preference. By seeing each other often they contract a habit, which makes it painful not to see each other always. Tender and agreeable sentiments steal into the soul, and are by the smallest opposition wound up into the most impetuous fury: jealousy kindles with love; discord triumphs; and the gentlest of passions requires sacrifices of human blood to appease it.

In proportion as ideas and sentiments succeed each other, and the head and the heart exercise themselves, men continue to shake off their original wildness, and their connections become more intimate and extensive. They now begin to assemble round a great tree: singing and dancing, the genuine offspring of love and leisure, become the amusement or rather the occupation of the men and women, free from care, thus gathered together. Everyone begins to survey the rest, and wishes to be surveyed himself; and public esteem acquires a value. He who sings or dances best; the handsomest, the strongest, the most dexterous, the most eloquent, comes to be the most respected: this was the first step towards inequality, and at the same time towards vice. From these first preferences there proceeded on one side vanity and contempt, on the other envy and shame; and the fermentation raised by these new leavens at length produced combinations fatal to happiness and innocence.

Men no sooner began to set a value upon each other, and know what esteem was, than each laid claim to it, and it was no longer safe for any man to refuse it to another. Hence the first duties of civility and politeness, even among savages; and hence every voluntary injury became an affront, as besides the mischief, which resulted from it as an injury, the party offended was sure to find in it a contempt for his person more intolerable than the mischief itself. It was thus that every man, punishing the contempt expressed for him by others in proportion to the value he set upon himself, the effects of revenge became terrible, and men learned to be sanguinary and cruel. Such precisely was the degree attained by most of the savage nations with whom we are acquainted. And it is for want of sufficiently distinguishing ideas, and observing at how great a distance these people were from the first state of nature, that so many authors have hastily concluded that man is naturally cruel, and requires a regular system of police to be reclaimed; whereas nothing can be more gentle than he in his primitive state, when placed by nature at an equal distance from the stupidity of brutes, and the pernicious good sense of civilized man; and equally confined by instinct and reason to the care of providing against the mischief which threatens him, he is withheld by natural compassion from doing any injury to others, so far from being ever so little prone even to return that which he has received. For according to the axiom of the wise Locke,[2] Where there is no property, there can be no injury.

But we must take notice, that the society now formed and the relations now established among men required in them qualities different from those, which they derived from their primitive constitution; that as a sense of morality began to insinuate itself into human actions, and every man, before the enacting of laws, was the only judge and avenger of the injuries he had received, that goodness of heart suitable to the pure state of nature by no means suited infant society; that it was necessary punishments should become severer in the same proportion that the opportunities of offending became more frequent, and the dread of vengeance add strength to the too weak curb of the law. Thus, though men were become less patient, and natural compassion had already suffered some alteration, this period of the development of the human faculties, holding a just mean between the indolence of the primitive state, and the petulant activity of self-love, must have been the happiest and most durable epoch. The more we reflect on this state, the more convinced we shall be, that it was the least subject of any to revolutions, the best for man, and that nothing could have drawn him out of it but some fatal accident, which, for the public good, should never have happened. The example of the savages, most of whom have been found in this condition, seems to confirm that mankind was formed ever to remain in it, that this condition is the real youth of the world, and that all ulterior improvements have been so many steps, in appearance towards the perfection of individuals, but in fact towards the decrepitness of the species.

As long as men remained satisfied with their rustic cabins; as long as they confined themselves to the use of clothes made of the skins of other animals, and the use of thorns and fish-bones, in putting these skins together; as long as they continued to consider feathers and shells as sufficient ornaments, and to paint their bodies of different colors, to improve or ornament their bows and arrows, to form and scoop out with sharp-edged stones some little fishing boats, or clumsy instruments of music; in a word, as long as they undertook such works only as a single person could finish, and stuck to such arts as did not require the joint endeavors of several hands, they lived free, healthy, hon-

[2] John Locke (1632-1704), English philosopher.

est and happy, as much as their nature would admit, and continued to enjoy with each other all the pleasures of an independent intercourse; but from the moment one man began to stand in need of another's assistance; from the moment it appeared an advantage for one man to possess the quantity of provisions requisite for two, all equality vanished; property started up; labor became necessary; and boundless forests became smiling fields, which it was found necessary to water with human sweat, and in which slavery and misery were soon seen to sprout out and grow with the fruits of the earth.

From EMILE, OR ON EDUCATION

(*Translated by Bernard D. N. Grebanier*)

Everything is good as it comes from the hands of the Supreme Author; everything decays in the hands of Man. He forces one soil to nourish the products of another, one tree to bear the fruits of another; he mixes and confounds climate, the elements, the seasons; he mutilates his dog, his horse, his slave; he turns everything upside down, he disfigures everything; he loves deformity, monsters; he desires nothing the way nature made it, not even Man; Man must be put through the paces for him, like a saddle-horse; Man must be twisted to his taste like a tree in his garden.

Without all this, everything would be even worse, and our species cannot be managed by halves. In the state things are today, a man left to himself from birth among the rest of mankind, would be the most monstrous of all. Prejudice, authority, necessity, example, all the social institutions in which we find ourselves submerged, would stifle nature within him and put nothing in its place. She would be like a young tree which chance has made grow in the middle of a road, and which passers-by soon will kill, crushing and bending it everywhere. . . .

We are born to weakness, we have need of strength; we are born unprovided with anything, we need help; we are born stupid, we need judgment. All that we have not at birth and need when older is given us by education.

This education comes to us from nature, from men, or from things. The inner development of our faculties and organs is the education of nature; the use we are taught to make of this development is the education of men; what we acquire from our own experience of the objects we encounter is the education of things.

Each of us, then, is a pupil of these three teachers. The student in whom their different teachings contradict one another, is badly educated, and will never be at peace with himself; the pupil in whom these teachings agree and tend toward the same goal, achieves easily his ends, and lives well. He alone is well educated. . . .

In the natural order, all men are equal; their common calling is being a man; and whoever is well educated for that calling cannot inadequately satisfy those requirements connected with it. That my pupil is destined for the army, the church, the law matters little to me. Before the calling his parents select for him, he has been selected by nature to the calling of life. Living is the trade I would teach him. When he leaves my hands, he will not be, I grant, magistrate, soldier or priest; he will be first of all a man: all that a man ought to be, he will know how to be when he has the need, as quickly as anyone else; and fate in vain will change his position in life, he will always have a place. *Occupavi te, fortuna, atque cepi; omnesque aditus tuos interclusi, ut ad me aspirare non posses.*[1]

Our real study is man's environment. Those of us who know best how to bear the good and the ill of life are, in my opinion, the best educated; whence it follows that true education consists less in precept than in practice. We begin to learn when we begin to live. . . .

Study nature, and follow the path she traces for you. She is ever at work on children; she hardens their temperament by trials of every kind; she teaches them early what pain and grief are. Cutting teeth gives them a fever; sharp colics give them convulsions; fits of coughing choke them; worms torment them; plethora corrupts their blood; various germs ferment in it, and cause dangerous eruptions. Almost all the earliest age is a succession of illness and danger: one half of children born die before their eighth year. These trials done, the child has earned strength; and as soon as he can use his life, he is more assured of it.

That is nature's law. Why will you go against it? Don't you see that in trying to correct it you destroy her work, you are preventing the results of her care? To do from without what she does within is, according to you, to double the danger; and on the contrary it's a way to avert it. Experience teaches that more children delicately brought up die than the others. Provided that we do not go beyond their strength, we risk less in using it than in sparing it. Accustom them,

[1] I have conquered you and seized you, fortune; I have barred off all your approaches so that you may not hope to overcome me.

then, to the strains they will have to endure every day. Harden their bodies to the intemperance of season, climate, the elements, hunger, thirst, fatigue; dip them in the waters of Styx. Before habits of the body are fixed, give them what habits you deem wise, without danger; for when once habits are part of their constitution, any change is attempted only with peril. A child will stand changes a man could not bear: the muscles of the one are tender and flexible, taking without effort the direction given; those of a man, more hardened, change only with violence the direction they have had. Thus, we can make a child robust without jeopardising his health and life; and even if there be some risk, it should not enter into consideration. Since risks are inseparable from living, can we do better than deal with them at a time when they are least harmful? . . .

I repeat, education begins at birth; before he can speak, before he can understand, man is learning. Experience precedes lessons; the moment he recognizes his nurse, he has already learned much. We should be surprised at the knowledge of the most ignorant of men if we followed his progress from the moment of birth to the present. If all human knowledge were divided in two,—one part common to all, the other limited to the savants—, the latter would be very small in comparison with the former. . . .

Canaries escaped from their cages do not know how to fly, because they have never flown. Everything is learning for living, feeling creatures. If plants were capable of progressive motion, they would need senses and they would have to acquire knowledge; otherwise their species would soon perish.

The first sensations of children are purely affective; they know only pleasure or pain. Unable either to walk or grasp, they need plenty of time to form, little by little, the typical sensations which objects outside themselves give; but while waiting for these objects to approach and recede, so to speak, and to take their size and shape, the children are being subjected to the domination of habit, through the return of affective sensations. . . . The only habit which one should allow the child to form is the habit of not forming any; let him not be carried more on one arm than the other; let him not get accustomed to offer one hand rather than the other, or to use it more often; let him not desire to eat, sleep or play at the same hours, not be unable to be left alone either at night or day. . . .

Emile shall have no head-pads, no go-carts, no wagons, no strings; or at least, as soon as he begins to know how to place one foot before the other, he will be held up only on pavements, and on them he will be taken quickly. Instead of letting him stifle in the bad air of a room, he will daily be taken to the middle of a field. There, let him run, let him fight, let him fall a hundred times a day. So much the better: he will learn all the sooner to pick himself up. The happiness of liberty will atone for many wounds. My pupil will often have bruises; on the other hand, he will always be merry; if your pupils get hurt less, they are always thwarted, always in chains, always sad. I doubt that the advantage is theirs. . . .

What should one say to such brutal education as sacrifices the present to an uncertain future, that loads a child with every kind of chain, and which begins by making him miserable in order to prepare him for I-know-not-what pretended happiness of the future—a happiness he may never enjoy? Even if I granted such an education reasonable in its aim, how am I to see without indignation poor unfortunates subjected to intolerable slavery, and doomed to continual taxing like galley-slaves, without any surety that all these cares will ever prove useful? The years of gaiety are passed in the midst of tears, punishment, threats, and slavery. They are tormented for their own good; nobody sees Death calling them to free them from such sad surroundings. Who knows how many children die victims to the extravagant wisdom of a father or teacher? Happy to escape from cruelty, they gain only one advantage from the evil they must bear—to die without regretting life, which has offered them only torment.

Men, be humane: that is your first duty: kind to all stations and ages, to all that is not foreign to man. What wisdom is there for you outside of humanity? Love childhood; encourage its games, its pleasures, its pleasant instincts. Who has not sometimes regretted the years when laughter is always on the lips, when the soul is always at peace? Why should you begrudge these little innocents the joys of a period that is so short and fleeting, of a precious good they will never abuse?

From THE NEW ELOISA

(*Translated 1784*)

I have employed scarce eight days in surveying a country that would require some years. But, besides that I was driven off by the snow, I chose to be before the post who brings me, I hope, a letter from Eloisa. In the mean time I begin this, and shall afterwards, if it be necessary, write another in answer to that which I shall receive.

I do not intend to give you an account of my journey in this letter, you shall see my remarks when we meet; they would take up too much of our precious correspondence. For the present, it will be sufficient to acquaint you with the situation of my heart. It is but just to render you an account of that which is entirely yours.

I set out dejected with my own sufferings, but consoled with your joy; which held me suspended in a state of languor that is not disagreeable to true sensibility. Under the conduct of a very honest guide, I crawled up the towering hills, through many a rugged, unfrequented path. Often would I muse, and then, at once, some unexpected object caught my attention. One moment I beheld stupendous rocks hanging ruinous over my head, the next I was enveloped in a drizzling cold, which arose from a vast cascade that dashing thundered against the rocks below my feet; on one side, a perpetual torrent opened to my view a yawning abyss, which my eyes could hardly fathom with safety; sometimes I was lost in the obscurity of a hanging wood, and then was agreeably astonished with the sudden opening of a flowery plain. A surprising mixture of wild and cultivated nature points out the hand of man, where one would imagine man had never penetrated. Here you behold a horrid cavern, and there a human habitation; vineyards where one would expect nothing but brambles; delicious fruit among barren rocks, and corn fields in the midst of cliffs and precipices.

But it is not labor only that renders this strange country so wonderfully contrasted; for here nature seems to have a singular pleasure in acting contradictory to herself, so different does she appear in the same place in different aspects. Towards the east the flowers of spring—to the south the fruits of autumn—and northwards the ice of winter. She unites all the seasons in the same instant, every climate in the same place, different soils on the same land, and, with a harmony elsewhere unknown, joins the produce of the plains to those of the highest Alps. Add to these, the illusions of vision, the tops of the mountains variously illumined, the harmonious mixture of light and shade, and their different effects in the morning and the evening as I travelled; you may then form some idea of the scenes which engaged my attention, and which seemed to change as I passed, as on an enchanted theatre; for the prospect of mountains being almost perpendicular to the horizon, strikes the eye at the same instant, and more powerfully than that of a plain, where the objects are seen obliquely and half concealed behind each other.

To this pleasing variety of scenes I attributed the serenity of my mind during my first day's journey. I wondered to find that inanimate beings should overrule our most violent passions, and despised the impotence of philosophy for having less power over the soul than a succession of lifeless objects. But, finding that my tranquillity continued during the night, and even increased with the following day, I began to believe it flowed from some other source, which I had not yet discovered. That day I reached the lower mountains, and, passing over their rugged tops, at last ascended the highest summit I could possibly attain. Having walked a while in the clouds, I came to a place of greater serenity, whence one may peacefully observe the thunder and the storm gathering below—Ah! too flattering picture of human wisdom, of which the original never existed, except in those sublime regions whence the emblem is taken.

Here it was that I plainly discovered, in the purity of the air, the true cause of that returning tranquillity of soul, to which I had been so long a stranger. This impression is general, though not universally observed. Upon the tops of mountains, the air being subtle and pure, we respire with greater freedom, our bodies are more active, our minds more serene, our pleasures less ardent, and our passions much more moderate. Our meditations acquire a degree of sublimity from the grandeur of the objects around us. It seems as if, being lifted above all human society, we had left every low, terrestrial sentiment behind; and that as we approach the ethereal regions the soul imbibes something of their eternal purity. One is grave without being melancholy, peaceful but not indolent, pensive yet contented; our desires lose their painful violence, and leave only a gentle emotion in our hearts. Thus the passions which in the lower world are man's greatest torment, in happier climates contribute to his felicity. I doubt much whether any violent agitation, or vapors of the mind, could hold out against such a situation; and I am surprised that a bath of the reviving and wholesome air of the mountains is not frequently prescribed both by physic and morality.

Quí non palazzi, non teatro o loggia,
Ma'n lor vece un' abete, un faggio, un pino
Trà l'erba verde e'l bel monte vicino
Levan di terra al Ciel nostr' intelletto.

Nor palace, theatre, nor proud exchange,
Here lift their heads; but fir trees, beech, and pine,
O'er verdant valleys, and on pleasant hills,
Lift up the thoughtful mind from earth to heaven.

Image to yourself all these united impressions; the

amazing variety, magnitude, and beauty of a thousand stupendous objects; the pleasure of gazing at an entire new scene, strange birds, unknown plants, another nature, and a new world. To these even the subtilty of the air is advantageous; it enlivens the natural colors of objects, renders them more distinct, and brings them as it were nearer to the eye. In short, there is a kind of supernatural beauty in these mountainous prospects which charms the senses of the mind both into a forgetfulness of one's self and of everything in the world.

I could have spent the whole time in contemplating these magnificent landscapes, if I had not found still greater pleasure in the conversation of the inhabitants. In my observations you will find a slight sketch of their manners, their simplicity, their equality of soul, and of that peacefulness of mind which renders them happy by an exemption from pain, rather than by the enjoyment of pleasure. But what I was unable to describe, and which is almost impossible to be conceived, is their disinterested humanity and hospitable zeal to oblige every stranger whom chance or curiosity brings to visit them. This I myself continually experienced—I who was entirely unknown, and who was conducted from place to place only by a common guide. When, in the evening, I arrived in any hamlet at the foot of a mountain, each of the inhabitants was so eager to have me lodge at his house that I was always embarrassed which to accept; and he who obtained the preference seemed so well pleased that, at first, I supposed his joy to arise from a lucrative prospect; but I was amazed, after having used the house like an inn, to find my host not only refuse to accept the least gratuity, but offended that it was offered. I found it universally the same. So that it was true hospitality, which, from its unusual ardor, I had mistaken for avarice. So perfectly disinterested are these people, that during eight days it was not in my power to leave one dollar among them. In short, how is it possible to spend money in a country where the landlord will not be paid for his provisions, nor the servant for his trouble, and where there are no beggars to be found? Nevertheless, money is by no means abundant in the Upper Valais, and for that very reason the inhabitants are not in want; for the necessaries of life are plentiful, yet nothing is sent out of the country; they are not luxurious at home, nor is the peasant less laborious. If ever they have more money they will grow poor, and of this they are so sensible that they tread upon mines of gold, which they are determined never to open.

I was at first greatly surprised at the difference between the customs and manners of these people and those of the Lower Valais; for in the road through that part of the country to Italy travellers pay dearly enough for their passage. An inhabitant of the place explained the mystery. "The strangers (says he) who pass through the Lower Valais are chiefly merchants, or people who travel in pursuit of gain; it is but just that they should leave us a part of their profit, and that we should treat them as they treat others; but here travellers meet with a different reception, because we are assured their journey must have a disinterested motive: they visit us out of friendship, and therefore we receive them as our friends. But, indeed, our hospitality is not very expensive; we have but few visitors."—"No wonder (I replied) that mankind should avoid a people, who live only to enjoy life, and not to acquire wealth, and excite envy. Happy, deservedly happy, mortals! I am pleased to think that one must certainly resemble you in some degree, in order to approve your manners and taste your simplicity."

What I found particularly agreeable whilst I continued among them was the natural ease and freedom of their behavior. They went about their business in the house as if I had not been there; and it was in my power to act as if I were the sole inhabitant. They are entirely unacquainted with the impertinent vanity of doing the honors of the house, as if to remind the stranger of his dependence. When I said nothing, they concluded I was satisfied to live in their manner; but the least hint was sufficient to make them comply with mine, without any repugnance or astonishment. The only compliment which they made me, when they heard that I was a Swiss, was, that they looked upon me as a brother, and I ought therefore to think myself at home. After this, they took but little notice of me, not supposing that I could doubt the sincerity of their offers, or refuse to accept them whenever they could be useful. The same simplicity subsists among themselves: when the children are once arrived at maturity, all distinction between them and their parents seems to have ceased; their domestics are seated at the same table with their master; the same liberty reigns in the cottage as in the republic, and each family is an epitome of the state. . . .

Till you are pleased to recall me from exile, I will try to deceive the tedious hours in exploring the mountains of Valais, whilst they are yet practicable. I am of opinion that this unfrequented country deserves the attention of speculative curiosity, and that it wants nothing to excite admiration but a skilful spectator. Perhaps, my excursion may give rise to a few observations that may not be entirely undeserving your perusal. To amuse a fine lady one should describe a witty and polite nation; but I know my Eloisa will

have more pleasure in a picture where simplicity of manners and rural happiness are the principal objects. . . .

I enter with a secret horror on this vast desert, the world; whose confused prospect appears to me only as a frightful scene of solitude and silence. In vain my soul endeavors to shake off the universal restraint it lies under. It was the saying of a celebrated ancient, that he was never less alone than when by himself: for my part, I am never alone but when I mix with the crowd, and am neither with you nor with anybody else. My heart would speak, but it feels there is none to hear: it is ready to answer, but no one says anything that regards it. I understand not the language of the country, and nobody here understands mine. Yet, I own that I am greatly caressed, and that all the obliging offices of friendship and civility are readily offered to me: this is the very thing of which I complain. The officious zeal of thousands is ever on the wing to oblige me, but I know not how to entertain immediately a friendship for men I have never seen before. The honest feelings of humanity, the plain and affecting openness of a frank heart, are expressed in a different manner from those false appearances of politeness, and that external flattery, which the customs of the world require. I am not a little afraid that he, who treats me at first sight as if I was a friend of twenty years, should, if I should want his assistance, treat me as a stranger; and when I see men lost in dissipation pretend to take so tender a part in the concerns of every one, I readily presume they are interested for nobody but themselves.

There is, however, some truth in all this procession: the French are naturally good-natured, open, hospitable, and generous. But they have a thousand modes of expression which are not to be too strictly understood; a thousand apparent offers of kindness which they make only to be refused. They are no more than the snares of politeness laid for rustic simplicity. I never before heard such profusion of promises: you may depend on my serving you, command my credit, my purse, my house, my equipage.—But if all this were sincere, and literally taken, there would not be a people upon earth less attached to property. The community of possessions would be in a manner already established; the rich always making offers and the poor accepting them, both would naturally soon come upon a level, and not the citizens of Sparta itself could ever have been more upon equality than would be the people of Paris. On the contrary, there is not a place, perhaps, in the world, where the fortunes of men are so unequal, where are displayed at once the most sumptuous opulence, and the most deplorable poverty. This is surely sufficient to prove the insignificance of that apparent commiseration, which every one here affects to have for the wants and sufferings of others, and that tenderness of heart, which in a moment contracts eternal friendship.

But if, instead of attending to professions so justly to be suspected, and assurances so liable to deceive, I desire information, and would seek knowledge, here is its most agreeable source. One is immediately charmed with the good sense which is to be met with in company of the French, not only among the learned, but with men of all ranks, and even among the women: the turn of conversation is always easy and natural; it is neither dull nor frivolous, but learned without pedantry, gay without noise, polite without affectation, gallant without being fulsome, and jocose without being immodest. Their discourse is neither made up of dissertations nor epigrams; they reason without argumentation, and are witty without punning; they artfully unite reason and vivacity, maxims and rhapsodies; and mix the most pointed satire and refined flattery with strictness of morals. They talk about every thing, because every one has something to say; they examine nothing to the bottom, for fear of being tedious, but propose matters in a cursory manner, and pass them over with rapidity: every one gives his opinion, and supports it in few words; no one attacks with virulence that of another, nor obstinately defends his own; they discuss the point only for the sake of improvement, and stop before it comes to a dispute: every one improves, every one amuses himself, and they part all satisfied with each other; even the philosopher himself carrying away something worthy his private meditation.

But, after all, what kind of knowledge do you think is to be gained from such agreeable conversation? To form a right judgment of life and manners; to make a right use of society; to know, at least, the people with whom we converse; there is nothing, Eloisa, of all this: all that is here to be learnt, is to plead artfully the cause of falsehood; to confound, by philosophy, all the principles of virtue; to throw a false color, by the help of sophistry, on the passions and prejudices of mankind; and to give a certain turn to error, agreeable to the fashionable mode of thinking. It is not necessary to know the characters of men, but their interests, to guess their sentiments on any occasion. When a man talks on any subject, he rather expresses the opinions of his garb or his fraternity, than his own, and will change them as often as he changes his situation and circumstances.

Dress him up, for instance, by turns, in the robe of a judge, a peer, and a divine, and you shall hear him

successively stand up with the same zeal for the rights of the people, the despotism of the prince, and the authority of the Inquisition. There is one kind of reason for the lawyer, another for the officer of the revenue, and a third for the soldier. Each of them can demonstrate the other two to be knaves, a conclusion not very difficult to be drawn by all three. Thus men do not speak their own sentiments, but those they would instill into others, and the zeal which they affect is only the mask of interest. You may imagine, however, that such persons as are unconnected and independent have at least a personal character, and an opinion of their own. Not at all: they are only different machines, which never think for themselves, but are set going by springs.

You need only inform yourself of their company, their clubs, their friends, the women they visit, the authors they are acquainted with, and you may immediately tell what will be their opinion of the next book that is published, the next play that is acted, the works of this or that writer they know nothing of, or this or that system of which they have not one idea. As ordinary clocks, also, are wound up to go but four-and-twenty hours, so are these people under the necessity of going every evening into company, to know what they are to think the next day.

Hence it is that there is but a small number of both sexes who think for all the rest, and for whom all the rest talk and act. As every one considers his own particular interest, and none of them that of the public, and as the interests of individuals are always opposed, there is amongst them a perpetual clashing of parties and cabals, a continual ebb and flow of prepossessions and contrary opinions; amidst which the most violent temper, agitated only by the rest, seldom understands a word of the matter in dispute. Every club has its rules, its opinions, its principles, which are nowhere else admitted. An honest man at one house is a knave at the next door. The good, the bad, the beautiful, the ugly, truth, and even virtue itself, have all only a limited and local existence. Whoever chooses a general acquaintance, therefore, and goes into different societies, should be more pliable than Alcibiades;[1] he should change his principles with his company, new-model his sentiments in a manner at every step, and lay down his maxims by the rod. He ought at every visit to leave his conscience, if he has one, at the door, and take up with that belonging to the house; as a new servant, on his entrance, puts on his livery, which he leaves behind him when turned out, and if he chooses it, again takes up his own, which serves him till he gets a new suit with a new place. But what is still more extraordinary is, that every one here is perpetually contradicting himself, without being concerned at all about it. They have one set of principles for conversation, and another for their actions; nor is anybody scandalized at their inconsistency, it being generally agreed they should be very different. It is not required of an author, particularly of a moral writer, that he should maintain in conversation what he advances in his works; nor that he should put in practice what he inculcates. His writings, conversation, and conduct, are three things essentially different, which he is not at all obliged to reconcile to each other. In a word, everything is absurd, and yet nothing offends, because absurdity is the fashion. Nay, there is attached to this incongruity of principles and manners a fashionable air, of which they are proud, and which is frequently affected. In fact, although everyone zealously preaches up the maxims of his profession, he piques himself on the carriage and manners of another. The attorney, for instance, assumes the martial air of a soldier, and a petty clerk of the customs the supercilious deportment of a lord; the bishop affects the gallantry of a fine gentleman; the courtier the precision of a philosopher; and the statesman the repartee and raillery of a wit. Even the plain mechanic, who knows not how to put on the airs of any other profession, dresses himself up in a suit of black on Sundays, in order to pass for a practitioner in the law. The military gentlemen alone, despising every other profession, preserve, without affectation, the manners of their own, which, to say the truth, are insufferable. Not that M. de Moralt was in the wrong, when he gave the preference to the conversation of a soldier; but what might be true in his time is no longer so. The progress of literature has since improved conversation in general; and, as the gentlemen of the army despise such improvement in theirs, that which used to be the best, is at length become the worst. Hence it is, that the persons we talk to are not those with whom we converse; their sentiments do not come from the heart; their knowledge is not the acquisition of their own genius; their conversation does not discover their thoughts; and one perceives nothing of them but their figure. Thus a man in company here is nearly in the same situation as if he were spectator of a moving picture, where he himself is the only figure capable of self-motion.

Such are the notions I have formed of great societies, by that which I have seen at Paris. They may, nevertheless, be rather adapted to my own particular situation than to the true state of things and will doubtless improve as I become more acquainted with

[1] Athenian politician and general (450?-404 B.C.).

the manners of the world. Besides this, I have hitherto kept no other company than that into which I have been introduced by the friends of Lord B——, and am sensible it is necessary to descend to persons of different ranks, to know the peculiar manners of a country, those of the opulent being almost everywhere the same. I shall endeavor to inform myself better hereafter: in the mean time, I leave you to judge whether I have not sufficient reason to call this crowded scene a desert, and to be terrified by a solitude, where I find only an empty appearance of sentiments and of sincerity, that falsifies itself in the instant of expression; and where I perceive only the mere apparitions of men, phantoms that strike the eye for a moment, but are insensible to the touch. Hitherto I have seen a great number of masks: when shall I behold the faces of mankind? . . .

I began to wander over the orchard thus metamorphosed with a kind of ecstasy; and if I found no exotic plants, nor any of the products of the Indies, I found all those which were natural to the soil, disposed and blended in such a manner as to produce the most cheerful and lively effect. The verdant turf, thick but short and close, was intermixed with wild thyme, balm, sweet marjoram, and other fragrant herbs. You might perceive a thousand wild flowers dazzle your eyes, among which you would be surprised to discover some garden flowers, which seemed to grow natural with the rest. I now and then met with shady tufts, as impervious to the rays of the sun as if they had been in a thick forest. These tufts were composed of trees of a very flexible nature, the branches of which they bend, till they hang on the ground, and take root, as I have seen some trees naturally do in America. In the more open spots, I saw here and there bushes of roses, raspberries, and gooseberries: little plantations of lilac, hazle-trees, alders, seringa, broom, and trefoil, dispersed without any order or symmetry, and which embellished the ground, at the same time that it gave it the appearance of being overgrown with weeds. I followed the track through irregular and serpentine walks, bordered by these flowery thickets, and covered with a thousand garlands composed of vines, hops, rose-weed, snake-weed, and other plants of that kind, with which honeysuckles and jessamine deigned to intertwine. These garlands seemed as if they were scattered carelessly from one tree to another, and formed a kind of drapery over our heads, which sheltered us from the sun; while under foot we had smooth, agreeable, and dry walking upon a fine moss, without sand, or grass, or any rugged shoots. Then it was I first discovered, not without astonishment, that this verdant and bushy umbrage, which had deceived me so much at a distance, was composed of these luxuriant and creeping plants, which running all along the trees, formed a thick foliage overhead, and afforded shade and freshness under foot. I observed likewise, that by means of common industry, they had made several of these plants take root in the trunks of the trees, so that they spread more, being nearer the top. You will readily conceive that the fruit is not the better for these additions; but this is the only spot where they have sacrificed the useful to the agreeable, and in the rest of their grounds they have taken such care of the tree that without the orchard the return of fruit is greater than it was formerly. If you do but consider how delightful it is to meet with wild fruit in the midst of a wood, and to refresh one's self with it, you will easily conceive what a pleasure it must be to meet with excellent and ripe fruit in this artificial desert, though it grows but here and there, and has not the best appearance; which gives one the pleasure of searching, and selecting the best. . . .

You see nothing here in an exact row, nothing level; the line never entered this place; nature plants nothing by the line; the affected irregularity of the winding walks is managed with art, in order to prolong the walk, to hide the boundaries of the island, and to enlarge its extent in appearance, without making inconvenient and too frequent turnings. . . .

I was struck with an idea which made them laugh. "I am supposing to myself (said I) some rich man to be master of this house, and to bring an architect who is paid an extravagant price for spoiling nature. With what disdain would he enter this plain and simple spot! With what contempt would he order these ragged plants to be torn up! What fine lines he would draw! What fine walks he would cut! What fine geese-feet, what fine trees in the shape of umbrellas and fans he would make! What fine arbor-work—nicely cut out! What beautiful grass-plots of fine English turf, round, square, sloping, oval! What fine yew-trees cut in the shape of dragons, pagods, marmoset, and all sorts of monsters! With what fine vases of brass, with what fine fruit in stone he would decorate his garden!" "When he had done all this (said Mr. Wolmar) he would have made a very fine place, which would scarce ever be frequented, and from whence one should always go with eagerness to enjoy the country; a dismal place, where nobody would walk, but only use it as a thoroughfare when they were setting out; whereas, in my rural rambles, I often make haste to return, that I may walk here. . . ."

But probably you do not yet know that Mrs. Orbe, having settled her affairs, arrived here on Thursday

last, and resides entirely at the house of her friend. As I knew beforehand the day of her arrival, I set out to meet her, unknown to Mrs. Wolmar, whom she had a mind to surprise: we met on this side Lutri, and returned together. . . .

As she was unwilling Eloisa should hear the rattling of her coach, she got out in the avenue before we came to the gate; and, scudding across the courtyard like a sylph, ran up stairs with so much precipitation that she was obliged to stop and take breath on the first landing place, before she could get up the next flight. Mr. Wolmar came out to meet her, but she was in too much hurry to speak to him. On opening the door of Eloisa's apartment, I saw her sitting near the window, with the little Harriet on her knee. Clara had prepared for her a fine compliment, in her way; a compound of affection and pleasantry; but, on setting her foot over the threshold, compliment and pleasantry were all forgotten; she flew forward to embrace her friend with a transport impossible to be described, crying out, Ah! my dear, dear cousin! Harriet, seeing her mother, fled to meet her, and crying out, "Mama, Mama," ran with so much force against her, that the poor child fell backward on the floor. The effect of the sudden appearance of Clara, the fall of Harriet, the joy, the apprehensions, that seized upon Eloisa at that instant, made her give a violent shriek, and faint away. Clara was going to lift the child, when she saw her friend turn pale, which made her hesitate whom to assist; till, seeing me take up Harriet, she flew to the relief of Eloisa; but, in endeavoring to recover her sunk down likewise in a swoon by the side of her friend.

The child, seeing them both without motion, made such loud lamentations, as soon brought the little French woman into the room; the one clung about her mother, the other ran to her mistress. For my part, I was so struck, that I stalked about the room, without knowing what I did, venting broken exclamations, and making involuntary motions to no purpose. Wolmar himself, the unsusceptible Wolmar, seemed affected. But where is the heart of iron whom such a scene of sensibility would not affect? Where is the unfortunate mortal from whom such a scene of tenderness would not have extorted tears? Instead of running to Eloisa, this fortunate husband threw himself on a settee, to enjoy the delightful scene. "Be not afraid (says he, seeing our uneasiness). In these accidents nature only is exhausted for a moment, to recover itself with new vigor; they are never dangerous. Let me prevail on you not to interrupt the pleasure I take in this transporting sight, but partake it with me. How ravishingly delightful must it be to you? I never tasted anything like it, and am yet the most unhappy of all here."

You may judge, my lord, by the first moment of their meeting, the consequences of the reunion of these charming friends. It has excited throughout the whole house a sound of gladness, a tumultuous joy, that has not yet subsided.

Robert Burns

(1759-1796)

Because of his closeness to the soil and his warm common humanity with simple folk, Burns shares with his contemporary Blake the title of being the earliest of full-fledged romantic poets in the eighteenth century. But whereas Blake had little influence on the course of the Romantic Movement and was hardly known, the fame of Burns's verses did much to usher in the era of Wordsworth.

Misrepresentation rather than fact has been the basis for the familiar gossip about Burns's life. He has been falsely painted as a profligate, a drunkard, and a faithless lover—for reasons that are not far to seek. His staunch republicanism was best explained away by libeling him as a man. He was also a taunting enemy of religious formalism, cant, and hypocrisy; and those who felt the sting of his mockery could retort only by attributing dissoluteness to him. That he drank much on some occasions is no doubt true, but it was a vice of the time which he seems to have contracted from his acquaintance in high society. That he was often falling in love with a new lass is equally true; he was

very susceptible to female charms, but there was nothing mean or insincere in his passionate attachments, and the facts indicate that, once married, he was a devoted husband.

From childhood Burns was familiar with the poverty of the Scottish peasant. He was born January 25, 1759, in a clay cottage of two rooms at Alloway, near Ayr, not distant from the southwestern coast of Scotland. "My father," he tells us, "was advanced in life when he married. I was the eldest of seven children; and he, worn out by early hardship, was unfit for labor. . . . We lived very poorly; I was a dexterous Ploughman for my years." Misfortune dogged the steps of his family, which moved from farm to farm to cultivate an ungrateful soil that refused to yield them a living for all their arduous labors. "This kind of life," Burns said, "the cheerless gloom of a hermit with the unceasing moil of a galley slave, brought me to my sixteenth year; a little before which period I first committed the sin of Rhyme." But there were some recompenses in this hard existence. The poet's father, despite his failure as a farmer, was an intelligent man of admirable character, and the affections of their home have been lovingly painted in *The Cotter's Saturday Night* (cf. *below*).

Although he had but three years of schooling, Burns was an avid reader in English literature and mastered French well enough to read it fluently. More important, he was an enthusiastic collector of the rich stores of Scottish songs, made by forgotten singers and known to the simple folk of the countryside. Most of his enduring work, indeed, is but superb adaptation and imitation of crude old songs; he gave to the efforts of unknown bards the gift of immortality in exchange for the inspiration they offered him. Beginning his career, then, as a rhymer of local oral literature, he became gradually more widely known, though he was in his late twenties before he ventured to travel more than ten miles from his home. At last disgusted with the unfruitful toil that was his daily lot, he published in 1786 at the nearby town of Kilmarnock the first edition of his poems, with the intention of raising money for a trip to Jamaica. The volume created something of a sensation, and he decided to reach a larger public by printing another edition at Edinburgh.

To Edinburgh he went, therefore, and made prolonged visits for most of the ensuing year. For he found himself lionized at once. With the excitement over the primitive and the Rousseauistic worship of nature in the literary atmosphere, Burns seemed like a living proof to the new cult of the validity of its ideas. He was hailed by the literati as a wonderful example of untaught genius, a man schooled by nature alone. Though this was far from the case, Burns was pleased to fall in with their notions, and described himself as "but little indebted to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail."

It did not take Burns long, however, to realize that there was no future for him in Edinburgh. In 1786 her father's refusal had prevented his marriage to Jean Armour, who was then with child by Burns; in the interim he had fallen in love with Mary Campbell (his "Highland Mary") and been engaged to marry her, but she had died soon after of a fever. All obstacles to his marriage with Jean Armour were at last removed by 1788, and he took his wife to a little farm that before long proved no more tractable than his earlier ventures. His friends procured him the post of exciseman, and he made his headquarters at Dumfries. From there it was his duty to travel several hundred miles a week. His bold advocacy of the French Revolution and his love of the bottle made him few friends among his neighbors, and he took to lower company. Sunk in poverty again, he declined rapidly in health, his earlier physical overexertion now taking its toll. His untimely death was the occasion for his many enemies to cloud his memory with exaggerations and distortions of his weaknesses.

And it is not hard to see why he offended his provincial fellow citizens. Like Rousseau, Burns believed strongly in the guidance of the heart to religion, and despised narrow orthodoxy and smug respectability. His poems, *The Holy Fair, Address to the Deil* (i.e.

Devil), *Holy Willie's Prayer,* and *Address to the Unco Guid* must have struck the strict Calvinists as so much devil's work. Their fury only spurred him on to further affronts. His objections to them are fairly well summed up in the opening lines of the *Address to the Unco Guid*:

O ye wha are sae guid yoursel,
Sae pious and sae holy,
Ye've nought to do but mark and tell
Your neebour's fauts and folly!

Today, with the possible exception of his masterpiece, *Tam O'Shanter,* Burns is best known for his many and beautiful songs. These vary from the lighthearted sweetness of *My Nanie, O* (cf. *below*) and *Green Grow the Rashes* (cf. *below*), to the boisterous jollity of *Willie Brewed a Peck o' Maut* (cf. *below*); from the sadness of *Ae Fond Kiss* (cf. *below*) and *Highland Mary* (cf. *below*) to the patriotic fervor of *Scots, Wha Hae* (cf. *below*); from the touching dignity of *John Anderson, My Jo, John* (cf. *below*) to the pathos of *The Banks o' Doon* (cf. *below*) and the passionate exuberance of *A Red, Red Rose* (cf. *below*). In all these Burns sings out of a full heart. This emotional directness is his peculiar quality, for in no romantic poet is the interest so entirely one of the feelings. In no other poet of the school is there less intellectual appeal. Yet, despite the note of spontaneity in these songs, their great merit is their swift conciseness—a characteristic rightness which makes them somehow akin to the best lyrics of the ancients, to whom Burns owed nothing.

The good earth on which dwell man and his fellow creatures, the mouse, the louse, the mule, and the daisy, is rarely absent from Burns's consciousness. He finds no lessons in her such as Wordsworth will find; he feels no rapturous inspiration from her such as Shelley will experience; she is to him the loved reality that she is to the peasant. In *To a Mouse* (cf. *below*) and *To a Mountain Daisy* (cf. *below*) one feels Burns's profound kinship with these "earth-born companions and fellow mortals."

These poems show Burns at his best. But there is another side to him. He might mock at Pope or Steele in his vivaciously autobiographical *Epistle to J. Lapraik* (cf. *below*), but on occasion he could not resist the unfortunate temptation to emulate the elegance of the neoclassicists. When he tried it, he failed lamentably, for he spoke in an affected, pompous manner that is worthy of only the most wretched of Pope's imitators. In general the division between Burns at his best and at his worst is marked by his use of the Scottish dialect of his native Lowlands and his use of the King's English. His heights and depths can thus be studied in various passages of *The Cotter's Saturday Night.* To know what is imperishable in Burns requires, therefore, a slight effort at mastering the Lowland vocabulary. But the true flavor of his beautiful songs can be relished only when they are recited or sung by one of Burns's own compatriots.

The standard edition of Burns was edited by W. E. Henley and T. F. Henderson (1896-97) in four volumes. The songs and their music were collected by J. C. Dick (1903). The best biography is by F. B. Snyder (1932). An excellent recent one has been written by De L. Ferguson (1939).

The Cotter's Saturday Night

Though of no great length, this poem is nevertheless one of Burns's longest, and is notable for its use of the Spenserian stanza. It has been very popular, but shows Burns at his best only in some passages. Indeed, it affords a curious demonstration of how the poet is rarely successful when he forsakes his native language for conventional English; his lapses from true poetry will be found only in the portions where the latter is employed. Thus: the first stanza is weak and pretentious, while the second is powerful and vivid; all continues well until the seventy-third line opens a formal, uninspired stanza; and the next stanza is downright silly in its sentimentality, inasmuch as there seems to be no one interested in betraying "sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth," and all the virtuous indignation is just so much rhetoric. But the simple dignity of the depiction of the farmer's home-life and the tender portrait of the poet's father entitle this poem to the favor always accorded it, despite its flaws.

INSCRIBED TO ROBERT AIKEN, ESQ.

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys and destiny obscure;
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile,
The short and simple annals of the poor.—GRAY.

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

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sugh,[1]
The short'ning winter day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae[2] the pleugh,
The black'ning trains o' craws[3] to their repose;
The toil-worn Cotter frae his labor goes,—
This night his weekly moil is at an end,—
Collects his spades, his mattocks and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

[1] moan. [2] from. [3] crows.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin, stacher[4] through
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin[5] noise an' glee.
His wee bit ingle,[6] blinkin bonilie,
His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wifie's smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary kiaugh[7] and care beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labor an' his toil.

Belyve,[8] the elder bairns come drappin in,
At service out amang the farmers roun';
Some ca[9] the pleugh, some herd, some tentie[10] rin
A cannie errand to a neibor toun:
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman-grown,
In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her ee,
Comes hame, perhaps to shew a braw[11] new gown,
Or deposite her sair-won[12] penny-fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

With joy unfeign'd brothers and sisters meet,
An' each for other's weelfare kindly spiers:[13]
The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd fleet;
Each tells the uncos[14] that he sees or hears.
The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;
Anticipation forward points the view;
The mother, wi' her needle an' her sheers,
Gars[15] auld claes look amaist as weel's the new;
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

Their master's an' their mistress's command
The younkers a' are warnèd to obey;
An' mind their labors wi' an eydent[16] hand,
An' ne'er tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play:
"An' O! be sure to fear the Lord alway,
An' mind your duty, duly, morn an' night!
Lest in temptation's path ye gang[17] astray,
Implore His counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain that sought the Lord aright!"

But hark! a rap comes gently to the door.
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,

[4] stagger. [5] fluttering. [6] fire. [7] anxiety. [8] soon.
[9] drive. [10] watchful. [11] fine. [12] hard-won.
[13] inquires. [14] unusual things.
[15] Makes old clothes look almost as well as the new.
[16] diligent. [17] go.

Tells how a neibor lad cam o'er the moor,
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in Jenny's ee, and flush her cheek;
Wi' heart-struck, anxious care, inquires his name,
While Jenny hafflins[18] is afraid to speak;
Weel pleas'd the mother hears it's nae wild worthless rake.

Wi' kindly welcome Jenny brings him ben,[19]
A strappin youth; he takes the mother's eye;
Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill taen;
The father cracks[20] of horses, pleughs, and kye.[21]
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
But, blate[22] and laithfu',[23] scarce can weel behave;
The mother wi' a woman's wiles can spy
What maks the youth sae bashful' an' sae grave
Weel-pleas'd to think her bairn's respected like the lave.[24]

O happy love! where love like this is found!
O heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!
I've pacèd much this weary, mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare—
"If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair,
In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the ev'ning gale."

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart,
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
That can with studied, sly, ensnaring art
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling smooth!
Are honor, virtue, conscience, all exil'd?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child,
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The halesome parritch[25] chief of Scotia's food;
The sowpe[26] their only hawkie[27] does afford,
That yont[28] the hallan[29] snugly chows her cud.
The dame brings forth, in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck fell,[30]
An' aft[31] he's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid;
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,
How 'twas a towmond[32] auld, sin' lint[33] was i' the bell.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They round the ingle form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er with patriarchal grace
The big ha'-bible,[34] ance his father's pride;
His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets[35] wearing thin and bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales[36] a portion with judicious care;
And, "Let us worship God," he says with solemn air.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps *Dundee's* wild-warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive *Martyrs*, worthy of the name,
Or noble *Elgin* beets[37] the heaven-ward flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays.
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickl'd ear no heart-felt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,—
How Abram was the friend of God on high;
Or Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or how the royal bard did groaning lie
Beneath the stroke of heaven's avenging ire;
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,—
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How He, who bore in heav'n the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay His head:
How His first followers and servants sped;
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land;
How he, who lone in Patmos banishèd,[38]

[18] halfway. [19] inside. [20] talks. [21] cows. [22] shy. [23] bashful. [24] rest. [25] porridge. [26] milk. [27] cow. [28] beyond. [29] partition. [30] well-saved, strong cheese. [31] oft. [32] twelve-month. [33] flax. [34] hall-Bible. [35] grey temples. [36] chooses. [37] kindles. [38] the Apostle John.

Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounced by Heav'n's command.

Then kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing,"[39]
That thus they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear,
While circling Time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride
In all the pomp of method and of art,
When men display to congregations wide
Devotion's ev'ry grace except the heart!
The Pow'r, incens'd, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But haply in some cottage far apart
May hear, well pleased, the language of the soul;
And in His Book of Life the inmates poor enroll.

Then homeward all take off their several way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to Heav'n the warm request,
That He who stills the raven's clamorous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flowery pride,
Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But chiefly in their hearts with grace divine preside.

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her loved at home, revered abroad:
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
"An honest man's the noblest work of God";[40]
And certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp? a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refined!

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And O may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile;
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-loved isle.

O Thou! who poured the patriotic tide
That streamed thro' Wallace's[41] undaunted heart,
Who dared to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die—the second glorious part,
(The patriot's God, peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert;
But still the patriot, and the patriot-bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!
(1785-6)

[39] from Pope's *Windsor Forest.*
[40] from Pope's *Essay on Man.*

To a Mouse

ON TURNING HER UP IN HER NEST WITH THE PLOW, NOVEMBER, 1785

Wee, sleekit,[1] cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,
Oh, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou needna start awa' sae hasty,
Wi' bickerin' brattle![2]
I wad be laith[3] to rin and chase thee
Wi' murd'ring pattle![4]

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earthborn companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubtna, whiles,[5] but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun[6] live!
A daimen icker in a thrave[7]
'S a sma' request:

[41] Cf. Vol. II, p. 71.
[1] sleek. [2] hurrying clatter. [3] loath.
[4] hand-stick for cleaning the plough.
[5] sometimes. [6] must.
[7] occasional ear in twenty-four sheaves.

I'll get a blessin' wi' the lave,[8]
And never miss't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin'!
And naething now to big[9] a new ane
O' foggage[10] green!
An' bleak December's winds ensuin',
Baith snell[11] an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary winter comin' fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
Till, crash! the cruel coulter passed
Out through thy cell.

That wee-bit heap o' leaves an' stibble
Hast cost thee monie a weary nibble!
Now thou's turned out for a' thy trouble,
But[12] house or hald,
To thole[13] the winter's sleety dribble,
And cranreuch[14] cauld!

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley,[15]
An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain,
For promised joy.

Still thou art blest, compared wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, och! I backward cast my e'e
On prospects drear!
An' forward, though I canna see,
I guess an' fear.

To a Mountain Daisy

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOUGH,
IN APRIL, 1786

Wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure[1]
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neibor sweet,
The bonie lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet
Wi' spreckl'd breast,
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early, humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the parent-earth
Thy tender form.

The flaunting flowers our gardens wield
High shelt'ring woods an' wa's[2] maun shield:
But thou, beneath the random bield[3]
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie[4] stibble-field
Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sun-ward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betray'd
And guileless trust;
Till she, like thee, all soil'd, is laid
Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,
On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd!
Unskilful he to note the card
Of prudent lore,
Till billows rage and gales blow hard,
And whelm him o'er!

Such fate to suffering Worth is giv'n,
Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,
By human pride or cunning driv'n
To mis'ry's brink;
Till, wrench'd of ev'ry stay but Heav'n,
He ruin'd sink!

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date;

[8] rest. [9] build. [10] grass. [11] sharp. [12] without. [13] endure. [14] cold frost. [15] astray. [1] dust.
[2] walls. [3] protection. [4] dry.

Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight
Shall be thy doom.

Epistle to John Lapraik, an Old Scottish Bard

1

While briers an' woodbines budding green,
An' paitricks[1] scraichin' loud at e'en,
An' morning poussie[2] whiddin[3] seen,
Inspire my Muse,
This freedom, in an unknown frien',
I pray excuse.

2

On Fasten-een[4] we had a rockin',[5]
To ca' the crack[6] and weave our stockin';
And there was muckle[7] fun and jokin',
Ye need na doubt;
At length we had a hearty yokin'[8]
At "sang about."

3

There was ae[9] sang, amang the rest,
Aboon[10] them a' it pleased me best,
That some kind husband had addressed
To some sweet wife:
It thirled[11] the heart-strings thro' the breast,
A' to the life.

4

I've scarce heard ought described sae weel,
What gen'rous, manly bosoms feel;
Thought I "Can this be Pope, or Steele;
Or Beattie's[12] wark?"
They tauld me 'twas an odd kind chiel[13]
About Muirkirk.

5

It pat me fidgin' fain[14] to hear't,
And sae about him there I spiered;[15]
Then a' that kenned[16] him round declared
He had ingine,[17]
That nane excelled it, few cam near't,
It was sae fine.

6

That, set him to a pint of ale,
An' either douce[18] or merry tale,
Or rhymes an' sangs he'd made himsel,
Or witty catches,[19]
'Tween Inverness and Teviotdale,
He had few matches.

7

Then up I gat, an' swoor an aith,
Tho' I should pawn my pleugh an' graith,[20]
Or die a cadger pownie's death,
At some dyke-back,[21]
A pint an' gill I'd gie them baith,
To hear your crack.[22]

8

But, first an' foremost, I should tell,
Amaist as soon as I could spell,
I to the crambo-jingle[23] fell;
Tho' rude an' rough—
Yet crooning to a body's sel,
Does weel eneugh.

9

I am nae poet, in a sense;
But just a rhymer like by chance,
An' hae to learning nae pretence;
Yet, what the matter?
Whene'er my Muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her.

10

Your critic-folk may cock their nose,
And say, "How can you e'er propose,

[1] partridges. [2] the hare. [3] scurrying away. [4] Ash-Wednesday evening. [5] gathering. [6] to talk. [7] much. [8] turn. [9] one. [10] above. [11] thrilled. [12] Scottish poet (1735-1803). [13] fellow. [14] made me very glad. [15] enquired. [16] knew. [17] talent. [18] serious. [19] rhymes. [20] gear. [21] behind some wall. [22] talk. [23] rhyming.

You wha ken hardly verse frae prose,
To mak a sang?"
But, by your leaves, my learned foes,
Ye're maybe wrang.

11

What's a' your jargon o' your Schools,
Your Latin names for horns an' stools?
If honest Nature made you fools,
What sairs[24] your grammers?
Ye'd better taen up spades and shools,[25]
Or knappin-hammers.

12

A set o' dull, conceited hashes[26]
Confuse their brains in college-classes,
They gang in stirks[27] and come out asses,
Plain truth to speak;
An' syne[28] they think to climb Parnassus
By dint o' Greek!

13

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then, tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire
At pleugh or cart,
My Muse, tho' hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.

14

O for a spunk o' Allan's[29] glee,
Or Fergusson's,[30] the bauld an' slee,
Or bright Lapraik's, my friend to be,
If I can hit it!
That would be lear[31] eneugh for me,
If I could get it.

15

Now, sir, if ye hae friends enow,
Tho' real friends I b'lieve are few;
Yet, if your catalogue be fow,[32]
I'se no insist:

But, gif ye want ae friend that's true,
I'm on your list.

16

I winna blaw about mysel,
As ill I like my fauts to tell;
But friends, an' folks that wish me well,
They sometimes roose[33] me;
Tho', I maun own, as monie still
As far abuse me.

17

There's ae wee faut they whyles lay to me,
I like the lasses—Gude forgie me!
For monie a plack[34] they wheedle frae me
At dance or fair;
Maybe some ither thing they gie me,
They weel can spare.

18

But Mauchline Race or Mauchline Fair,
I should be proud to meet you there:
We 'se gie ae night's discharge to care,
If we forgather;
And hae a swap o' rhymin-ware
Wi ane anither.

19

The four-gill chap, we'se gar him clatter,
An' kirsen him wi' reekin water;[35]
Syne we'll sit down an' tak our whitter,[36]
To cheer our heart;
An' faith, we'se be acquainted better
Before we part.

20

Awa ye selfish, warly race,
Wha think that havins,[37] sense, an' grace,
Ev'n love an' friendship should give place
To Catch-the-Plack![38]
I dinna like to see your face,
Nor hear your crack.[39]

[24] of what use are? [25] shovels.
[26] fools. [27] bullocks. [28] afterwards.
[29] Allan Ramsay (1686-1758), Scottish poet.
[30] Robert Fergusson (1750-1774), Scottish poet.
[31] learning. [32] full.
[33] praise. [34] penny.
[35] We will make the four-gill cup rattle and christen it with boiling water.
[36] drink. [37] manners.
[38] money-making. [39] talk.

21

But ye whom social pleasure charms,
Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms,
Who hold your being on the terms,
"Each aid the others,"
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
My friends, my brothers!

22

But, to conclude my lang epistle,
As my auld pen's worn to the grissle,
Twa lines frae you wad gar me fissle,[40]
Who am most fervent,
While I can either sing or whistle,
Your friend and servant.

(1785)

Tam O'Shanter

"I look on *Tam O'Shanter* to be my standard performance in the Poetical line," wrote Burns. He admitted that it exhibited "a spice of roguish waggery that might perhaps be as well spared," but added that in his opinion it showed "a force of genius and a finishing polish that I despair of ever excelling." This judgment time has proved to be just. The poem is a wonderful mixture of laughter and terror, and moves with that celerity of which Burns was a complete master. Tradition has it that it was composed in one day during a walk by the river Nith.

The ruined kirk of Alloway, on the river Doon, was less than a mile from the poet's birthplace, and the hero whom he celebrates was familiar to him in popular legend from his childhood. The poem, therefore, is entirely local in subject and setting, and may be conceived as addressed to his neighbors as a fireside tale.

When chapman billies[1] leave the street,
And drouthy[2] neebors neebors meet;
As market-days are wearing late,
An' folk begin to tak the gate;[3]
While we sit bousing at the nappy,[4]
An' getting fou[5] and unco[6] happy,
We think na on the lang Scots miles,
The mosses, waters, slaps, and styles,
That lie between us and our hame,
Whare sits our sulky, sullen dame,
Gathering her brows like gathering storm,
Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

This truth fand honest Tam O'Shanter,
As he frae Ayr ae night did canter
(Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,
For honest men and bonie lasses).

O Tam! hadst thou but been sae wise,
As taen thy ain wife Kate's advice!
She tauld thee weel thou was a skellum,
A blethering, blustering, drunken blellum;[7]
That frae November till October,
Ae market-day thou was nae sober;
That ilka melder wi' the miller,[8]
Thou sat as lang as thou had siller;
That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,[9]
The smith an' thee gat roaring fou on;
That at the Lord's house, ev'n on Sunday,
Thou drank wi' Kirkton Jean till Monday.
She prophesied that, late or soon,
Thou would be found deep drowned in Doon,
Or catched wi' warlocks in the mirk,[10]
By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.[11]

Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet,[12]
To think how mony counsels sweet,
How mony lengthened, sage advices,
The husband frae the wife despises!

But to our tale: Ae[13] market night,
Tam had got planted unco right,
Fast by an ingle,[14] bleezing finely,
Wi' reaming swats[15] that drank divinely;
And at his elbow, Souter[16] Johnny,
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony—
Tam lo'ed him like a very brither;
They had been fou for weeks thegither.
The night drave on wi' sangs and clatter,
And aye the ale was growing better;
The landlady and Tam grew gracious,
Wi' favors secret, sweet, and precious;
The souter tauld his queerest stories;
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus.
The storm without might rair and rustle,
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

[40] thrill with joy.
[1] peddlers. [2] thirsty. [3] take the road for home.
[4] strong ale. [5] full. [6] very.
[7] blabber. [8] each trip to the miller.
[9] every time the horse was shod. [10] dark.
[11] church. [12] it makes me weep. [13] one.
[14] fireplace. [15] creamy ale. [16] Cobbler.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,
E'en drowned himself amang the nappy.
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,
The minutes winged their way wi' pleasure;
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

But pleasures are like poppies spread—
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;
Or like the snow falls in the river,
A moment white—then melts forever;
Or like the borealis race,
That flit ere you can point their place;
Or like the rainbow's lovely form,
Evanishing amid the storm.—
Nae man can tether time nor tide;
The hour approaches Tam maun ride;
That hour, o' night's black arch the keystane,
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in;
And sic a night he taks the road in,
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last;
The rattling show'rs rose on the blast;
The speedy gleams the darkness swallowed;
Loud, deep, and lang the thunder bellowed;
That night, a child might understand,
The Deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his gray mare Meg—
A better never lifted leg—
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire,
Despising wind, and rain, and fire;
Whyles holding fast his guid blue bonnet,
Whyles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet,
Whyles glow'ring round wi' prudent cares,
Lest bogles catch him unawares—
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,
Whare ghaists and houlets[17] nightly cry.

By this time he was cross the ford,
Whare in the snaw the chapman smoored;[18]
And past the birks[19] and meikle[20] stane,[21]
Whare drunken Charlie brak's neckbane;
And through the whins,[22] and by the cairn,[23]
Whare hunters fand the murdered bairn;[24]
And near the thorn, aboon[25] the well,
Whare Mungo's mither hanged hersel.
Before him Doon pours all his floods;
The doubling storm roars through the woods;

The lightnings flash from pole to pole;
Near and more near the thunders roll;
When, glimmering through the groaning trees,
Kirk-Alloway seemed in a bleeze;
Through ilka bore[26] the beams were glancing,
And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!
What dangers thou canst make us scorn!
Wi' tippenny,[27] we fear nae evil;
Wi' usquabae,[28] we'll face the Devil!
The swats sae reamed[29] in Tammie's noddle,
Fair play, he cared na deils a boddle.
But Maggie stood, right sair astonished,
Till, by the heel and hand admonished,
She ventured forward on the light;
And, wow! Tam saw an unco[30] sight!

Warlocks and witches in a dance!
Nae cotillion, brent new frae France,
But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys,[31] and reels
Put life and mettle in their heels.
A winnock-bunker[32] in the east,
There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast,
A towzie tyke,[33] black, grim, and large;
To gie them music was his charge.
He screwed the pipes[34] and gart them skirl,[35]
Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.[36]
Coffins stood round, like open presses,
That shawed the dead in their last dresses;
And by some devilish cantraip sleight,[37]
Each in its cauld hand held a light,
By which heroic Tam was able
To note upon the haly table,
A murderer's banes in gibbet airns;
Twa span-lang, wee, unchristened bairns;
A thief, new-cutted frae the rape,[38]
Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape;
Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red-rusted;
Five scymitars, wi' murder crusted;
A garter which a babe had strangled;
A knife, a father's throat had mangled,
Whom his ain son o' life bereft—
The gray hairs yet stack to the heft;
Wi' mair of horrible and awfu',
Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glowered, amazed and curious,

[17] ghosts and owls. [18] smothered. [19] birches.
[20] great. [21] stone. [22] furze. [23] pile of stone.
[24] child. [25] above.
[26] opening. [27] twopenny. [28] whiskey.
[29] ale so foamed. [30] awful. [31] a Scotch dance.
[32] window-seat. [33] shaggy cur. [34] bagpipes.
[35] made them scream. [36] vibrate.
[37] magical contrivance. [38] rope.

The mirth and fun grew fast and furious.
The piper loud and louder blew;
The dancers quick and quicker flew;
They reeled, they set, they crossed, they cleekit,
Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,[39]
And coost her duddies[40] to the wark,
And linket at it in her sark![41]

Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans,
A' plump and strapping in their teens,
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen!
Thir breeks[42] o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' guid blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies,[43]
For ae blink o' the bonie burdies![44]
But withered beldams, auld and droll,
Rigwoodie[45] hags wad spean a foal,
Louping[46] an' flinging on a crummock,[47]
I wonder did na turn thy stomach.

But Tam kend what was what fu' brawlie;
There was ae winsome wench and wawlie,[48]
That night enlisted in the core,
Lang after kend on Carrick shore
(For mony a beast to dead she shot,
And perished mony a bonie boat,
And shook baith meikle corn and bear,
And kept the country-side in fear).
Her cutty sark, o' Paisley harn,
That while a lassie she had worn,
In longitude though sorely scanty,
It was her best, and she was vauntie.
Ah! little kend thy reverend grannie,
That sark she coft[49] for her wee Nannie,
Wi' twa pund Scots[50] ('twas a' her riches),
Wad ever graced a dance of witches!
But here my Muse her wing maun cour;
Sic flights are far beyond her power;
To sing how Nannie lap and flang
(A souple jade she was and strang),
And how Tam stood, like ane bewitched,
And thought his very een enriched;
Even Satan glowered, and fidged fu' fain,
And hotched and blew wi' might and main
Till first ae caper, syne anither,[51]
Tam tint[52] his reason a' thegither,

[39] every old woman sweated and steamed.
[40] cast off her clothes. [41] shirt. [42] breeches.
[43] hips. [44] girls. [45] withered. [46] leaping. [47] cane.
[48] large. [49] bought.
[50] two Scotch pounds, about one dollar.
[51] first one caper, then another. [52] lost.

And roars out, "Weel done, Cutty sark!"
And in an instant all was dark;
And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,
When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke,[53]
When plundering herds assail their byke;[54]
As open pussie's[55] mortal foes,
When, pop! she starts before their nose;
As eager runs the market-crowd,
When "Catch the thief!" resounds aloud,
So Maggie runs, the witches follow,
Wi' mony an eldritch[56] skriech and hollow.

Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin'![57]
In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin'!
In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin'!
Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!
Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,
And win the key-stane of the brig;[58]
There, at them thou thy tail may toss—
A running stream they dare na cross;
But ere the key-stane she could make,
The fient[59] a tail she had to shake!
For Nannie, far before the rest,
Hard upon noble Maggie pressed,
And flew at Tam wi' furious ettle;[60]
But little wist she Maggie's mettle!
Ae spring brought off her master hale,
But left behind her ain gray tail.
The carlin claught her by the rump,
And left poor Maggie scarce a stump.

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,
Ilk[61] man and mother's son take heed:
Whene'er to drink you are inclined,
Or cutty sarks run in your mind,
Think, ye may buy the joys o'er dear;
Remember Tam O'Shanter's mare.

(1791)

Song: My Nanie, O

Behind yon hills where Lugar flows,
'Mang moors an' mosses many, O,
The wintry sun the day has clos'd,
An' I'll awa to Nanie, O.

The westlin wind blaws loud an' shill:
The night's baith mirk an' rainy, O;

[53] fury. [54] hive. [55] the hare's. [56] unearthly.
[57] reward. [58] bridge. [59] devil. [60] intent. [61] every.

But I'll get my plaid an' out I'll steal,
An' owre the hill to Nanie, O.

My Nanie's charming, sweet, an' young;
Nae artfu' wiles to win ye, O:
May ill befa' the flattering tongue
That wad beguile my Nanie, O.

Her face is fair, her heart is true,
As spotless as she's bonie, O:
The op'ning gowan,[1] wat wi' dew,
Nae purer is than Nanie, O.

A country lad is my degree,
An' few there be that ken me, O;
But what care I how few they be?
I'm welcome aye to Nanie, O.

My riches a's my penny-fee,
An' I maun[2] guide it cannie, O;
But warl's gear[3] ne'er troubles me,
My thoughts are a' my Nanie, O.

Our auld guidman[4] delights to view
His sheep an' kye[5] thrive bonie, O;
But, I'm as blythe that hauds[6] his pleugh,
And has nae care but Nanie, O.

Come weel, come woe, I care na by,
I'll tak what Heav'n will sen' me, O;
Nae ither care in life hae I,
But live, an love my Nanie, O.

(1784)

Song: Green Grow the Rashes

CHORUS.—Green grow the rashes, O!
Green grow the rashes, O!
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend
Are spent amang the lasses, O.

There's nought but care on ev'ry han',
In every hour that passes, O:
What signifies the life o' man,
An 't were na for the lasses, O?

The war'ly[1] race may riches chase,
An' riches still may fly them, O;
An' tho' at last they catch them fast,
Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them, O.

But gie me a cannie[2] hour at e'en,
My arms about my dearie, O;
An' war'ly cares, an' war'ly men,
May a' gae tapsalteerie,[3] O.

For you sae douce,[4] ye sneer at this;
Ye're nought but senseless asses, O:
The wisest man the warl' e'er saw,
He dearly lov'd the lasses, O.

Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O:
Her prentice han' she try'd on man,
An' then she made the lasses, O.

(1786)

[1] daisy. [2] must. [3] goods.
[4] land-owner. [5] cows. [6] holds.
[1] worldly.

Of A' the Airts the Wind Can Blaw

Of a' the airts the wind can blaw
I dearly like the west,
For there the bonie lassie lives,
The lassie I lo'e best:
There's wild woods grow, an' rivers row,
An' mony a hill between;
But day and night my fancy's flight
Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flow'rs,
I see her sweet an' fair:
I hear her in the tunefu' birds,
I hear her charm the air.
There's not a bonie flow'r that springs
By fountain, shaw or green;
There's not a bonie bird that sings,
But minds me o' my Jean.

(1788?)

Auld Lang Syne

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to min'?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne?[1]

[2] quiet. [3] topsy-turvy. [4] serious.
[1] old long ago.

Chorus.—For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne.

We twa hae run about the braes,
And pu'd the gowans[2] fine;
But we've wandered monie a weary fit
Sin' auld lang syne.

For auld, etc.

We twa hae paidl't i' the burn,[3]
Frae mornin' sun til dine;[4]
But seas between us braid[5] hae roared
Sin' auld lang syne.

For auld, etc.

And there's a hand, my trusty fiere,[6]
And gie's a hand o' thine;
And we'll tak a right guid-willie waught
For auld lang syne!

For auld, etc.

And surely ye'll be your pint-stowp,
And surely I'll be mine;
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet
For auld lang syne.

For auld, etc.

(1788)

John Anderson, My Jo, John

John Anderson, my jo,[1] John,
When we were first acquent,
Your locks were like the raven,
Your bonnie brow was brent;[2]
But now your brow is beld,[3] John,
Your locks are like the snow;
But blessings on your frosty pow,[4]
John Anderson, my jo!

John Anderson, my jo, John,
We clamb the hill thegither;
And monie a canty[5] day, John,
We've had wi' ane anither.
Now we maun totter down, John,
And hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep thegither at the foot,
John Anderson, my jo!

(pub. 1790)

[2] daisies. [3] brook. [4] dinner time. [5] broad. [6] companion.
[1] sweetheart. [2] smooth. [3] bald. [4] head. [5] happy.

Tam Glen

1

My heart is a-breaking, dear tittie,[1]
Some counsel unto me come len'.
To anger them a' is a pity,
But what will I do wi' Tam Glen?

2

I'm thinking, wi' sic a braw[2] fellow
In poortith[3] I might mak a fen'.[4]
What care I in riches to wallow,
If I mauna marry Tam Glen?

3

There's Lowrie the laird o' Dumeller:
"Guid day to you," brute! he comes ben.[5]
He brags and he blaws o' his siller,[6]
But when will he dance like Tam Glen?

4

My minnie[7] does constantly deave[8] me,
And bids me beware o' young men.
They flatter, she says, to deceive me—
But wha can think sae o' Tam Glen?

5

My daddie says, gin I'll forsake him,
He'd gie me guid hunder marks ten.
But if it's ordained I maun take him,
O, wha will I get but Tam Glen?

6

Yestreen at the valentines' dealing,
My heart to my mou[9] gied a sten,[10]

[1] sister. [2] such a fine. [3] poverty. [4] shift. [5] inside.
[6] blows about his money. [7] mother. [8] deafen.
[9] mouth. [10] spring.

For thrice I drew ane without failing,
And thrice it was written "Tam Glen!"

7

The last Holloween I was waukin[11]
My droukit sark-sleeve,[12] as ye ken—
His likeness came up the house staukin,[13]
And the very grey breeks[14] o' Tam Glen!

8

Come, counsel, dear tittie, don't tarry!
I'll gie ye my bonie black hen,
Gif ye will advise me to marry
The lad I lo'e dearly, Tam Glen.

(pub. 1790)

Willie Brewed a Peck o' Maut

O Willie brewed a peck o' maut,[1]
And Rob and Allan cam to see;
Three blither hearts, that lee-lang[2] night,
Ye wad na found in Christendie.

Chorus

We are na fou,[3] we're no that fou,
But just a drappie[4] in our e'e;
The cock may craw, the day may daw,[5]
And aye we'll taste the barley bree.[6]

Here are we met, three merry boys,
Three merry boys, I trow, are we;
And mony a night we've merry been,
And mony mae[7] we hope to be!

It is the moon, I ken her horn,
That's blinkin' in the lift[8] sae hie;
She shines sae bright to wyle[9] us hame,
But, by my sooth! she'll wait a wee.

Wha first shall rise to gang awa,
A cuckold, coward loun is he!
Wha first beside his chair shall fa',
He is the king among us three!

(1789)

[11] watching. [12] wetted shirt-sleeve. [13] stalking. [14] breeches.
[1] malt. [2] live-long. [3] full. [4] little drop.
[5] dawn. [6] brew. [7] more. [8] sky. [9] entice.

Ae Fond Kiss

Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;
Ae fareweel, alas, forever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee;
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee!
Who shall say that Fortune grieves him
While the star of hope she leaves him?
Me, nae cheerfu' twinkle lights me;
Dark despair around benights me.

I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy:
Naething could resist my Nancy;
But to see her was to love her,
Love but her, and love forever.
Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never lovèd sae blindly,
Never met—or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Fare thee weel, thou first and fairest!
Fare thee weel, thou best and dearest!
Thine be ilka joy and treasure,
Peace, enjoyment, love, and pleasure!
Ae fond kiss, and then we sever!
Ae fareweel, alas, forever!
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee;
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee!

(pub. 1792)

Sweet Afton

1

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes![1]
Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise!
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream—
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream!

2

Thou stock dove whose echo resounds thro' the glen,
Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,
Thou green-crested lapwing, thy screaming forbear—
I charge you, disturb not my slumbering fair!

[1] hillsides.

3

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighboring hills,
Far marked with the courses of clear, winding rills!
There daily I wander, as noon rises high,
My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.

4

How pleasant thy banks and green vallies below,
Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow!
There oft, as mild Ev'ning weeps over the lea,
The sweet-scented birk[2] shades my Mary and me.

5

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,
And winds by the cot where my Mary resides!
How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,
As, gathering sweet flowerets, she stems thy clear wave!

6

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes!
Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays!
My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream—
Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream!

(1789)

The Banks o' Doon

The precision of Burns's art in the song is nowhere better exhibited than here. For all its lyric lightness, it is as neat as a classic in its economy. And the poignancy of the last line is perfect.

Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair?
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
And I sae weary fu' o' care?
Thou'lt break my heart, thou warbling bird,
That wantons through the flowering thorn;
Thou minds me o' departed joys,
Departed never to return.

Aft hae I roved by bonnie Doon,
To see the rose and woodbine twine;
And ilka bird sang o' its love,
And fondly sae did I o' mine.
Wi' lightsome heart I pu'd a rose,
Fu' sweet upon its thorny tree;
And my fause lover staw my rose,
But ah! he left the thorn wi' me.

(1791?)

[2] birch.

A Red, Red Rose

The extent to which Burns used old materials and lifted them from crudity to high art may be surmised by a comparison of this beautiful song with stanzas from two different older songs (in versions which he may or may not have known):

I

Her cheeks are like the roses
That blossom fresh in June;
O, she's like a new-strung instrument
That's newly put in tune.

II

The seas they shall run dry,
And rocks melt into sands;
Then I'll love you still, my dear,
When all these things are done.

To transform these sentiments as Burns transformed them is to be an original genius in every sense of the word.

O my Luve's like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
O my Luve's like the melodie
That's sweetly played in tune!

So fair art thou, my bonnie lass,
So deep in luve am I;
And I will luve thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry—

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
I will luve thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only Luve,
And fare thee weel a while!
And I will come again, my Luve,
Though it were ten thousand mile!

(pub. 1796)

Last May a Braw Wooer

1

Last May a braw wooer cam down the lang glen,
And sair wi' his love he did deave[1] me.
I said there was naething I hated like men:
The deuce gae wi'm[2] to believe me, believe me—
The deuce gae wi'm to believe me!

2

He spak o' the darts in my bonie black een,
And vowed for my love he was diein.
I said, he might die when he liket for Jean:
The Lord forgie me for liein, for liein—
The Lord forgie me for liein!

3

A weel-stocket mailen,[3] himself for the laird,
And marriage aff-hand were his proffers:
I never loot on that I kenned it, or cared,
But thought I might hae waur offers, waur offers—
But thought I might hae waur offers.

4

But what wad ye think? In a fortnight or less
(The Deil tak his taste to gae near her!)
He up the Gate-Slack to my black[4] cousin, Bess!
Guess ye how, the jad! I could bear her, could bear her—
Guess ye how, the jad! I could bear her.

5

But a' the niest[5] week, as I petted[6] wi' care,
I gaed to the tryste[7] o' Dalgarnock,
And wha but my fine fickle lover was there?
I glowered as I'd seen a warlock,[8] a warlock—
I glowered as I'd seen a warlock.

6

But owre my left shouther I gae him a blink,
Lest neebors might say I was saucy.
My wooer he capered as he'd been in drink,
And vowed I was his dear lassie, dear lassie—
And vowed I was his dear lassie!

7

I spiered[9] for my cousin fu' couthy[10] and sweet:
Gin she had recovered her hearin?
And how her new shoon fit her auld, shachled[11] feet?
But heavens! how he fell a swearin, a swearin—
But heavens! how he fell a swearin!

8

He beggèd for gude sake, I wad be his wife,
Or else I wad kill him wi' sorrow;
Sò e'en to preserve the poor body in life,
I think I maun wed him to-morrow, tomorrow—
I think I maun wed him to-morrow!

(pub. 1799)

[1] deafen. [2] with him. [3] farm. [4] dark complexioned. [5] next. [6] sulked. [7] fair. [8] wizard. [9] inquired. [10] kind. [11] shapeless.

Scots, Wha Hae

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace[1] bled,
Scots, wham Bruce[2] has aften led,
Welcome to your gory bed,
Or to victory!
Now's the day, and now's the hour;
See the front o' battle lour;
See approach proud Edward's[3] power—
Chains and slavery!

Wha will be a traitor knave?
Wha can fill a coward's grave?
Wha sae base as be a slave?
Let him turn and flee!
Wha for Scotland's king and law
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,
Freeman stand, or Freeman fa',
Let him follow me!

[1] Sir William Wallace (1274?-1305), who led the Scots to victory over the British in 1297.

[2] Robert Bruce (1274-1329), a Scottish national hero. He defeated the British at Bannockburn in 1314, and eventually became King Robert I.

[3] Both Edward I and Edward II of England are referred to in this line.

By oppression's woes and pains
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they shall be free!
Lay the proud usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!—
Let us do or die!

(1794)

Highland Mary

Ye banks and braes and streams around
The castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie!
There simmer first unfauld her robes,
And there the langest tarry;
For there I took the last fareweel
O' my sweet Highland Mary.

How sweetly bloomed the gay green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade
I clasped her to my bosom!
The golden hours on angel wings
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me as light and life
Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' monie a vow and locked embrace
Our parting was fu' tender;
And, pledging aft to meet again,
We tore ourselves asunder;
But oh! fell Death's untimely frost,
That nipped my flower sae early!
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,
What wraps my Highland Mary!

O pale, pale now, those rosy lips
I aft hae kissed sae fondly!
And closed for aye the sparkling glance
That dwelt on me sae kindly!
And mold'ring now in silent dust,
That heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary.

(1792)

A Man's a Man for A' That

Although Burns himself felt that this song was "not really poetry" it has been hailed as the world's most democratic poem. Burns's strong sympathies with the French Revolution are undoubtedly responsible for this, the first clear statement in English poetry of man's equality with all other men and of a hope for a society in which men shall at last be brothers.

Is there, for honest poverty,
That hings[1] his head, an' a' that?
The coward slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,
Our toils obscure, an' a' that;
The rank is but the guinea's stamp;
The man's the gowd[2] for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hodden-gray, an' a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
A man's a man for a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
Their tinsel show, an' a' that;
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie,[3] ca'd a lord,
Wha struts, an' stares, an' a' that;
Though hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof[4] for a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
His riband, star, an' a' that,
The man o' independent mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, an' a' that;
But an honest man's aboon[5] his might,
Guid faith he mauna fa' that![6]
For a' that, an' a' that,
Their dignities, an' a' that,
The pith o' sense, an' pride o' worth,
Are higher rank than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that,

[1] hangs. [2] gold. [3] fellow. [4] fool. [5] above.
[6] cannot lay claim to that.

That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree,[7] an' a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
It's coming yet, for a' that,
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that.

(1795)

O Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast

O wert thou in the cauld blast,
On yonder lea, on yonder lea,
My plaidie to the angry airt,[1]
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee;
Or did misfortunes bitter storms
Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,
Thy bield[2] should be my bosom,
To share it a', to share it a'.

Or were I in the wildest waste,
Sae black and bare, sae black and bare,
The desert were a paradise
If thou wert there, if thou wert there;
Or were I monarch o' the globe,
Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,
The brightest jewel in my crown
Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.

(1796)

[7] prize.
[1] direction of the wind; here means simply "wind."

Mary Morison

O Mary, at thy window be,
It is the wished, the trysted hour!
Those smiles and glances let me see,
That make the miser's treasure poor.
How blithely wad I bide the stoure,[1]
A weary slave frae sun to sun,
Could I the rich reward secure,
The lovely Mary Morison.

Yestreen, when to the trembling string
The dance gaed through the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,
I sat, but neither heard nor saw.
Tho' this was fair, and that was braw,
And yon the toast of a' the town,
I sighed, and said amang them a':
"Ye are na Mary Morison."

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
Wha for thy sake wad gladly die?
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
Whase only faut is loving thee?
If love for love thou wilt na gie,
At least be pity to me shown;
A thought ungentle canna be
The thought o' Mary Morison.

(pub. 1800)

[2] shelter.
[1] endure the conflict.

William Blake

(1757-1827)

The poetical career of William Blake is the nearest thing to an anomaly in the eighteenth century. Until the appearance of the poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge in the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798 there can be found no other poet who so completely broke with Augustan traditions. And, indeed, Blake is actually much more of a revolutionary against the Age of Reason than Wordsworth or Coleridge. Had he had anything of a public his verses might have caused a far greater stir than those of Burns, for he was advocating principles that would have rocked the foundations of the established order. But his quiet, uneventful life and his mystical mode of utterance left him generally unknown. Though he achieved a simplicity of diction that even Wordsworth could not rival, he cannot be shown to have had any important influence on the romantic poets. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that he was rediscovered. Many important histories of English literature of fifty years ago made no mention of him. Within our own time, however, he has been the object of much study and appreciation, and few poets have exercised a greater sway over twentieth-century poetry. If he was long ignored, he is now regarded by many as a major poet. Even some who cannot follow him through all the mazes of his mystical mythology would grant him this high place, and there have been no symptoms of an attempt to detract from such well-deserved admiration.

This man, who wrote with a "rural pen," spent all but three years of his life in the crowded city of London. His sunlit songs were written in cramped quarters in an unbeautiful part of the city. Though any human being with such a mind as his must have led a dynamic existence, there are no dramatic events to record in his biography. He was born on November 28, 1757, the third son of a dissenting hosier. The visions which he experienced throughout his life and which were as real to him as were the members of his own family, began early. When he was four he saw God "put his head to the window," and was set "a-screaming" in fright. A few years later, on his return home from a ramble through the open fields near London, he saw the prophet Ezekiel under a tree. Though he was beaten for reporting his visions, he continued to have them. A year later he saw a tree filled with angels, and soon after perceived the figures of angels walking among the haymakers at their work. His parents learned to respect the boy's sincerity and also to fear his terrible anger after physical punishment. For the latter reason, he was not sent to school. Reading, writing, and nothing more, he therefore learned at home. He was quick to learn, and the green field had much to teach him. Moreover, he was an auditor to much talk in his household over the mystical writings of Swedenborg, who had described with concrete detail the ordering of things in Heaven.

He was still a child when his bent for drawing was quite clear. It is recorded of him that he "became an artist at the age of ten, and a poet at the age of twelve." The remark is significant, for Blake never gave pre-eminence to his poetry over his engravings and paintings. And as he grew older he definitely chose to express his artistic side through the fine arts, reserving literature more for the delivery of his ideas. As an artist, he ranks high in the world, and is certainly one of England's greatest. His designs for Blair's *The Grave* and for *The Book of Job* are among the most inspired pieces of illustration ever made. In addition to drawings and engravings illustrative of the writings of others, he issued nearly all of his own compositions in volumes designed, decorated, and hand-colored by himself —each book itself a work of art.

When he was twenty-five he married a woman who could neither read nor write, Catherine Boucher, with whom he lived for the rest of his life in great happiness and close

understanding. In 1796 he received a commission to make the illustrations for Young's *Night Thoughts*. The mediocrity of the poems, which had been enjoying great popularity, was a vexation to his splendid imagination, and he toiled over them only to have the edition a failure. For a decade his reputation as an artist suffered an eclipse until he again won notice for his beautiful work on Blair's *The Grave*. But his disgust with the academies undid his favor with the public, and he sought its patronage no more. Alone, neglected, impoverished, but quite content with his life, Blake earned his living by executing all kinds of uninspiring orders until the painter John Linnell discovered him and engaged him to engrave the drawings Blake had already made for *The Book of Job*. After that series of masterpieces, Blake commenced a series on the *Divine Comedy*, but died before they were completed.

As a boy Blake's favorite reading was in the Elizabethans—Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis, Lucrece*, and *Sonnets*, and Ben Jonson's lyrics. In 1783 his friends published for him the *Poetical Sketches* (cf. *below*), which had been composed, as the advertisement states, by an "untutored youth, commencing in his twelfth and occasionally resumed by the author till his twentieth year." In their perfection these songs show a precocity even greater than Chatterton's. They stand unique among Blake's poetry for their clarity, for in them no mysticism is yet to be heard. This volume might well be taken as marking the year in which romanticism in English poetry had come into its own, were it not for the fact that the book had so limited a circulation. For here we find no neoclassic ingredients. Unlike Burns, Blake had no classic precepts or practices to throw off. He was completely unaffected by them. His voice is the fresh lyrical voice of the Elizabethan song-writers, celebrating with ease the unaffected feelings of joy and well-being.

From these Blake turned to incorporate his beliefs in the poems he now began to write. One might sum up those beliefs by saying that they stood in complete opposition to all that was axiomatically the truth for Dryden, Pope, Johnson, and their associates. Where they taught common sense, reason, moderation, conformity, urbanity, and standards, Blake advocated divine frenzy, inspiration, and excess. He detested restraint of every kind, and so spoke scathingly, as befitted a member of Godwin's circle, of orthodoxy in law and religion. The prophet Isaiah, he tells us, informed him "that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God." As for following ancient precept, he declared: "We do not want either Greek or Roman models if we are but just and true to our own imaginations." For him the highest virtue is the exercise of energy. "Energy is the only life," he said, and "is eternal delight." So far from urging a rational life, he bade men live in extremes. The evil principle which constrains and limits he called Reason. His was, thus, the completest revolt from the intellectual faith of his century.

Like Rousseau (cf. *above*), Blake looked upon man's primitive state as the condition in which he was most at peace with himself before social institutions corrupted him. The *Songs of Innocence* (cf. *below*), published in 1789, is a series of poems which show the soul complete and fulfilling itself, uncontaminated by the world of experience. For this purpose Blake employed the setting and simplicity of childhood. These, perhaps his most perfect poems, flow like clear water in the sunlight.

In *The Book of Thel*, of the same year, Blake shows the soul "standing on the threshold of experience," shrinking in fear from the lot which it knows to be the destiny of mortal existence. The *Songs of Experience* (cf. *below*), published in 1794, find the soul already exposed to evil and the knowledge of cruelty and death. In them Blake compressed some of the most startlingly vivid and powerful images in our literature. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (cf. *below*), issued probably in 1793, shows innocence and experience, Good and Evil, Body and Soul united in their contradictions, as is essential to human life. "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul," Blake avers in the opening pages.

So far any reader with imagination can follow Blake. Even without his mystical point of view, we nevertheless can understand his meaning because of the vividness and beauty of his lines. Thereafter, in his later "prophetic books," it is difficult to penetrate with him

the labyrinth of his inspirations. In *America* (1793), *Europe* (1794), *The Book of Urizen* (1794), *The Book of Los* (1795), *Milton* (1804-09), *Jerusalem* (1804-20), and others, there are many wonderful flashes of powerful images and lightninglike truths. But the elaborate mythology which he evolved for himself and his indifference to clarity make it neither possible nor inviting to decipher his meaning. Osbert Burdett has well analyzed his failure: "To endeavor, as Blake was to endeavor, to make the sublime the foundation instead of the crown of poetry is to sacrifice the means to the end, to rebuild the Tower of Babel, and to incur the penalty of confusion. In place of the epic temple that he promised we have sublime ruins." The artistic discipline which during the same years enabled him to create masterpieces of engraving was not applied to these poetic works. It is true that scholarship has done much to illuminate the "prophetic books" of Blake, but it is unlikely that they will supersede *Poetical Sketches*, *Songs of Innocence*, and *Songs of Experience* in the affection of the public. For in these poems, although the mystic speaks as ever with symbols, the images are sharply defined and their meaning discoverable. The process of evaluating Blake still continues, however, and it may be that at a later time works now obscure will seem clear. If so, it would not be the first occasion in which the intuitive methods of a mystic have attained a goal that logic has had painfully to struggle to overtake.

There are many good biographies of Blake. The early two-volume work of A. Gilchrist (1863) remains an important source-book. Other excellent biographies have been written by Swinburne (1868), G. K. Chesterton (1910), S. F. Damon (1924), O. Burdett (1926), M. Wilson (1927), and T. Wright (1929). There are two elaborate editions of his writings, one by E. J. Ellis and W. B. Yeats in three volumes (1893), and another in three volumes by G. Keynes (1927). Important studies are D. Figgis's *The Paintings of William Blake* (1925), D. Saurat's *Blake and Modern Thought* (1929), M. Plowman's *An Introduction to the Study of Blake* (1927), and the annotated edition of *The Prophetic Writings of William Blake* made by D. J. Sloss and J. P. R. Wallis (1926).

Poetical Sketches (1783)

The wonderful first fruits of Blake's poetic genius in the *Poetical Sketches* exhibit him as purely the artist at a time when he was still content to make exquisite song untouched by burning mysticism. Most of the lyrics in this collection might have come from some rich Elizabethan miscellany. The simple directness of the language, the lightness of the music, and the clarity and vividness of the pictures had not been known to English poetry since the days of Shakespeare.

Before he was fourteen he had already written the poignant song, *How sweet I roamed*; it is interesting to note in the third stanza of this poem a hint of the intensity that was to characterize his later lyrics. But what is more important to mark is how completely in all the *Poetical Sketches* the youthful Blake had freed himself from every neoclassical shackle. The volume was the first to reawaken the English muse to her heritage of limpid song.

Song

How sweet I roamed from field to field
And tasted all the summer's pride,
Till I the Prince of Love beheld
Who in the sunny beams did glide!

He showed me lilies for my hair,
And blushing roses for my brow;
He led me through his gardens fair
Where all his golden pleasures grow.

With sweet May dews my wings were wet,
And Phœbus[1] fired my vocal rage;
He caught me in his silken net,
And shut me in his golden cage.

He loves to sit and hear me sing,
Then, laughing, sports and plays with me;
Then stretches out my golden wing,
And mocks my loss of liberty.

Song

My silks and fine array,
My smiles and languished air,
By love are driv'n away;
And mournful lean Despair
Brings me yew to deck my grave:
Such end true lovers have.

His face is fair as heaven,
When springing buds unfold;
O why to him was't given
Whose heart is wintry cold?
His breast is love's all-worshiped tomb,
Where all love's pilgrims come.

Bring me an axe and spade,
Bring me a winding-sheet;
When I my grave have made
Let winds and tempest beat:
Then down I'll lie as cold as clay
True love doth pass away!

[1] the sun.

Mad Song

The wild winds weep,
And the night is a-cold;
Come hither, Sleep,
And my griefs unfold:
But lo! the morning peeps
Over the eastern steeps,
And the rustling beds of dawn
The earth do scorn.

Lo! to the vault
Of pavèd heaven,
With sorrow fraught,
My notes are driven:
They strike the ear of night,
Make weep the eyes of day;
They make mad the roaring winds,
And with tempests play.

Like a fiend in a cloud,
With howling woe
After night I do crowd,
And with night will go;
I turn my back to the east
From whence comforts have increased;
For light doth seize my brain
With frantic pain.

To the Muses

Whether on Ida's[1] shady brow
  Or in the chambers of the East,
The chambers of the sun, that now
  From ancient melody have ceased;

Whether in heaven ye wander fair,
  Or the green corners of the earth,
Or the blue regions of the air
  Where the melodious winds have birth;

Whether on crystal rocks ye rove,
  Beneath the bosom of the sea,
Wandering in many a coral grove,
  Fair Nine, forsaking Poetry—

How have you left the ancient love
  That bards of old enjoyed in you!
The languid strings do scarcely move;
  The sound is forced, the notes are few.

[1] Mount Ida, near Troy, beloved of the Muses.

Songs of Innocence (1789)

The *Songs of Innocence* are Blake's most perfect poetic achievement. In them he was able to find complete expression for what he had to say, and there is none of the confusion of his later works where his poetic means were inadequate to convey his message. Beautiful as these songs are, some measure of delight is denied to us who cannot read them in the edition Blake illustrated and colored with his own hand. Now worth a small fortune, it was little prized by his contemporaries when it sold for five shillings a volume. Each of these, made with the assistance of his loving wife, was a harmonious entity, as lovely as some old illuminated manuscript. Frances Winwar's description is fitting: "Designs of flowers and child faces and innocent figures flowing with the grace of growing plants filled the margins, all in delicate wild-flower tints. If the angels read in Heaven, it must be such books they read."

As with the poems themselves, these books have had no imitators. For no other English poet, except Rossetti, has been gifted with genius also in the fine arts. "He sang his songs to his own music," Arthur Symons notes, "and thus, while he lived, he was the complete realization of the poet in all his faculties, and the only complete realization that has ever been known."

The *Songs of Innocence* are, of course, not "children's poems." They are a picture of the soul's perfect condition of existence, when it is at one with itself—the condition which Blake mirrors as a state of childhood. No experience of Evil has yet come to draw the soul out of its Eden.

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

The Lamb

  Little Lamb, who made thee?
  Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life and bid thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
  Little Lamb, who made thee?
  Dost thou know who made thee?

  Little Lamb, I'll tell thee;
  Little Lamb, I'll tell thee:
He is callèd by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb.
He is meek, and he is mild;
He became a little child.
I a child, and thou a lamb,
We are callèd by his name.
  Little Lamb, God bless thee!
  Little Lamb, God bless thee!

Infant Joy

"I have no name;
I am but two days old."
—What shall I call thee?
"I happy am;
Joy is my name."
—Sweet joy befall thee!

Pretty joy!
Sweet joy, but two days old;
Sweet joy I call thee:
Thou dost smile:
I sing the while,
Sweet joy befall thee!

A Cradle Song

Sweet dreams, form a shade
O'er my lovely infant's head!
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams
By happy, silent, moony beams!

Sweet sleep, with soft down
Weave thy brows an infant crown.
Sweet sleep, Angel mild,
Hover o'er my happy child!

Sweet smiles, in the night
Hover over my delight;
Sweet smiles, mother's smile,
All the livelong night beguile.

Sweet moans, dovelike sighs,
Chase not slumber from thy eyes.
Sweet moans, sweeter smile,
All the dovelike moans beguile.

Sleep, sleep, happy child,
All creation slept and smiled;
Sleep, sleep, happy sleep,
While o'er thee thy mother weep.

Sweet babe, in thy face
Holy image I can trace.
Sweet babe, once like thee,
Thy Maker lay and wept for me:

Wept for me, for thee, for all,
When He was an infant small.
Thou His image ever see,
Heavenly face that smiles on thee!

Smiles on thee, on me, on all;
Who became an infant small.
Infant smiles are His own smiles;
Heaven and earth to peace beguiles.

Laughing Song

When the green woods laugh with the voice of joy,
And the dimpling stream runs laughing by;
When the air does laugh with our merry wit,
And the green hill laughs with the noise of it;

When the meadows laugh with lively green,
And the grasshopper laughs in the merry scene;
When Mary and Susan and Emily
With their sweet round mouths sing "Ha ha he!"

When the painted birds laugh in the shade,
Where our table with cherries and nuts is spread,
Come live, and be merry, and join with me,
To sing the sweet chorus of "Ha ha he!"

The Little Black Boy

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O my soul is white!
White as an angel is the English child,
But I am black, as if bereaved of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree,
And, sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissèd me,
And, pointing to the east, began to say:

"Look on the rising sun;—there God does live,
And gives his light, and gives his heat away;
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noon-day.

"And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love;
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

"For when our souls have learned the heat to bear,
The cloud will vanish, we shall hear his voice,

Saying: 'Come out from the grove, my love and care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.'"

Thus did my mother say, and kissèd me;
And thus I say to little English boy,
When I from black, and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,

I'll shade him from the heat, till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our father's knee;
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.

Songs of Experience (1794)

In the *Songs of Experience*, the soul "has eaten of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and left its Eden for ever." It has lost its unity and is at war with itself between Good and Evil. Just as the *Songs of Innocence* were sung in a happy Paradise, the *Songs of Experience* are sung in a disillusioned Hell. In the former, the lamb was the symbol of innocence or goodness, in this the tiger is the symbol of experience or evil; to the meekness of one is opposed the fearfulness of the other, though each is depicted as beautiful in its own province. So, too, may be contrasted the cradle songs in each series: the first celebrates the "Holy image" and the heavenly smiles of the infant, the second tells of the "cunning wiles" and "dreadful lightnings" sleeping in the infant's heart.

It would be a pity to miss the power in some of these lines because of the simplicity of the diction and the verse-form. *The Tiger,* if read attentively, will reveal images terrible in their concentrated heat. *The Clod and the Pebble* speaks a truth that is tragic to those who must accept love from the proud. And it is the very disarming quality of the cadences of the *Cradle Song* which makes the terror of the fourth stanza more startling. The greatness of the art in these poems is that their outward sunniness conceals their stormy intent.

The Clod and the Pebble

'Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.'

So sung a little clod of clay,
Trodden with the cattle's feet,
But a pebble of the brook
Warbled out these meters meet:

'Love seeketh only self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.'

The Tiger

Tiger! tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burned the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tiger! tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Ah, Sunflower

Ah, Sunflower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the sun,
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the traveler's journey is done—

Where the youth pined away with desire,
And the pale virgin, shrouded in snow,
Arise from their graves, and aspire
Where my sunflower wishes to go!

A Poison Tree

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I watered it in fears
Night and morning with my tears,
And I sunnèd it with smiles
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright,
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,—

And into my garden stole
When the night had veiled the pole;
In the morning, glad, I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

A Little Boy Lost

'Nought loves another as itself,
Nor venerates another so,
Nor is it possible to thought
A greater than itself to know.

'And, father, how can I love you
Or any of my brothers more?
I love you like the little bird
That picks up crumbs around the door.'

The priest sat by and heard the child;
In trembling zeal he seized his hair,
He led him by his little coat,
And all admired the priestly care.

And standing on the altar high,
'Lo, what a fiend is here!' said he:
'One who sets reason up for judge
Of our most holy mystery.'

The weeping child could not be heard,
The weeping parents wept in vain:
They stripped him to his little shirt,
And bound him in an iron chain,

And burned him in a holy place
Where many had been burned before;
The weeping parents wept in vain.
Are such things done on Albion's[1] shore?

Cradle Song

Sleep! sleep! beauty bright,
Dreaming o'er the joys of night;
Sleep! sleep! in thy sleep
Little sorrows sit and weep.

Sweet Babe, in thy face
Soft desires I can trace,
Secret joys and secret smiles,
Little pretty infant wiles.

As thy softest limbs I feel,
Smiles as of the morning steal
O'er thy cheek, and o'er thy breast
Where thy little heart does rest.

O! the cunning wiles that creep
In thy little heart asleep.
When thy little heart does wake
Then the dreadful lightnings break

From thy cheek and from thy eye,
O'er the youthful harvests nigh.
Infant wiles and infant smiles
Heaven and Earth of peace beguiles.

[1] England's.

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1793?)

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* the opposing conditions of existence, sung respectively in *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, are wedded as they are in life. Body and soul are united, as in the marvelous drawing Blake later made for Blair's *The Grave*. The soul thus recaptures its lost happiness and completeness. *A Song of Liberty* is an exalted pæan of its final triumph.

Proverbs of Hell

In seed time learn, in harvest teach, in winter enjoy.

Drive your cart and your plow over the bones of the dead.

The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.

Prudence is a rich, ugly old maid courted by Incapacity.

He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence.

The cut worm forgives the plow.

Dip him in the river who loves water.

A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.

He whose face gives no light shall never become a star.

Eternity is in love with the productions of time.

The busy bee has no time for sorrow.

The hours of folly are measur'd by the clock; but of wisdom, no clock can measure.

All wholesome food is caught without a net or a trap.

Bring out number, weight, and measure in a year of dearth.

No bird soars too high, if he soars with his own wings.

A dead body revenges not injuries.

The most sublime act is to set another before you.

If the fool would persist in his folly he would become wise.

Folly is the cloak of knavery.

Shame is Pride's cloak.

Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion.

The pride of the peacock is the glory of God.

The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.

The wrath of the lion is the wisdom of God.

The nakedness of woman is the work of God.

Excess of sorrow laughs. Excess of joy weeps.

The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, and the destructive sword are portions of eternity, too great for the eye of man.

The fox condemns the trap, not himself.

Joys impregnate. Sorrows bring forth.

Let man wear the fell of the lion, woman the fleece of the sheep.

The bird a nest, the spider a web, man friendship.

The selfish, smiling fool, and the sullen, frowning fool shall be both thought wise, that they may be a rod.

What is now proved was once only imagin'd.

The rat, the mouse, the fox, the rabbit watch the roots; the lion, the tiger, the horse, the elephant watch the fruits.

The cistern contains: the fountain overflows.

One thought fills immensity.

Always be ready to speak your mind, and a base man will avoid you.

Everything possible to be believ'd is an image of truth.

The eagle never lost so much time as when he submitted to learn of the crow.

The fox provides for himself, but God provides for the lion.

Think in the morning. Act in the noon. Eat in the evening. Sleep in the night.

He who has suffer'd you to impose on him, knows you.

As the plow follows words, so God rewards prayers.

The tigers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction.

Expect poison from the standing water.

You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough.

Listen to the fool's reproach! it is a kingly title!

The eyes of fire, the nostrils of air, the mouth of water, the beard of earth.

The weak in courage is strong in cunning.

The apple tree never asks the beech how he shall grow; nor the lion, the horse how he shall take his prey.

The thankful receiver bears a plentiful harvest.

If others had not been foolish, we should be so.

The soul of sweet delight can never be defil'd.

When thou seest an Eagle, thou seest a portion of Genius; lift up thy head!

As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys.

To create a little flower is the labor of ages.

Damn braces. Bless relaxes.

The best wine is the oldest, the best water the newest.

Prayers plow not! Praises reap not!

Joys laugh not! Sorrows weep not!

The head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty, the hands and feet Proportion.

As the air to a bird or the sea to a fish, so is contempt to the contemptible.

The crow wish'd everything was black, the owl that everything was white.

Exuberance is Beauty.

If the lion was advised by the fox, he would be cunning.

Improvement makes straight roads; but the crooked roads without Improvement are roads of Genius.

Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires.

Where man is not, nature is barren.

Truth can never be told so as to be understood, and not be believ'd.

Enough! or Too much.

A Song of Liberty

1. The Eternal Female groan'd! it was heard over all the Earth.

2. Albion's coast is sick, silent; the American meadows faint!

3. Shadows of Prophecy shiver along by the lakes and the rivers, and mutter across the ocean: France, rend down thy dungeon!

4. Golden Spain, burst the barriers of old Rome!

5. Cast thy keys, O Rome, into the deep down falling, even to eternity down falling,

6. And weep.

7. In her trembling hands she took the new born terror, howling.

8. On these infinite mountains of light, now barr'd out by the Atlantic sea, the new born fire stood before the starry king!

9. Flag'd with grey brow'd snows and thunderous visages, the jealous wings wav'd over the deep.

10. The speary hand burned aloft, unbuckled was the shield; forth went the hand of jealousy among the flaming hair, and hurl'd the new born wonder thro' the starry night.

11. The fire, the fire is falling!

12. Look up! look up! O citizen of London, enlarge thy countenance! O Jew, leave counting gold! return to thy oil and wine. O African! black African! (go, winged thought, widen his forehead.)

13. The fiery limbs, the flaming hair, shot like the sinking sun into the western sea.

14. Wak'd from his eternal sleep, the hoary element roaring fled away.

15. Down rush'd, beating his wings in vain, the jealous king; his grey brow'd counsellors, thunderous warriors, curl'd veterans, among helms, and shields, and chariots, horses, elephants, banners, castles, slings, and rocks.

16. Falling, rushing, ruining! buried in the ruins, on Urthona's dens;

17. All night beneath the ruins; then, their sullen flames faded, emerge round the gloomy king.

18. With thunder and fire, leading his starry hosts thro' the waste wilderness, he promulgates his ten commands, glancing his beamy eyelids over the deep in dark dismay,

19. Where the son of fire in his eastern cloud, while the morning plumes her golden breast,

20. Spurning the clouds written with curses, stamps the stony law to dust, loosing the eternal horses from the dens of night, crying:

EMPIRE IS NO MORE! AND NOW THE LION AND WOLF SHALL CEASE.

CHORUS

Let the Priests of the Raven of dawn no longer, in deadly black, with hoarse note curse the sons of joy. Nor his accepted brethren—whom, tyrant, he calls free—lay the bound or build the roof. Nor pale religious lechery call that virginity that wishes but acts not!

For everything that lives is Holy.

Stanzas from *Milton*

And did those feet in ancient time
  Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
  On England's pleasant pastures seen?

And did the Countenance Divine
  Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
  Among these dark Satanic mills?

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
  Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
  Bring me my chariot of fire!

I will not cease from mental fight,
  Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
  In England's green and pleasant land.

(pub. 1804)

Auguries of Innocence

To see the world in a grain of sand,
  And a heaven in a wild flower;
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,
  And eternity in an hour.

(c. 1801-3)

Love's Secret

Never seek to tell thy love,
  Love that never told shall be;
For the gentle wind does move
  Silently, invisibly.

I told my love, I told my love,
  I told her all my heart,
Trembling, cold, in ghastly fears.
  Ah! she did depart!

Soon after she was gone from me,
  A traveller came by,
Silently, invisibly:
  He took her with a sigh.

(c. 1793)

George Crabbe

(1754-1832)

Much read and admired in his own time, somewhat forgotten in the blaze created by the geniuses who came after him, but more recently restored to his just place as an admirable poet, George Crabbe was really a transitional figure. He was at once the last of Pope's imitators and a forerunner of Wordsworth. With the pre-romantic and romantic poets with whom we have dealt he has little in common. Indeed, he set himself the task of confuting their imaginative excursions, and preferred, throughout his career, to write in the old heroic couplet. On the other hand, he was fairly free from the false elegance and abstractness of diction of the later neoclassicists, and had a strictly non-Augustan interest in the portraiture of simple human beings. His poetry, if never on the wing, is solid in its honesty and closeness to the facts of life. In this, his particular gift, he resembles Wordsworth, who praised him for the "truth" of what he wrote.

He was born in the sordid little seacoast town of Aldeburgh, in Suffolk, the son of a petty revenue officer who could not afford to give his children much of an education. Aldeburgh, so intimately connected with Crabbe's poetry, has been described by the poet's son, his first biographer, as consisting of "two parallel and unpaved streets, running between mean and scrambling houses, the abodes of sea-faring men, pilots, and fishers." Crabbe's earliest attempts to escape from the poverty and brutality of his environment were doomed to failure. He tried his hand at various occupations—as apprentice to an apothecary, a laborer on the quay, and a surgeon. Disheartened, he left Aldeburgh with a scant purse, and journeyed to London to try his luck as a writer. After a time there,

when he was at the end of his resources, he wrote to Burke for assistance. The latter generously took him into his home, introduced him to his friends, and procured a publisher for Crabbe's *The Library* (1781), after the poet had failed of success with *Inebriety* (1775) and *The Candidate* (1780). Through Burke's influence Crabbe, having taken orders, was appointed chaplain to the Duke of Rutland.

He uncovered his true literary bent as a result of his displeasure with Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*. Only too familiar with the squalor and misery of his own birthplace, Crabbe was angered at the rural felicity of "sweet Auburn." To blast Goldsmith's picture of peace and beauty, Crabbe wrote a long poem, *The Village* (cf. *below*), to show the country as he knew it. With bitter heart he spoke of the "thin harvest," the "rank weeds," the "sullen woe displayed in every face," the ignorance of country folk and their arduous labors. All that can be said of this difference of approach is that both Goldsmith and Crabbe were right, and that each chose to select such aspects of the country as suited his temperament. Crabbe was closed to the imaginative sympathy of Goldsmith, just as the latter was somewhat blind to the grimness that Crabbe presents.

That old foe of the rosy pastoral, Samuel Johnson, was delighted with *The Village*, and called it "original, vigorous, and elegant." Before its publication in 1783, he revised it for Crabbe but said: "The alterations which I have made, I do not require him to adopt; for my lines are, perhaps, not often better [than] his own." The volume established Crabbe's reputation, and he followed it in 1785 with *The Newspaper*. It is surprising to learn that for the next twenty-two years Crabbe published nothing. He wrote much during this period, but was chiefly occupied with raising his family, and it is said that he consigned most of his efforts to the fire, to the great delight of his small sons. Among his works thus lost were three novels that did not please his wife. At last, in 1807, he appeared in print again with *The Parish Register*. This, *The Borough* (1810), and *Tales in Verse* (1812) were widely read. His last book was *Tales of the Hall* (1819). A number of posthumous *Tales* were published by his son in 1834.

Among Crabbe's great admirers have been men so dissimilar as Burke, Johnson, Reynolds, Fox, Wordsworth, Byron, Scott, and Lamb. He made at least four distinct contributions to literature: his was the first attempt to see the country realistically; he was among our earliest penetrators into the psychology of human conduct; he was one of the first writers to recognize the shaping power of environment on the human character; and, because of all these and of his interest in narrative, he did much to further the development of fiction (i.e. the novel and the short story).

The chief source-book for Crabbe's biography has been *The Life and Poems of the Reverend George Crabbe by his son* (George Crabbe), which was re-edited by E. M. Forster (1933). Good editions of his poems are those of A. W. Ward, in three volumes (1905), and A. F. and R. M. Carlyle, in one volume (1914). A. Ainger's *Crabbe* (1903) is an interesting study.

The Village

BOOK I

The village life, and every care that reigns
O'er youthful peasants and declining swains;
What labor yields, and what, that labor past,
Age, in its hour of languor, finds at last;
What form the real picture of the poor,
Demand a song—the Muse can give no more.

Fled are those times when, in harmonious strains,
The rustic poet praised his native plains.[1]
No shepherds now, in smooth alternate verse,
Their country's beauty or their nymphs' rehearse;
Yet still for these we frame the tender strain,
Still in our lays fond Corydons complain,
And shepherds' boys their amorous pains reveal,

[1] Cf. Virgil's *Eclogues*, Vol. I, pp. 247-8.

The only pains, alas! they never feel.
On Mincio's[2] banks, in Cæsar's bounteous reign,
If Tityrus found the Golden Age again,
Must sleepy bards the flattering dream prolong,
Mechanic echoes of the Mantuan song?
From Truth and Nature shall we widely stray,
Where Virgil, not where Fancy, leads the way?
Yes, thus the Muses sing of happy swains
Because the Muses never knew their pains.
They boast their peasants' pipes; but peasants now
Resign their pipes and plod behind the plough;
And few amid the rural tribe have time
To number syllables and play with rhyme.
Save honest Duck,[3] what son of verse could share
The poet's rapture and the peasant's care?
Or the great labors of the field degrade
With the new peril of a poorer trade?
From this chief cause these idle praises spring,
That themes so easy few forbear to sing,
For no deep thought the trifling subjects ask;
To sing of shepherds is an easy task.
The happy youth assumes the common strain,
A nymph his mistress and himself a swain;
With no sad scenes he clouds his tuneful prayer,
But all, to look like her, is painted fair.
I grant indeed that fields and flocks have charms
For him that grazes or for him that farms;
But when amid such pleasing scenes I trace
The poor laborious natives of the place,
And see the midday sun, with fervid ray,
On their bare heads and dewy temples play;
While some, with feebler heads and fainter hearts,
Deplore their fortune yet sustain their parts,
Then shall I dare these real ills to hide
In tinsel trappings of poetic pride?
No; cast by fortune on a frowning coast
Which neither groves nor happy valleys boast,
Where other cares than those the Muse relates,
And other shepherds dwell with other mates:
By such examples taught, I paint the cot
As Truth will paint it, and as bards will not;
Nor you, ye poor, of letter'd scorn complain;
To you the smoothest song is smooth in vain.
O'ercome by labor and bow'd down by time,
Feel you the barren flattery of a rhyme?
Can poets soothe you when you pine for bread
By winding myrtles round your ruin'd shed?
Can their light tales your weighty griefs o'erpower,
Or glad with airy mirth the toilsome hour?

Lo! where the heath, with withering brake grown o'er,
Lends the light turf that warms the neighboring poor;
From thence a length of burning sand appears,
Where the thin harvest waves its wither'd ears;
Rank weeds that every art and care defy
Reign o'er the land and rob the blighted rye:
There thistles stretch their prickly arms afar
And to the ragged infant threaten war;
There poppies nodding mock the hope of toil;
There the blue bugloss paints the sterile soil;
Hardy and high above the slender sheaf
The slimy mallow waves her silky leaf;
O'er the young shoot the charlock throws a shade,
And clasping tares cling round the sickly blade;
With mingled tints the rocky coasts abound,
And a sad splendor vainly shines around.
So looks the nymph whom wretched arts adorn,
Betray'd by man, then left for man to scorn,
Whose cheek in vain assumes the mimic rose
While her sad eyes the troubled breast disclose;
Whose outward splendor is but folly's dress,
Exposing most when most it gilds distress.
Here joyless roam a wild amphibious race,
With sullen woe displayed in every face,
Who far from civil arts and social fly
And scowl at strangers with suspicious eye.
Here too the lawless merchant of the main[4]
Draws from his plough th' intoxicated swain;
Want only claim'd the labor of the day,
But vice now steals his nightly rest away.
Where are the swains who, daily labor done,
With rural games play'd down the setting sun,
Who struck with matchless force the bounding ball
Or made the ponderous quoit obliquely fall;
While some huge Ajax,[5] terrible and strong,
Engaged some artful stripling of the throng
And fell beneath him, foil'd, while far around
Hoarse triumph rose and rocks return'd the sound?
Where now are these? Beneath yon cliff they stand
To show the freighted pinnace where to land,
To load the ready steed with guilty haste,
To fly in terror o'er the pathless waste,
Or, when detected in their straggling course,
To foil their foes by cunning or by force,
Or, yielding part (which equal knaves demand),
To gain a lawless passport through the land.
Here, wandering long amid these frowning fields,
I sought the simple life that Nature yields.

[2] Virgil's home was at Mantua on an island in the river Mincio.
[3] Stephen Duck, the thresher poet, patronized by Queen Caroline, wife of George II.
[4] smuggler. [5] a Homeric hero noted for his strength.

Rapine and Wrong and Fear usurp'd her place,
And a bold, artful, surly, savage race
Who, only skill'd to take the finny tribe,
The yearly dinner or septennial bribe,
Wait on the shore and, as the waves run high,
On the tossed vessel bend their eager eye
Which to their coast directs its venturous way—
Theirs, or the ocean's, miserable prey.
As on their neighboring beach yon swallows stand
And wait for favoring winds to leave the land,
While still for flight the ready wing is spread,
So waited I the favoring hour, and fled,
Fled from these shores where guilt and famine reign,
And cried "Ah! hapless they who still remain,
Who still remain to hear the ocean roar,
Whose greedy waves devour the lessening shore
Till some fierce tide, with more imperious sway,
Sweeps the low hut and all it holds away,
When the sad tenant weeps from door to door
And begs a poor protection from the poor."
But these are scenes where Nature's niggard hand
Gave a spare portion to the famish'd land;
Hers is the fault if here mankind complain
Of fruitless toil and labor spent in vain.
But yet in other scenes more fair in view,
Where Plenty smiles—alas! she smiles for few,
And those who taste not yet behold her store
Are as the slaves that dig the golden ore,
The wealth around them makes them doubly poor.
Or will you deem them amply paid in health,
Labor's fair child, that languishes with wealth?
Go then, and see them rising with the sun,
Through a long course of daily toil to run;
See them beneath the dog-star's raging heat,
When the knees tremble and the temples beat;
Behold them, leaning on their scythes, look o'er
The labor past, and toils to come explore;
See them alternate suns and showers engage,
And hoard up aches and anguish for their age;
Through fens and marshy moors their steps pursue
When their warm pores imbibe the evening dew;
Then own that labor may as fatal be
To these thy slaves as thine excess to thee.
Amid this tribe too oft a manly pride
Strives in strong toil the fainting heart to hide;
There may you see the youth of slender frame
Contend with weakness, weariness, and shame;
Yet, urged along, and proudly loath to yield,
He strives to join his fellows of the field,
Till long-contending nature droops at last,
Declining health rejects his poor repast,
His cheerless spouse the coming danger sees,
And mutual murmurs urge the slow disease.
Yet grant them health, 'tis not for us to tell,
Though the head droops not, that the heart is well;
Or will you praise that homely, healthy fare,
Plenteous and plain, that happy peasants share?
Oh! trifle not with wants you cannot feel,
Nor mock the misery of a stinted meal—
Homely, not wholesome, plain, not plenteous, such
As you who praise would never deign to touch.
Ye gentle souls who dream of rural ease,
Whom the smooth stream and smoother sonnet please,
Go, if the peaceful cot your praises share,
Go look within, and ask if peace be there:
If peace be his—that drooping weary sire,
Or theirs, that offspring round their feeble fire,
Or hers, that matron pale, whose trembling hand
Turns on the wretched hearth the expiring brand!
Nor yet can time itself obtain for these
Life's latest comforts, due respect and ease;
For yonder see that hoary swain whose age
Can with no cares except his own engage,
Who, propp'd on that rude staff, looks up to see
The bare arms broken from the withering tree
On which, a boy, he climb'd the loftiest bough,
Then his first joy, but his sad emblem now.
He once was chief in all the rustic trade;
His steady hand the straightest furrow made;
Full many a prize he won, and still is proud
To find the triumphs of his youth allowed.
A transient pleasure sparkles in his eyes,
He hears and smiles, then thinks again and sighs,
For now he journeys to his grave in pain;
The rich disdain him—nay, the poor disdain;
Alternate masters now their slave command,
Urge the weak efforts of his feeble hand,
And when his age attempts its task in vain,
With ruthless taunts of lazy poor, complain.
Oft may you see him when he tends the sheep,
His winter-charge, beneath the hillock weep;
Oft hear him murmur to the winds that blow
O'er his white locks and bury them in snow,
When, roused by rage and muttering in the morn,
He mends the broken hedge with icy thorn:
"Why do I live, when I desire to be
At once from life and life's long labor free?
Like leaves in spring the young are blown away
Without the sorrows of a slow decay;
I, like yon wither'd leaf, remain behind
Nipp'd by the frost and shivering in the wind;

There it abides till younger buds come on,
As I, now all my fellow-swains are gone;
Then, from the rising generation thrust,
It falls, like me, unnoticed to the dust.
"These fruitful fields, these numerous flocks I see,
Are others' gain, but killing cares to me;
To me the children of my youth are lords,
Cool in their looks but hasty in their words;
Wants of their own demand their care: and who
Feels his own want and succors others too?
A lonely wretched man, in pain I go;
None need my help and none relieve my woe;
Then let my bones beneath the turf be laid,
And men forget the wretch they would not aid."
Thus groan the old till, by disease oppress'd,
They taste a final woe, and then they rest.
Theirs is yon house that holds the parish poor,
Whose walls of mud scarce bear the broken door;
There where the putrid vapors, flagging, play,
And the dull wheel hums doleful through the day—
There children dwell who know no parents' care,
Parents who know no children's love, dwell there!
Heart-broken matrons on their joyless bed,
Forsaken wives and mothers never wed,
Dejected widows with unheeded tears,
And crippled age with more than childhood fears,
The lame, the blind, and—far the happiest they!—
The moping idiot and the madman gay.
Here too the sick their final doom receive,
Here brought, amid the scenes of grief, to grieve,
Where the loud groans from some sad chamber flow,
Mix'd with the clamors of the crowd below;
Here, sorrowing, they each kindred sorrow scan,
And the cold charities of man to man,
Whose laws indeed for ruined age provide,
And strong compulsion plucks the scrap from pride;
But still that scrap is bought with many a sigh,
And pride embitters what it can't deny.
Say ye, oppress'd by some fantastic woes,
Some jarring nerve that baffles your repose,
Who press the downy couch while slaves advance
With timid eye to read the distant glance,
Who with sad prayers the weary doctor tease
To name the nameless ever-new disease,
Who with mock patience dire complaints endure
Which real pain, and that alone, can cure;
How would ye bear in real pain to lie
Despised, neglected, left alone to die?
How would ye bear to draw your latest breath
Where all that's wretched paves the way for death?
Such is that room which one rude beam divides,
And naked rafters from the sloping sides;
Where the vile bands that bind the thatch are seen,
And lath and mud are all that lie between,
Save one dull pane that, coarsely patch'd, gives way
To the rude tempest, yet excludes the day.
Here on a matted flock, with dust o'erspread,
The drooping wretch reclines his languid head;
For him no hand the cordial cup applies,
Or wipes the tear that stagnates in his eyes;
No friends with soft discourse his pain beguile,
Or promise hope till sickness wears a smile.
But soon a loud and hasty summons calls,
Shakes the thin roof and echoes round the walls;
Anon a figure enters, quaintly neat,
All pride and business, bustle and conceit,
With looks unalter'd by these scenes of woe,
With speed that, entering, speaks his haste to go,
He bids the gazing throng around him fly
And carries fate and physic in his eye:
A potent quack, long versed in human ills,
Who first insults the victim whom he kills,
Whose murderous hand a drowsy bench protect,
And whose most tender mercy is neglect.
Paid by the parish for attendance here,
He wears contempt upon his sapient sneer;
In haste he seeks the bed where Misery lies,
Impatience mark'd in his averted eyes;
And, some habitual queries hurried o'er,
Without reply, he rushes on the door.
His drooping patient, long inured to pain,
And long unheeded, knows remonstrance vain;
He ceases now the feeble help to crave
Of man, and silent sinks into the grave.
But ere his death some pious doubts arise,
Some simple fears which "bold bad" men despise;
Fain would he ask the parish priest to prove
His title certain to the joys above;
For this he sends the murmuring nurse, who calls
The holy stranger to these dismal walls.
And doth not he, the pious man, appear,
He, "passing rich with forty pounds a year"?[6]
Ah! no. A shepherd of a different stock,
And far unlike him, feeds this little flock:
A jovial youth who thinks his Sunday's task
As much as God or man can fairly ask;
The rest he gives to loves and labors light,
To fields the morning, and to feasts the night;
None better skill'd the noisy pack to guide,
To urge their chase, to cheer them or to chide;
A sportsman keen, he shoots through half the day,
And, skill'd at whist, devotes the night to play.

[6] a reference to the village preacher in Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*; cf. Vol. I, p. 796, line 142.

Then, while such honors bloom around his head,
Shall he sit sadly by the sick man's bed
To raise the hope he feels not, or with zeal
To combat fears that e'en the pious feel?
  Now once again the gloomy scene explore,
Less gloomy now: the bitter hour is o'er;
The man of many sorrows sighs no more.
Up yonder hill, behold how sadly slow
The bier moves winding from the vale below;
There lie the happy dead, from trouble free,
And the glad parish pays the frugal fee.
No more, O Death, thy victim starts to hear
Churchwarden stern or kingly overseer;
No more the farmer claims his humble bow;
Thou art his lord, the best of tyrants thou!
  Now to the church behold the mourners come,
Sedately torpid and devoutly dumb.
The village children now their games suspend
To see the bier that bears their ancient friend,
For he was one in all their idle sport
And like a monarch ruled their little court:
The pliant bow he form'd; the flying ball,
The bat, the wicket were his labors all;
Him now they follow to his grave, and stand
Silent and sad and gazing, hand in hand,
While, bending low, their eager eyes explore
The mingled relics of the parish poor.
The bell tolls late, the moping owl flies round,
Fear marks the flight and magnifies the sound;
The busy priest, detain'd by weightier care,
Defers his duty till the day of prayer,
And, waiting long, the crowd retire distressed
To think a poor man's bones should lie unblessed.

(1783)

THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

England, the French Revolution, and Germany

THE industrial revolution of the eighteenth century (cf. Vol. I, p. 745) powerfully altered the social character of England. As the factory system evolved, economic specialization encouraged mechanical invention for the uses of industry; mass production developed to fill the needs of expanding markets. The capitalist middleman assumed a more and more significant role in national life. Businessmen, having for some time past purchased their way into the ranks of the landowning class, now had the power to rule the country whose wealth they were making. The private craftsman, eliminated by the machine, and the small farmer, dispossessed by the large enclosures, drifted to the towns to work, in dependence on the manufacturer, for wages. Cities multiplied their populations many times. Life being cheap and unskilled labor plentiful, the bourgeoisie advanced increasingly toward an assertion of their philosophy of individualism, in which profit-taking and economic enterprise involved no obligations to their employees or to society in general. Of the actual deprivations of the working classes and of their augmenting wretchedness the writers of the Romantic Movement took only occasional cognizance. It was not from the wage-earners, who received little education and no leisure for self-cultivation, that poets and authors sprang. The romanticists knew little about factory towns, and were on the whole too sensitive to wish to know more from direct experience. Charles Lamb, for example, who, by exception, was a wage-earner himself, employed his genius as an *escape* from the humdrum world of business. But, more important, the romantic writers were actively concerned with the *theories* of freedom being expounded in France. Theory precedes practice, and the principles of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity were yet to be established as social ideals before any well-directed efforts could be made to alleviate the lot of the poor. Moreover, until the urban working population created by industry could become self-conscious and vocal, their grievances could not be brought before the country. That was a task that awaited the Victorians. Until later, then, the workers remained largely outside literature, neither figuring in it nor reading it, except when mentioned by such a poet as Thomas Hood (cf. *below*).

The struggle of the liberals in England during the early decades of the nineteenth century, therefore, was not so much for practical solution of social and economic problems as for achieving greater liberty from the government and for moving toward universal suffrage. The French Revolution and its principles became, indeed, the focus of English thought from the fall of the Bastille in 1789 to the fall of Napoleon in 1815; and long thereafter the issues were still a force with which to reckon. For as the Revolution progressed, governmental reaction stiffened. From 1783 to 1830 the Tories, except for one brief interval, were in power; and these years fairly include

the entire duration of the Romantic Movement. The lines between liberals and conservatives were sharply defined. We have already seen how Paine (cf. Vol. I, p. 812), Godwin (cf. Vol. I, p. 816), Burns (cf. Vol. II, p. 55), and Blake (cf. Vol. II, p. 74) were strong partisans of the democratic cause. The first generation of romantic poets—Wordsworth (1770-1850), Coleridge (1772-1834), and Southey (1774-1843)—all began as vigorous advocates of republicanism. Wordsworth's imagination was first powerfully awakened by his experiences in France during the crucial years of 1791-92; and when England went to war with France in 1793 his sympathies were with his country's enemy. Southey and Coleridge, excited by hopes for a better world, in 1794 formed plans for a new society to be instituted across the Atlantic. As the Revolution ran its course, however, all three suffered a change of heart. When, in 1798, the *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth and Coleridge appeared, and thus marked what is generally considered the opening of the Romantic Period, both poets, as well as Southey, were already retreating to conservatism. Nor did any of them pause until he had gone the full distance.

Their abjuration of the Revolution was symptomatic of the reversal of opinion among most liberals. Of the second generation of romantic poets only Shelley (1792-1822) maintained complete optimism for revolutionary principles. Byron (1788-1824) was assuredly an iconoclast, but his philosophy was a negative one. Keats (1795-1821) felt that political matters and ideals had no place in great poetry. Scott (1771-1832), a man of Wordsworth's generation, was frankly a prop of feudal ideals. By the time Byron, Shelley, and Keats were young men, the French Revolution had already been converted to the purposes of the Napoleonic empire. Conservatism fixed upon Napoleon, product of the Revolution, as the great enemy of England; and English foreign policy was based on the simple objective of frustrating his ambitions. These new poets, consequently, began to write in an intellectual atmosphere of despair over the possibility of emancipating society. That atmosphere, besides, was conditioned not only by the collapse of revolutionary hopes in France but by the new philosophy and literature of Germany as well.

German literature had for a long time been of no consequence. Indeed, the true birth of modern German letters occurred as late as the eighteenth century. Even under the enlightened Frederick the Great, German writers received little encouragement, the emperor being far more interested in the language and literary models of the country of Voltaire. French neoclassicism held undisputed sway, and German authors had been sedulously aping French originals. The causes of the slow birth of German literature, however, are chiefly to be sought in the political structure of the land. For it would be more correct to speak of "Germanies" than a Germany in the eighteenth century; the territory was divided into many petty states of varying size and population, each with its prince, who, in most cases, ruled his province with an iron hand. Each little state maintained its court and its army, at the cost of oppressive taxes. Freedom of expression and of thought were entirely discouraged; and the standardization toward which French neoclassicism tended, as well as its aristocratic tone, were all the more welcome at German courts. As revolutionary doctrine became elaborated in France, young men in Germany naturally hungered for it as a hope of liberation. Like the French, they too turned to English literature

for guidance, and the pre-romantic nature poets—Thomson, Gray, Macpherson—had a considerable vogue among them (cf. Vol. II, p. 39). But Shakespeare especially was like a bright light shining upon their world of darkness. To the German romanticists he seemed to be the perfect proof of Rousseauistic teaching—the natural genius, achieving sublimity without the aid of books or classical dogma, by the simple direction of his gifts and of Nature.

Lessing (1729-1781), by his penetrating criticism of French drama and his vigorous preference for Shakespeare in the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1767-68), helped make the first cracks in the neoclassical ice. The young Schiller, undergoing what amounted to incarceration during his compulsory attendance at the military academy of the Duke of Würtemburg, found in Shakespeare a release from an intolerable routine, and the fountain at which he first drank literary inspiration. Shakespeare, in truth, became something of a midwife to German literature; and the enormous quantity of German Shakespearean commentary is a testimonial to his importance to the country. National consciousness was now awakened in writers, and the tocsin was sounded by an extravagant play by the dramatist Klinger, *Sturm und Drang* (i.e. Storm and Stress) in 1776, a call to free German letters from their shackles. The ensuing period has been since called the era of *Sturm und Drang*. Leaders of the new movement were J. G. Herder (1744-1803), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), and J. C. F. von Schiller (1759-1805).

But from the beginning the German romantic revolt was frustrate. The trammels of political oppression were impossible to break, and the *Sturm und Drang* epoch was one of despair and pessimism. Two types of heroes evolved as an expression of this defeatism. One, to be found in Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (cf. *below*), was the oversensitive man, crushed by the pain and cruelty of life. The other, exemplified by the hero of Schiller's *The Robbers* (cf. *below*), was the strong man of stormy passions who, refusing to succumb to an evil and knavish society, wages eternal war against it.

As the hopes of English liberals in the French Revolution were thwarted, these two kinds of heroes, who had already appealed to the sentimental, became more and more common in English poetry. Echoes of suffering over "world sorrow" (in the manner of Werther) are to be found throughout the pages of the second generation of English romantic poets. And the titanic hero (as in Schiller's *The Robbers*), battling against Fate and society, was recreated again and again by Byron, and formed something of a model for the poet's own life.

On the philosophical side, too, the English romantic movement received considerable impetus from Germany. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), student of Locke and Hume, gave the basis for romanticism in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), by challenging the power of reason to penetrate to ultimate reality. Kant's followers further elaborated upon this supersensual world of reality. Man was thus depicted as essentially nonintellectual. His instinctive, intuitive life is his truer one. Thus, as J. H. Randall sums up the final implications of this school of philosophy: "The poet or the saint is a truer and better guide on the pathway of life and thought than the scientist. Religion, morals, art, literature, social and political philosophy, and education should recognize this fundamental fact and build upon it. Religion is not a

science to be demonstrated, but a matter of the heart, a life to be lived. . . . Art is not a matter of form and structure, but of rich sentiment and feeling. Society is not a cold-blooded enterprise founded on self-interest, but a vast organism pressing onward to realize dimly seen ideals." It was this train of speculation which influenced the literary theories and opinions of Coleridge (cf. *below*), who furnished the Romantic Movement some of its fundamental doctrine.

The First Generation of Romantics

William Wordsworth is the first great figure of the Romantic Movement, the man who gave English poetry a new vision of Nature. Born and educated in the Lake District, he imbibed in youth impressions which were to supply inspiration for his long career. As a young man he was a disciple of Rousseau and an enthusiast for the French Revolution. Disillusioned by the success of Napoleon, he was still in his twenties when he renounced his earlier hopes of regenerating humanity through politics. His volume issued jointly with Coleridge, the *Lyrical Ballads*, appeared in 1798. By that year he had already decided to find in the realm of sensibility and the imagination the means for affirming his hopes for mankind. The insignificant events of country life, the thoughts and talk of children, the feelings evoked by natural scenery, the simple tragedies of the humble—these were his chosen subjects for poetry. And for them he employed the language of plain people, rejecting the conventional "poetic diction" of Pope and his school. His poetic theories were announced to the world in the important *Preface* (cf. *below*) which he wrote to the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. Living, as did Coleridge and Southey, in the Lake country (for which reason all three are known as the "Lake Poets"), Wordsworth remained constant to Rousseauistic teaching (cf. Vol. II, pp. 42-44) by turning to Nature for his philosophic education. He came, mystically, to understand and perceive a unity in all things, and to discover in Nature an anchor and a guide for his moral ideas. Those ideas he intended to expound in a monumental work to be called *The Recluse*; of it he wrote only the long fragments known as *The Recluse* (1800), *The Prelude* (1798-1805)—the record of the growth of his mind (cf. *below*), and *The Excursion* (1797-1814)—a refutation of the pessimism engendered by the failure of the French Revolution. It is chiefly, however, in a number of shorter poems, homely and profound, the product of recollection and experience, that Wordsworth's mystical insight has expressed itself in poetic perfection. The diary of his sister, Dorothy Wordsworth (cf. *below*), is a vivid commentary on some of the occasions which blossomed in these poems.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, his close friend, whose genius ignited and was ignited by Wordsworth's, was a poet of sublime gifts. His personal weaknesses prevented him from doing himself full justice, however, and his high place is retained by only a handful of poems—any one of which, nonetheless, would have assured its author immortality. It was agreed between them that Wordsworth's task was to transfigure ordinary occurrences by the light of imagination; Coleridge's poetry was to do the reverse—to find that "semblance of truth sufficient to procure for [the] . . . shadows

of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith." *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (cf. *below*) is as remarkable for the amazing veracity achieved in a story of fantastic invention as are the simple details of Wordsworth's lines. This magical poem, like the strange witch-tale, *Christabel* (cf. *below*), shows the strong influence upon Coleridge of the old ballads. Opium, German metaphysics, love of talk, and lack of self-confidence eventually killed his impulse to create poetry. But the transfiguring quality of his imagination and his marvelous command over the music of verse prove him to have been second to none of the romantic poets in genius. His later years were devoted to lecture and criticism, profoundly affected by his studies of Kantian philosophy; he lost the gift of poetic creation, but he became one of the chief critics of the Romantic Movement.

Neither Wordsworth nor Coleridge received the measure of recognition accorded to their industrious friend Robert Southey, whose verse few people now read. Though he was an assiduous writer, kept to his task both by his love of letters and by the desire to care for his family, it is true that he won admiration out of proportion to his gifts, which were vastly inferior to those of his fellow Lake Poets. He was, nevertheless, a much more companionable man than Wordsworth or Coleridge; and his cheerful good-naturedness still brings him readers—though more in his letters and his prose than in his poetry. In his youth he was very much the revolutionist, was expelled from school, read Rousseau and Goethe, and evolved with Coleridge plans for a perfect society. When still young he wrote, in an inflammatory strain, *Wat Tyler* and *Joan of Arc*, both full of references to the French Revolution. Recovering from his radical fervor after his marriage to Coleridge's sister-in-law, who adored her handsome husband, he embarked upon a career more remarkable for its prolific output than for genius. He set himself the ambitious project of "exhibiting all the more important and poetical forms of mythology which have at any time obtained among mankind, by making each the groundwork of an heroic poem." Parts of this plan were realized in a series of epics: *Thalaba* (1801), set in Arabia; *Madoc* (1805), in Mexico; *The Curse of Kehama* (1801), in India; and *Don Roderick* (1814), in Spain. These poems, written with great facility and dexterity, if with no deep poetic insight, exhibit the romantic interest in exotic lands. Southey also wrote a number of ballads. Although in 1813 he was made Poet Laureate, his compositions after his fortieth year were mostly in prose. He compiled huge histories and miscellanies, and wrote frequently for the *Quarterly Review* (1808-39). Of his prose works the best are the whimsical miscellany, *The Doctor* (1834-47), and the biographies of Nelson (1813) and John Wesley (1820). A virile author, his wholesomeness, love of fun, hard work, and devotion to his family render him attractive even when we cannot rate his books very high. Their importance is historical, rather than artistic, and they demonstrate the more obvious aspects of romanticism.

Similar strictures must be made upon the work of Sir Walter Scott (cf. *below*). Early an enthusiastic student of the old ballads, he published a collection of them, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-03), an important supplement to Percy's *Reliques*. He next turned to the composition of historical narrative poems for which he at once received considerable acclaim; *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), *Marmion* (1808), *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), and *Rokeby* (1813) show his romantic

reverence (exhibited also in his private life) for the feudal past and chivalric lore. Vigorous and martial, Scott is still an interesting, though not a great, poet. Upon the appearance of Byron on the literary horizon, he willingly abandoned the field to a superior rival and turned to the writing of novels, in which he had an even greater success. In them his love of historic pageantry was further exploited (cf. p. 188, *below*).

But neither Scott with his inventiveness nor Southey with his facile balladry and adventures in the exotic can be allowed the highest praise as writers, for they both fall short of the greater gifts of some of their contemporaries. What, then, it now devolves upon us to ask, is the quintessence of romanticism at its best? The answer to that question has been too often essayed for us to hope that we can satisfactorily settle the matter. It is simple enough to describe the attributes of writers whom the world recognizes as "romantic"; that we have already done (Vol. II, p. 4). It is equally simple to point out among the works included in the following pages: how the romantic revulsion against the authority of Reason is exhibited in Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* and *Expostulation and Reply*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, Byron's *Prisoner of Chillon*, Shelley's *To a Skylark*, Keats's *Lamia*, Lamb's *Popular Fallacies*, or De Quincey's *Suspiria de Profundis*; how the romantic appreciation of natural beauty is to be found in Wordsworth's *The Prelude* and *I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud*, Dorothy Wordsworth's *Recollections*, Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*, Byron's *Childe Harold*, Shelley's *The Cloud* and *Ode to the West Wind*, or Keats's *To Autumn* and *Ode to a Nightingale*; how the romantic interest in the country and country folk is to be seen in Wordsworth's *Michael*, or Hazlitt's *On Going a Journey*; how the romantic love of the past is demonstrated in Wordsworth's *The Solitary Reaper*, Coleridge's *Christabel*, Scott's *Pibroch of Donald Dhu*, Byron's *Don Juan*, Shelley's *Ozymandias*, Keats's *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, or Landor's *Pentameron*; how the romantic concern with other lands is to be shown in Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, Byron's *The Destruction of Sennacherib*, Shelley's *The Indian Serenade*, or Landor's *Pericles to Aspasia*; how the romantic element of melancholy is an ingredient in Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimations of Immortality*, Coleridge's *Dejection*, Scott's *Proud Maisie*, Byron's *Stanzas for Music* and *Manfred*, Shelley's *Mutability* and *Adonais*, Keats's *Ode on Melancholy*, Landor's *Rose Aylmer*, Lamb's *Dream Children*, or De Quincey's *Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow*; and how all the poems we have mentioned indicate the abandonment of the heroic couplet. Many of these romantic qualities, indeed, can be discovered all in one work: a long poem like Byron's *Manfred* or a short one like Wordsworth's *The Solitary Reaper* could be shown to possess every romantic trait we have enumerated. But the unifying point of view behind all these manifestations is not so easy to state. It is true that the Romantic Movement was something of a conscious protest—against the superstructure of civilization (as with Wordsworth), the tyranny of Reason (as with Coleridge), the lack of color in modern life (as with Scott), middle-class respectability (as with Byron), the evils of contemporary society (as with Shelley), or the prosaic quality of everyday living (as with Keats). These rebellions indicate that the romanticist, unlike the Addisonian author (whose perfect milieu was the calm sense and good manners of a drawing room), was primarily an individualist, seeking to impose his own values on his public. Why, then, were these

romantic values so many-sided? The answer would seem to be that the romanticist typically looked at life and nature not with the common-sense objectivity of the neoclassicist, but always imaginatively. Everything he saw or heard was at once invested with the radiance of his imagination. Thus, a neoclassicist's thoughts on a tree would be likely to lead him to speak of its affording "a pleasant shade." A romanticist, however, would see the tree clothed in imaginative association; the mind of Wordsworth could associate it with the slow march of Time (*Yew Trees*), that of Coleridge with the tropical luxuriance of Eastern lands (*Kubla Khan*), that of Scott with the merry hunting parties of olden times (*Hunting Song*), that of Shelley with the changing social order (*Ode to the West Wind*), and that of Keats with the "embalmed darkness" of woods in mid-May (*Ode to a Nightingale*).

This imaginative approach of the romanticist is characteristic not only of his subject matter but of his style as well. Nothing could be less valid than the oft-heard distinction between romanticist and neoclassicist: that the former was interested only in *what* he had to say and the latter in *how* he said it. Shelley was in no degree less concerned with the perfection of his style than was Pope, nor on purely stylistic grounds can he be deemed less of a master. But a distinction between the methods of these two poets can certainly be made. Pope, having decided on the criteria of a perfect style (normally, with him, the heroic couplet), will adapt what he has to say to the limits of that style; Shelley, on the other hand, will approach the question of style imaginatively; for him the problem will be to find the perfect technique for expressing what he has to say. Thus, the romanticist is ever led to employ a variety of poetic techniques. Such an elastic view of form is discoverable in prose-writers as well as poets. Clarity and lucidity, all-important ideals for Addison and Swift, become no longer the highest virtues in romantic prose. If intuitive meanings, beyond the scope of mere common sense, are to be communicated, the clear, sharp outlines of neoclassical prose must be dimmed and rendered flexible. Whereas the neoclassical poet tried to achieve the rational tone of prose in his verse, the romanticist will try to achieve the imaginativeness of poetry in his prose. Even the vocabulary of the romanticist is garbed in imaginative connotation. By a neoclassicist like Swift each word was employed in a precise, a "dictionary" meaning; romanticists prefer to use words for their overtones, their associations, their power of suggestion.

It is not strange, therefore, that the leading romantic prose-writers, Charles Lamb (1775-1834), William Hazlitt (1778-1830), and Thomas De Quincey (1785-1859) should have been on intimate terms with the Lake Poets—and indeed have left some valuable records of their friendships. Lamb, however, spent most of his life as a clerk in a business office in the city of London, whose romantic qualities he was one of the earliest writers to explore. If he is thus, alone of the romantic group, little concerned with the country, his love of the town has nothing in common with the Augustan preference for it as a center of culture. He throbs to the warmth and color of London, to its sounds and sights, to its humanity. In him we find, also, the romanticists' rediscovery of the Elizabethans. His *Specimens of the English Dramatic Poets* (1808) was a successful attempt to reawaken interest in a period largely ignored by the Augustans. A devotee of the quaint and the antique, he was an enthusiastic adventurer among forgotten books. His favorite authors were Sir Thomas Browne

and Robert Burton, the echoes of whose cadences and diction may be heard in his own pages. Like Hazlitt and De Quincey, Lamb won immortality for himself not through any ambitious work but through a series of essays which appeared in periodicals. The best of them, collected under the titles of *The Essays of Elia* (cf. *below*) and *The Last Essays of Elia* (cf. *below*), are perhaps the favorite familiar essays in English. In his essays and letters, Lamb's affections and prejudices, sentiment and wit, kindliness and whimsicality, all reflect for us one of the most lovable men in our literature.

His friend, William Hazlitt, was made of more passionate stuff. A man with a very wide range of interests, he wrote with zest and vigorous opinion on all kinds of subjects. His *The Round Table* (1817), *Table Talk* (1821-22), and *The Plain-Speaker* (1826), if less charming than Lamb, contain some of the finest essays in our language for their variety and virility. His appreciations of literature, particularly the Elizabethan, are admirable for their taste and quick sympathy, as is attested by his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), *Lectures on the English Poets* (1818), *Lectures on the English Comic Writers* (1819), and *Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* (1820).

Thomas De Quincey, indefatigable writer and studious bookworm, is most famous for his perfection of a prose that partakes of most of the characteristics of poetry. It is in his records of his visions while under the influence of opium, as in *Suspiria de Profundis* (cf. *below*) and *The English Mail-Coach* (cf. *below*), that we find his poetic prose at its most characteristic. His autobiographical *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1812) inaugurated the series which reveals his dreams, and it contains, like his *Reminiscences of the English Lake Poets*, psychological studies of his literary friends.

A transitional figure is Walter Savage Landor (1775-1864). Though there were strong elements of romanticism in his own make-up, he was a sincere worshiper of the classics, and professed to have little sympathy with the exuberance of his romantic contemporaries. But his reverence for classic art did not come by way of the Augustans; he loved the productions of Greece and Rome, and approached them with an enkindled imagination which the "polite" eighteenth century would never have understood. It was the spirit, as much as the form, of the ancients which charmed him, and his *Hellenics* (cf. *below*) are remarkable for their fidelity to "antique" beauty. On some occasions Landor's subjects were frankly romantic, as in the Oriental poetic tale of *Gebir* (1798); but even there his classical desire for conciseness is exhibited in the style. In his absorbingly interesting revelations of the souls and times of historical personages, the *Imaginary Conversations, Pericles to Aspasia* (cf. *below*), and *The Pentameron* (cf. *below*), his prose has something of the clarity and also the grandeur of the ancient masters of rhetoric. The topic of these conversations, however, is often romantic and imaginative, and certainly as much of Landor is unfolded to us as of the persons of these fragmentary dramas.

An important part of literary history in the early nineteenth century is connected with the establishment of reviews. On October 10, 1802, the initial number of the *Edinburgh Review* appeared. Immediately successful, this first magazine to feature literary discussion was edited by the Whig, Francis Jeffrey, a man of liberal views

and a stubborn rationalist, who had no objection to the more superficial aspects of romanticism, but could not tolerate the mystical outpourings of the Lake Poets and their disciples. In February 1809, under the tutelage of the conservative Scott, a rival Tory publication appeared, the *Quarterly Review*, of which the leading spirits were William Gifford, Robert Southey, and John G. Lockhart. Some years later, in 1817, a second Tory magazine was launched, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, with some of the same staff as the *Quarterly*, but far more relentless in its Toryism. The presiding geniuses of *Blackwood's* were John Wilson and John G. Lockhart; they looked with favor on the now conservative Wordsworth, the feudal Scott, and the aristocratic Byron. With Coleridge they had little patience. But it was against the liberal Hazlitt, Leigh Hunt (cf. *below*), and the latter's disciple Keats that their vituperative fury was unleashed. Shelley, who received three bitter attacks from the *Quarterly*, was damned by silence from the liberal *Edinburgh Review*, which treated Keats in much the same fashion. On the whole, however, all three magazines showed little disposition to direct opinion. They admired what was safe to admire, and attacked what was not likely to be defended. And hence flows their historical importance. For, reading them, we procure a fairly accurate picture of the reading public's tastes and prejudices.

The Second Generation of Romantic Writers

Byron (1788-1824), Shelley (1792-1822), and Keats (1795-1821) began to write in a post-Napoleonic world. The French Revolution was over, had apparently failed, and the forces of reaction were triumphant in Europe. The despair of Werther's frustration or of the Robber's defiance was more congenial than ever to an atmosphere that could nourish little hope for humanity's liberation. Already the revolutionists of an earlier day, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, were complete converts to conservatism and willing props to the *status quo*. Consequently the younger poets in this second generation of romanticism rebelled more fiercely than had their predecessors. There is a quality of greater intensity and passion in what they wrote, and one has the feeling that all three, short-lived as they were, consumed themselves with their own heat.

Byron, unfortunate in his parents and early environment, and limited by a physical defect, felt himself marked out for an ironic fate even when he was but a youth. Insanely proud, mordantly witty, fatally handsome, he began his career in the disdainful role of a dilettante with a volume of verse, *Hours of Idleness* (1807). Treated as he deserved by the *Edinburgh Review*, he retaliated with a brilliant satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809). After a journey to Spain and the East, he published the first two cantos of *Childe Harold* (cf. *below*), and became famous overnight. In this poem he introduced through his hero the first of a series of self-portraits, to be met with in many of his later poems—the disillusioned man, living, like the hero of *The Robbers*, in revolt against society. Such are the heroes of *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *The Siege of Corinth*, *Parisina*—all romantically laid in an exotic setting—and *Manfred* (cf.

below), *Cain,* and others. Less because he had hoped much for humanity than because he despised the smug order of his day, he scoffed at Tories, befriended liberals like Leigh Hunt, lived like a roisterer with such friends as Tom Moore (cf. *below*), deliberately outraged the conventional by his cynicisms and loose talk. Perhaps his most shocking literary crime was his making the first murderer, Cain, the hero of a drama that is intended to enlist our sympathies against God. His last major work, *Don Juan* (cf. *below*), is a strange mixture of exalted poetry and malicious satire—a fine expression of the duality of his nature. None of his contemporaries succeeded in making so powerful an appeal as he to the public—not only in his flair for striking the perfect pose for the times, but also on account of his effectively chosen subjects. His greatest weakness, because of which he has continually lost ground, was his fatal facility, which made revision or artistic care tedious to him. He has, nevertheless, been the most popular of the English romanticists on the Continent.

Completely dissimilar in character was the man whose friendship Byron enjoyed, Percy Bysshe Shelley. The foundation of Byron's revolt was pride, that of Shelley's was love. Renouncing in his youth the comforts of a well-established country gentleman's home, he devoted himself to the cause of human emancipation. Inspired by Godwin's teachings on the perfectibility of the human race, Shelley's wonderful imagination was fired by visions of how happy humanity could yet be. His *Queen Mab,* written at the age of twenty-one, contains a picture of that better day; his *The Revolt of Islam,* five years later, proves that the French Revolution was only premature, but not finally lost. And his masterpiece of 1820, *Prometheus Unbound* (cf. *below*), a hymn of triumph over oppression, sets forth the means by which humanity shall be free—the force of all-encompassing love. Touched with such inner harmony as "is in immortal souls," Shelley's beautiful nature was understood by no one—though Byron had some apprehension of it. It was the same love which urged him to aid the cause of Irish freedom as a boy, involved him in an unwise marriage, and entangled the rest of his brief life in tragedy. It was the same spirit which enabled him to become one with nature: with the lark in *To a Skylark* (cf. *below*), with the wind in *Ode to the West Wind* (cf. *below*), with the cloud in *The Cloud* (cf. *below*). In all things he found assurance of man's progress. Thus, tinged though Shelley's work is with the melancholy of the era, he was fundamentally the one great optimist among his contemporaries. An incomparable master of magical imagery and music, Shelley's command over verse is fully equal to the enthusiasm of his thoughts. The one persistent note in his poetry is ethereal rapture; his lines always take wing, whether he writes of unattainable beauty in *Alastor* (1816), of the life of the soul in *Epipsychidion* (cf. *below*), of his sorrow over the death of his fellow poet Keats in *Adonais* (cf. *below*), or of the dramatic story of Beatrice Cenci in his poetic tragedy *The Cenci* (1819). Social poet though he believed himself to be, Shelley stands in the eyes of his admirers as one of the greatest of our nature poets—a genius of such sensibility and subtlety that he could penetrate into the very heart of nature and put into words truths that seem to be beyond expression.

John Keats, whose life was even briefer than that of his elegist, Shelley, was a poet who turned away from the problems of society to celebrate imperishable beauty.

Like the painter, the sculptor, and the musician, he sought for loveliness of line, color, form, and sound. His verse is richly laden with stores of tangible beauties. Unlike Shelley, he never scorns the earth, and to him Nature, mankind, and art were but spheres of keen esthetic experience. In Greek marbles or vases (cf. *Ode on a Grecian Urn, below*), an Elizabethan translation of Homer (cf. *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer, below*), a Greek legend (cf. *Endymion, below*), a medieval superstition (cf. *The Eve of St. Agnes, below*), the autumn (cf. *To Autumn, below*), a star (cf. *Bright Star, below*), or a bird's song (cf. *Ode to a Nightingale, below*), his "pole star" was ever the same, beauty. Perhaps no poet before him "brings together," as M. Legouis says, "so many riches in a single line or a single stanza."

The Novel during the Romantic Period

The nineteenth century witnessed the complete collapse of drama as literature. A number of the great poets, it is true, wrote in the dramatic form. Wordsworth's *The Borderers,* Coleridge's *Remorse,* Southey's *Wat Tyler* and his *The Fall of Robespierre* (written with Coleridge) are early examples. Byron wrote a number of plays, and two of his best works, *Manfred* (cf. *below*) and *Cain* are dramas. Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* is generally considered his masterpiece, and his tragedy *The Cenci* has been called the finest since Otway. But none of these, however interesting to read, with the possible exception of *The Cenci*—and that has rarely been attempted by actors—is possible to present in the theatre. On the other hand, the new plays which held the boards are wholly unreadable and cannot be considered seriously as worthy of preservation.

The novel, however, which had made promising beginnings in the eighteenth century (cf. Vol. I, pp. 625-629), continued to make notable advances through the pre-romantic period. Under the influence of the French revolutionary philosophers, and of Rousseau in particular, a crop of radical novels appeared: Robert Bage's *Man As He Is* (1792) and *Hermsprong, or Man As He Is Not* (1796); Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* (1792) and *Hugh Trevor* (1794); Mrs. Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) and *Nature and Art* (1796); and, best of them (cf. Vol. I, p. 818), William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) and *St. Leon* (1799). Meanwhile the novel of terror and mystery, the so-called "Gothic novel," had been inaugurated by Horace Walpole (cf. Vol. I, p. 831) in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764). Employing Walpole's medieval trappings, Clara Reeve wrote *The Old English Baron* (1777). Of this school, however, the climax is to be seen in Anne Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), and *The Italian* (1797), which delighted Europe with tremors of horror over the persecutions of a fair heroine in dark dungeons and winding corridors of medieval buildings. Mrs. Radcliffe had a feeling for authentic romantic effects in nature and background, and always maintained an impeccable moral tone. But Matthew Gregory Lewis won even greater success by piling horror upon horror in his novel *The Monk* (1796), and introducing considerable licentiousness into the framework of his story. The best of the terror-novels is *Vathek* (1784), originally written in French by its author, William Beckford, and later translated into English. Beckford was a kind of forerunner

of Byron, a true romanticist himself who, despite a huge fortune, could not find happiness and so spent his days in despairing misanthropy. *Vathek,* modeled on Voltaire's romances, is perhaps the finest piece of Orientalism produced in England during the eighteenth century. It is a remarkable mixture of the sardonic, the grotesque, the witty, and the terrible; but its concluding description of Hell is almost Miltonic in its grandeur.

These novels of terror constituted an important element in the hastening of the Romantic Movement. In the early years of the century, Matthew ("Monk") Lewis continued his stories of violence with *Tales of Terror* (1800), *Tales of Wonder* (1801), and *Romantic Tales* (1808). Charles Maturin, an Irish clergyman, continued the tradition with *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820). Mary Shelley wrote what became the most famous of these novels in her highly Rousseauistic *Frankenstein.*

During the Romantic Period the two greatest novelists were Sir Walter Scott and Jane Austen (1775-1817). The former's novels we discuss below in connection with his poetry. Miss Austen, one of the most delightful and engaging of English novelists, was no friend of the romanticists. Her *Northanger Abbey* (1798?), in fact, was deliberately anti-romantic in purpose, and intended as a burlesque on the Radcliffe school of terror-novels. The daughter of a Hampshire clergyman, she set herself the task of writing about the minor affairs of village life which she knew from personal experience. Lively, graceful, with a calmly rational view of life, Jane Austen is a true descendant of Addison. It was a tiny blade she wielded against what she conceived to be romantic nonsense and pretense, but a sharp one. *Sense and Sensibility* (1797?) is a witty counterpoise to the sentimental traditions of love; her heroine finds happiness through calm sense, while her butt, the heroine's sister, encounters only wretchedness because she stipulates for rapture. *Pride and Prejudice* (1797?), generally agreed to be her masterpiece, is a brilliant study of the manners of a small community, and is a lesson on the necessity of not judging by appearances. Her other novels, *Mansfield Park* (1814?), *Emma* (1814?), and *Persuasion* (1815-16) are all admirable comedies, lively, often brilliant, yet confined in their milieu, and full of sanity and sound judgment. Jane Austen is, in a fashion, the last of the Augustans.

Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849) wrote some pleasant novels, rich in sympathy for the people of her native Ireland. *Castle Rackrent* (1800), *The Absentee* (1810), and *Ormond* (1817) are the best of these.

Among the many general studies for the Romantic Movement we recommend: E. Bernbaum's *A Guide through the Romantic Movement* (1930); A. C. Bradley's *English Poetry and German Philosophy in the Age of Wordsworth* (1909); *The Cambridge History of English Literature,* Vols. XII and XIII (1917); W. L. Courthope's *History of English Poetry,* Vol. VI (1910); E. Dowden's *Studies in Literature, 1789-1877* (1878); O. Elton's *A Survey of English Literature, 1780-1880,* Vols. I and II (1920); C. H. Herford's *The Age of Wordsworth* (1930); D. Masson's *Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats,* etc. (1875); E. Railo's *The Haunted Castle* (1927); G. Saintsbury's *A History of Nineteenth Century Literature* (1896) and *Essays in English Literature, 1780-1860* (1895); Mrs. H. Sandford's *Thomas Poole and His Friends* (1888); Sir Leslie Stephen's *Hours in a Library,* (3 vols., 1892); and A. Symons's *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry* (1909).

William Wordsworth

(1770-1850)

William Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth in the Lake District of Cumberland on April 7 of the same year, 1770, in which was born that other storm-center of romanticism, Ludwig van Beethoven. The family of one girl and three boys, of which William was the second, lost its mother when he was eight. Five years later Wordsworth's father died, leaving his children as legacy a sum owing to him by the future Lord Lonsdale, who had no intention of paying it. In the meantime William and his elder brother, Richard, had been sent to school at Hawkshead, on Esthwaite Water. Fortunately his uncles were willing to see him through St. John's College, Cambridge, and he entered there in 1787. In 1790 he made a summer tour on foot with a college friend, Robert Jones, through France, the Rhine valley, Switzerland, and northern Italy—a vacation that proved important to his career as a poet. In January 1791 he took his B.A., and left to spend some months in London.

At this time the revolution in France was proceeding with such moderation as won it the support of most English liberals. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette seemed to be in no danger, and few leaders of either party agreed with the rhetorical warnings of Burke (cf. Vol. I, p. 809). In November of 1791 Wordsworth went to France to learn its language. The excitement in Paris affected him little, and he went on to Orleans, in the neighborhood of which he remained until October 1792. It was here that his soul was at last awakened as a result of his intimacy with Michel Beaupuy and Annette Vallon.

Beaupuy, an army officer stationed at Blois, was an enthusiastic devotee of the Revolution. Of him Wordsworth has left us a grateful portrait in the ninth book of *The Prelude* (cf. *below*). This high-minded revolutionary made him understand the democratic principles for which Frenchmen were struggling, and strengthened his interest in the writings of Rousseau. The two would take long walks along the banks of the Loire, Wordsworth listening attentively as his mind expanded before new prospects. Once when they came upon a girl wasted by starvation, Beaupuy made his argument alive by exclaiming: "'Tis against *that* we are fighting."

But Wordsworth's fervor for France was conditioned also by another being, of whose very existence the world was unaware until recently. At Orleans he had become acquainted with Annette Vallon, a girl of good family, with whom he fell in love. The two met frequently in secret, and soon she was with child by him. It will never be known why he did not marry her. Wordsworth's many apologists have extended all kinds of excuses, none of them very convincing. It is true that she was a Roman Catholic, but that could have been no impediment to the free-thinker that Wordsworth then was. Nor can much stock be placed in the explanation that a marriage in France of 1792 would have been of questionable validity, inasmuch as such a ceremony would at least have satisfied Annette's relatives.

The answer, it is fair to suppose, lay in Wordsworth's character. Surely no poet of his magnitude possessed a personality less attractive. Try as we will, we cannot escape the impression of hardness, self-satisfaction, and lack of generosity in his make-up—though to say this much is to invoke the wrath of his many idolaters. At any rate, when Annette gave birth to a daughter, Caroline, Wordsworth was in Paris, not at her side in Orleans. In the metropolis, he tells us, he was trying in vain to associate himself with the revolutionary activities of the Girondists. His allowance exhausted, he returned to England, ostensibly to procure the consent of his guardians to a marriage with Annette. Once

there, however, he preferred to allow his sister Dorothy to be his advocate. She pleaded for him with such ill success that she was forbidden to see him. By degrees giving up whatever hopes he may have entertained of marrying Annette, Wordsworth busied himself with literary affairs in London. We need not, be it said, sentimentalize over Annette. If the poet broke his promise to her and left the full responsibility of raising their child to her, it cannot be thought that being his wife would have led her to a happier or fuller life than she actually had. It is enough to record that her existence was not a tragic one, and that she lived to see her daughter married to a man of standing in the community.

As for Wordsworth, his brief experience in France was stamped indelibly on his soul. The philosophy he had learned from Beaupuy was to make him, even after he had turned against the Revolution, the great poetic voice of the humble and the lowly. His love affair, however well he managed to conceal it from the public, had awakened his heart and left upon it a scar that would not heal. Again and again he was to return in his poems to the theme of the woman abandoned with her child by her lover.

In London he became friendly with the young revolutionists surrounding Godwin, and for a while was himself influenced by the latter's absurd speculations (cf. Vol. I, p. 816). When England declared war against France in 1793, Wordsworth took the position of these radicals, and sided with the country of Beaupuy. In the same year he issued his first two volumes, *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*, the second the result of his Alpine journey. Both are in heroic couplets, and show much indebtedness to the melancholy of the graveyard school of poetry. Still a friend to the French Revolution, he wrote an eloquent reply to Bishop Watson's sermon on *The Wisdom of God in Having Made Both Rich and Poor*; but it is typical of him that having thus expressed his iconoclasm, he allowed it to remain unpublished.

His activities and occupations are not clear until January 1795, when he was left a legacy of nine hundred pounds, which enabled him to satisfy his wish of devoting his life to poetry. When he was offered by a friend a house at Racedown, he gladly accepted. At last his faithful sister could also gratify her one desire, to know "the day of felicity, the day in which I am once more to find a home under the same roof with my brother." History affords few examples of such complete and unselfish consecration as that of Dorothy to her brother. A talented woman (cf. *below*), she chose to have no life apart from his, and they were thenceforth inseparable. She was mother, sister, and dearest friend to him, always patient and understanding. It was her greatest happiness to feed the flame of his poetic inspiration; if she could do that, she asked no more of life. It was she who now, at Racedown, turned aside the bitterness in his heart by aiding him in finding peace and comfort in Nature all about him.

It was here, too, that Wordsworth came to know well the great genius with whom his name will be forever linked, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The latter was tremendously impressed with his new friend; "I feel myself a little man by his side," he confessed. In his enthusiasm, Coleridge insisted that they must live near each other; whereupon the Wordsworths moved to Alfoxden, a few miles from Coleridge's home at Nether Stowey. Daily they saw one another, William, Dorothy, and Coleridge, and tramped miles together, intoxicating themselves with talk and plans. At length Wordsworth and Coleridge decided to issue jointly a volume of poems in which the former was to make humble subjects seem magical, and Coleridge was to make supernatural subjects seem real. This book, the epoch-making *Lyrical Ballads*, was published in September 1798, and contained some of Wordsworth's finest poems (*We Are Seven, Lines Written in Early Spring, Expostulation and Reply, The Tables Turned,* and *Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*) and Coleridge's incomparable *Ancient Mariner*. The friendship between the two men was, at first, fruitful for both. Completely dissimilar in temperament, they did each other much good. Coleridge, with his fiery imagination, his wide reading, and his torrential flood of ideas, ignited Wordsworth's mind and gave it new perspectives and understanding. Wordsworth, on the other hand, self-contained, reserved,

steady of habit, and strong of soul, made Coleridge realize the need of disciplining his affectionate, voluble temper if he were ever to accomplish great things. In this creative relationship Dorothy also filled an important function as a link between the two men; there can be little doubt that she and Coleridge were greatly attracted to each other.

Although *Lyrical Ballads* was severely attacked in some quarters, it sold well enough to justify a second printing in 1800, which contained some important new poems. These two editions took up the renascence of poetry so ably begun by Blake and Burns, and made it plain that the new era was opened. For the volume of 1800, indeed, Wordsworth wrote a long and important *Preface* (cf. *below*) to explain to the public what he had been attempting and to announce his poetic credo. This is one of the most important critical documents in our literature, for in effect it struck a mortal blow at neoclassical theory. "The principal object . . . proposed in these Poems," he says, "was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them . . . in a selection of language really used by men, . . . and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them . . . the primary laws of our nature. . . . Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language." Here the Rousseauistic creed is reduced to poetic practice. Rousseauistic, too, is his description of the creative process: "All good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." But he did not fail to add that the poet must also think "long and deeply" over his material.

We have in these words the causes of Wordsworth's greatest successes and failures in poetry. The utter perfection of such works as the *Lucy* poems, *The Solitary Reaper,* and *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* (cf. *below*) is owing to their beautiful simplicity and the happy union of thought and feeling. But sometimes Wordsworth seems to have merely *felt* without thinking (instances when he degenerates into sentimentality) or to have *thought* without feeling (in verses that are surprisingly arid). Moreover, his "selection of language really used by men" is sometimes without inspiration. An example of such prosaic diction and of the bathos into which he could fall is the ludicrous *Andrew Jones* (1800), which opens:

"I HATE that Andrew Jones; he'll breed
His children up to waste and pillage.
I wish the press-gang or the drum
With its tantara sound would come,
And sweep him from the village!

"I said not this, because he loves
Through the long day to swear and tipple;
But for the poor dear sake of one
To whom a foul deed he had done,
A friendless man, a travelling cripple!"

By no known canons of art can such verse be called poetry. Surely no poet who could soar as high as Wordsworth ever, at his worst, sank so low. Perhaps this disparity in his work is the result of a complete absence of humor in his temperament and his tendency to be satisfied with himself. It is characteristic of him, for example, that he should have attributed the hostility with which the *Lyrical Ballads* was greeted to the best poem in the volume, Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner.* On the other hand, he did not always (fortunately!) pursue his theory of poetic diction. The sublimities of *Tintern Abbey, Yew Trees,* and *The Prelude* are certainly not achieved through vocabulary in common use.

Late in 1798 William and Dorothy went to Germany with Coleridge, but continued on their own way to Goslar without him. There the poet's sentiments were chiefly nostalgic, and he wrote a number of fine lyrics about England, the *Lucy* poems among them. On their return the Wordsworths went to live in their native Lake Country on

the shore of Grasmere Lake, where they rented an abandoned inn that they named "Dove Cottage." For the rest of his long life Wordsworth resided in this neighborhood. When Coleridge came back he, too, was near by, and the companionship of his imaginative friend unloosed in Wordsworth a marvelous flow of poetic inspiration. The ensuing years (1800-1807) were the most productive in his career. In 1802 Lord Lowther decided to pay with interest the debt owing to the Wordsworths, and this new financial security made it possible for him to marry his childhood friend, Mary Hutchinson, on October 4, 1802. It was a strange wedding-present that Coleridge made them, his *Dejection, an Ode.*

On August 14, 1803, not many days after Mrs. Wordsworth had given birth to their first son, the poet, his sister, and Coleridge set out in a jaunting car for an extended tour of Scotland. After two weeks in their company, Coleridge left them to travel alone on foot, being allotted six out of the thirty-five pounds in their common purse for his expenses. The separation was fruitful for all concerned. For Coleridge it helped to clarify his growing coolness of feeling for Wordsworth. For William it meant a series of sights and impressions which inspired some of his loveliest lyrics—*At the Grave of Burns, Stepping Westward, The Solitary Reaper,* and *Yarrow Unvisited* (cf. *below*). For Dorothy the tour supplied material for her vivid *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* (cf. *below*).

In 1804 Coleridge left for a stay of two years in Malta. By the time he returned, real intimacy between the two poets was over. The separation which followed soon enough marks the end of the great poetic creativeness of both men. Later, in his *Biographia Literaria,* Coleridge was able to see Wordsworth's abilities more clearly, in their merits and defects.

The death of his brother John at sea in 1805 left a profound mark upon Wordsworth, turning his thoughts more and more toward orthodox Christianity. Napoleon's conversion of the French Revolution for his own ends had long ago disillusioned the poet in his radicalism. And as he grew older Wordsworth's conservatism hardened. He tried for a number of years to procure a government post, and in 1813 was appointed Distributor of Stamps in Westmoreland County, an office that brought a good income and required little labor. In 1819, after several removals, the Wordsworths moved to Rydal Mount, where he lived until his death in 1850. For the last thirty years of his life, Wordsworth was a staunch opposer of all political change, and disapproved heartily of Parliamentary Reform, Catholic Emancipation, universal suffrage, and the freedom of the press. He had no sympathy for the younger romantic poets who owed so much to his example, and expressed contempt for the work of Byron, Shelley, and Keats, all of whom he long outlived. He continued to write, but with less frequency and much less inspiration, though on occasion he could still turn out an admirable poem; and although his last works lack the magic of his earlier endeavors, they possess many striking lines. Upon the death of Southey he was appointed Poet Laureate in 1843. Late in life he dictated to Miss Fenwick the interesting series of notes to his various poems (herein printed at the head of each). He died on April 23, 1850, and was buried in Grasmere churchyard. A monument to him was erected in Westminster Abbey.

To do justice to this major poet two conditions are required of the reader: the dissociation of his poetry from his unsympathetic personality, and the discounting of that "mass of inferior work" of which his admirer Matthew Arnold speaks. When we have done so much, we shall not wonder, even if we cannot entirely agree, when Arnold places him below only Shakespeare and Milton in English poetry.

Although Wordsworth is commonly described as our great "Nature poet," the term is misleading, for to most minds it would imply that he was a great painter of natural scenery. There are indeed some wonderful pictures of Nature in his poetry, but on the whole he was not interested in representing the sights and sounds of Nature to the extent to which were, for instance, Shelley and Keats. To him the *thoughts* inspired by what he saw and heard in Nature were of greater importance. Hence, it is more correct to call him a great meditative poet who found the source of his reflections in Nature. In his

greatest poems she is recognized as "the nurse, the guide, the guardian . . . , and soul" of his moral being. This pantheistic mysticism which enabled him to "see into the life of things," when he felt a oneness in all created Nature—

> *"a sense sublime*
> *Of something far more deeply interfused,*
> *Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,*
> *And the round ocean and the living air,*
> *And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;*
> *A motion and a spirit, that impels*
> *All thinking things, all objects of all thought,*
> *And rolls through all things,"*

—was an insight he won to only after the feverish days in France. In order to trace the history of his development he wrote *The Prelude* (cf. *below*), a long autobiographical poem containing some of his best passages, which he composed between 1799 and 1805. In its first version, like Rousseau's *Confessions*, it was a faithful record of his intellectual and emotional experiences; even the Annette Vallon episode appeared in it, though in a somewhat disguised form. But he did not publish it, and continued to revise it, ever modifying his radicalism and pantheism, as first represented, to suit the conservatism and orthodoxy of his later years. When it was finally printed in 1850, though the world was given some of his most beautiful poetry, it was granted something less than an accurate account of his earlier life.

This development he had already briefly, but sublimely, dealt with in *Tintern Abbey* (cf. *below*). As a child he had been like a wild, thoughtless animal, drinking in unconsciously the wonders of Nature. Then, in young manhood, Nature became a passion to him; he loved her for her "colors" and "forms." In his later twenties this "appetite" passed, and he learned to listen to Nature for "the still, sad music of humanity." This analysis was important to Wordsworth, and it is therefore in the light of it that we should read such poems as *Expostulation and Reply*, *Tintern Abbey*, the *Lucy* poems, *My Heart Leaps Up*, and *Michael*.

To measure the accomplishment of Wordsworth, indeed, one need not do more than compare the last-named, *Michael*, his great "pastoral poem," with any of the many neoclassical pastorals. How far a cry it is from the pretty artificialities of Pope's school to the deep and quiet humanity of that masterpiece! One then well understands what Wordsworth came to mean to the nineteenth century, and how fitting are Matthew Arnold's lines on him:

> *He laid us as we lay at birth*
> *On the cool flowery lap of earth,*
> *Smiles broke from us and we had ease;*
> *The hills were round us, and the breeze*
> *Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;*
> *Our foreheads felt the wind and rain,*
> *Our youth returned; for there was shed*
> *On spirits that had long been dead,*
> *Spirits dried up and closely furled,*
> *The freshness of the early world.*

The standard edition of the *Poetical Works* was issued in five volumes by T. Hutchinson (1895), who also made a one-volume edition (1906). Important biographical studies have been written by E. Batho (1933), G. McL. Harper (third edition, 1929), E. Legouis (1897, 1922, 1923), and C. H. Patton (1935). The bibliography suggested for Coleridge should also be consulted. Among the best critical estimates are those of Arnold, Swinburne, Pater, and H. W. Garrod. E. de Selincourt's edition of *The Prelude* (1926) gives the original and revised versions.

We Are Seven

Written at Alfoxden in the spring of 1798, under circumstances somewhat remarkable. The little girl who is the heroine I met within the area of Goodrich Castle in the year 1793. Having left the Isle of Wight and crossed Salisbury Plain, as mentioned in the preface to "Guilt and Sorrow," I proceeded by Bristol up the Wye, and so on to North Wales, to the Vale of Clwydd, where I spent my summer under the roof of the father of my friend, Robert Jones. In reference to this Poem I will here mention one of the most remarkable facts in my own poetic history and that of Mr. Coleridge. In the spring of the year 1798, he, my Sister, and myself, started from Alfoxden, pretty late in the afternoon, with a view to visit Lenton and the valley of Stones near it; and as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem, to be sent to the New Monthly Magazine set up by Phillips the bookseller, and edited by Dr. Aikin. Accordingly we set off and proceeded along the Quantock Hills towards Watchet, and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of the "Ancient Mariner," founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend, Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention; but certain parts I myself suggested:—for example, some crime was to be committed which should bring upon the old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime, and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvock's Voyages a day or two before that while doubling Cape Horn they frequently saw Albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or fifteen feet. "Suppose," said I, "you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary Spirits of those regions take upon them to avenge the crime." The incident was thought fit for the purpose and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem. The Gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied was not thought of by either of us at the time; at least, not a hint of it was given to me, and I have no doubt it was a gratuitous after-thought. We began the composition together on that, to me, memorable evening. I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular:—

> "And listened like a three years' child;
> The Mariner had his will."

These trifling contributions, all but one (which Mr. C. has with unnecessary scrupulosity recorded) slipt out of his mind as they well might. As we endeavored to proceed conjointly (I speak of the same evening) our respective manners proved so widely different that it would have been quite presumptuous in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog. We returned after a few days from a delightful tour, of which I have many pleasant, and some of them droll-enough, recollections. We returned by Dulverton to Alfoxden. The "Ancient Mariner" grew and grew till it became too important for our first object, which was limited to our expectation of five pounds, and we began to talk of a Volume, which was to consist, as Mr. Coleridge has told the world, of poems chiefly on supernatural subjects taken from common life, but looked at, as much as might be, through an imaginative medium. Accordingly I wrote "The Idiot Boy," "Her eyes are wild," etc., "We are seven," "The Thorn," and some others. To return to "We are seven," the piece that called forth this note, I composed it while walking in the grove at Alfoxden. My friends will not deem it too trifling to relate that while walking to and fro I composed the last stanza first, having begun with the last line. When it was all but finished, I came in and recited it to Mr. Coleridge and my Sister, and said, "A prefatory stanza must be added, and I should sit down to our little tea-meal with greater pleasure if my task were finished." I mentioned in substance what I wished to be expressed, and Coleridge immediately threw off the stanza thus:—

> "A little child, dear brother Jem,"—

I objected to the rhyme, "dear brother Jem," as being ludicrous, but we all enjoyed the joke of hitching-in our friend, James T——'s name, who was familiarly called Jem. He was the brother of the dramatist, and this reminds me of an anecdote which it may be worth while here to notice. The said Jem got a sight of the Lyrical Ballads as it was going through the press at Bristol, during which time I was residing in that city. One evening he came to me with a grave face, and said, "Wordsworth, I have seen the volume that Coleridge and you are about to publish. There is one poem in it which I earnestly entreat you will cancel, for, if published, it will make you everlastingly ridiculous." I answered that I felt much obliged by the interest he took in my good name as a writer, and begged to know what was the unfortunate piece he alluded to. He said, "It is called 'We are seven.'" Nay! said I, that shall take its chance, however, and he left me in despair. I have only to add that in the spring of 1841 I revisited Goodrich Castle, not having seen that part of the Wye since I met the little Girl there in 1793. It would have given me greater pleasure to have found in the neighboring hamlet traces of one who had interested me so much; but that was impossible, as unfortunately I did not even know her name. The ruin, from its position and features, is a most impressive object. I could not but deeply regret that its solemnity was impaired by a fantastic new Castle set up on a projection of the same ridge, as if to show how far modern art can go in surpassing all that could be done by antiquity and nature with their united graces, remembrances, and associations.—*Wordsworth.*

——— A simple child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage girl:
She was eight years old, she said;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad:
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
—Her beauty made me glad.

"Sisters and brothers, little maid,
How many may you be?"
"How many? Seven in all," she said,
And wondering looked at me.

"And where are they? I pray you tell."
She answered, "Seven are we;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

"Two of us in the church-yard lie,
My sister and my brother;
And, in the church-yard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother."

"You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven!—I pray you tell,
Sweet maid, how this may be."

Then did the little maid reply,
"Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the church-yard lie,
Beneath the church-yard tree."

"You run about, my little maid,
Your limbs they are alive;
If two are in the church-yard laid,
Then ye are only five."

"Their graves are green, they may be seen,"
The little maid replied,
"Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
And they are side by side.

"My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit,
And sing a song to them.

"And often after sunset, sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

"The first that died was sister Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away.

"So in the church-yard she was laid;
And, when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.

"And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side."

"How many are you, then," said I,
"If they two are in heaven?"
Quick was the little maid's reply,
"O master! we are seven."

"But they are dead; those two are dead!
Their spirits are in heaven!"
'Twas throwing words away; for still
The little maid would have her will,
And said, "Nay, we are seven!"

(1798)

Lines Written in Early Spring

Actually composed while I was sitting by the side of the brook that runs down from the Comb, in which stands the village of Alford, through the grounds of Alfoxden. It was a chosen resort of mine. The brook fell down a sloping rock so as to make a waterfall considerable for that country, and across the pool below had fallen a tree, an ash if I rightly remember, from which rose perpendicularly, boughs in search of the light intercepted by the deep shade above. The boughs bore leaves of green that for want of sunshine had faded into almost lily-white; and from the underside of this natural sylvan bridge depended long and beautiful tresses of ivy which waved gently in the breeze that might poetically speaking be called the breath of the waterfall. This motion varied of course in proportion to the power of water in the brook. When, with dear friends, I revisited this spot, after an interval of more than forty years, this interesting feature of the scene was gone. To the owner of the place I could not but regret that the beauty of this retired part of the grounds had not tempted him to make it more accessible by a path, not broad or obtrusive, but sufficient for persons who love such scenes to creep along without difficulty.—*Wordsworth.*

I heard a thousand blended notes
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What Man has made of Man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure,—
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What Man has made of Man?

(1798)

Expostulation and Reply

This poem is a favorite among the Quakers, as I have learnt on many occasions. It was composed in front of the house at Alfoxden, in the spring of 1798.—*Wordsworth.*

"Why, William, on that old gray stone,
Thus for the length of half a day,
Why, William, sit you thus alone,
And dream your time away?

"Where are your books?—that light bequeathed
To Beings else forlorn and blind!
Up! up! and drink the spirit breathed
From dead men to their kind.

"You look round on your Mother Earth,
As if she for no purpose bore you;
As if you were her first-born birth,
And none had lived before you!"

One morning thus, by Esthwaite lake,
When life was sweet, I knew not why,
To me my good friend Matthew spake,
And thus I made reply:—

"The eye,—it cannot choose but see;
We cannot bid the ear be still;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against or with our will.

"Nor less I deem that there are Powers
Which of themselves our minds impress;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

"Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things forever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come
But we must still be seeking?

"Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,
Conversing as I may,
I sit upon this old gray stone,
And dream my time away."

(1798)

The Tables Turned

AN EVENING SCENE ON THE SAME SUBJECT

Up! up! my friend, and quit your books;
Or surely you'll grow double:
Up! up! my friend, and clear your looks;
Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun, above the mountain's head,
A freshening lustre mellow
Through all the long, green fields has spread,
His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! on my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless,—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings,
Our meddling intellect
Misshapes the beauteous forms of things,—
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;
Close up those barren leaves;
Come forth, and bring with you a heart
That watches and receives.

(1798)

Lines

COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY, ON REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING A TOUR JULY 13, 1798

No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days, with my Sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol. It was published almost immediately after in the little volume of which so much has been said in these Notes.—(The Lyrical Ballads, as first published at Bristol by Cottle.)—*Wordsworth.*

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain springs
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild, secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire
The hermit sits alone.
These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye;
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration—feelings, too,
Of unremembered pleasure; such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened—that serene and blessed mood
In which the affections gently lead us on—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul;
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.
If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer through the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!
And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again;
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts

That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever Nature led; more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colors and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn, nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on Nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
In Nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.
Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay;
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest friend,
My dear, dear friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy; for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee; and in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshiper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service; rather say
With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

(1798)

Lucy

Wordsworth never revealed in his notes the identity of the girl celebrated in these famous lyrics. Professors Harper and Legouis take her to be some early unknown love of the poet. Frances Winwar, disagreeing with them, observes that this was "no earthly passion," and offers a possible clue by remarking that "Lucy was a name which Wordsworth had for Dorothy."

1

Strange fits of passion have I known:
And I will dare to tell,
But in the Lover's ear alone,
What once to me befell.

When she I loved looked every day
Fresh as a rose in June,
I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath an evening-moon.

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,
All over the wide lea;
With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reached the orchard-plot;
And, as we climbed the hill,
The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
Came near, and nearer still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind Nature's gentlest boon!
And all the while my eyes I kept
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopped:
When down behind the cottage roof,
At once, the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
Into a Lover's head!
"O mercy!" to myself I cried,
"If Lucy should be dead!"

2

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove;
A maid whom there were none to praise,
And very few to love.

A violet by a mossy stone
Half-hidden from the eye!
—Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!

3

I traveled among unknown men
In lands beyond the sea;
Nor, England! did I know till then
What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream!
Nor will I quit thy shore
A second time; for still I seem
To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel
The joy of my desire;
And she I cherished turned her wheel
Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed
The bowers where Lucy played;
And thine too is the last green field
That Lucy's eyes surveyed.

4

Three years she grew in sun and shower;
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown:
This Child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A lady of my own.

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

"She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And hers shall be the breathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute insensate things.

"The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend;
Nor shall she fail to see
Ev'n in the motions of the storm
Grace that shall mold the maiden's form
By silent sympathy.

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

"And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live
Here in this happy dell."

Thus Nature spake—The work was done—
How soon my Lucy's race was run!
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm and quiet scene;
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be.

5

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

(1799)

The Prelude

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POEM

ADVERTISEMENT

The following Poem was commenced in the beginning of the year 1799, and completed in the summer of 1805.

The design and occasion of the work are described by the Author in his Preface to the "Excursion," first published in 1814, where he thus speaks:—

"Several years ago, when the Author retired to his native mountains with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such an employment.

"As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them.

"That work, addressed to a dear friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the Author's intellect is deeply indebted, has been long finished; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it, was a determination to compose a philosophical Poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society, and to be entitled the 'Recluse'; as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement.

"The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labor which he had proposed to himself; and the two works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the Ante-chapel has to the body of a Gothic church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor pieces, which have been long before the public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive reader to have such connection with the main work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices."

Such was the Author's language in the year 1814.

It will thence be seen, that the present Poem was intended to be introductory to the "Recluse," and that the "Recluse," if completed, would have consisted of Three Parts. Of these, the Second Part alone: viz. the "Excursion," was finished, and given to the world by the Author.

The First Book of the First Part of the "Recluse" still remains in manuscript; but the Third Part was only planned. The materials of which it would have been formed have, however, been incorporated, for the most part, in the Author's other Publications, written subsequently to the "Excursion."

The Friend, to whom the present Poem is addressed, was the late SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, who was resident in Malta, for the restoration of his health, when the greater part of it was composed.

Mr. Coleridge read a considerable portion of the Poem while he was abroad; and his feelings, on hearing it recited by the Author (after his return to his own country), are recorded in his Verses, addressed to Mr. Wordsworth, which will be found in the *Sibylline Leaves*, p. 197, ed. 1817, or *Poetical Works, by S. T. Coleridge*, vol. i. p. 206.

RYDAL MOUNT, *July 13th*, 1850.

From *Book I*

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear:
Much favored in my birth-place, and no less
In that beloved Vale to which erelong
We were transplanted—there were we let loose
For sports of wider range. Ere I had told
Ten birth-days, when among the mountain slopes
Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
The last autumnal crocus, 't was my joy
With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung
To range the open heights where woodcocks run
Along the smooth green turf. Through half the night,
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
That anxious visitation;—moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,
And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befell
In these night wanderings, that a strong desire
O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
Which was the captive of another's toil
Became my prey; and when the deed was done
I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less when spring had warmed the cultured Vale,
Moved we as plunderers where the mother-bird
Had in high places built her lodge; though mean
Our object and inglorious, yet the end
Was not ignoble. Oh! when I have hung
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds!

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
Like harmony in music; there is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society. How strange that all
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
And that a needful part, in making up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!
Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ;
Whether her fearless visitings, or those
That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light
Opening the peaceful clouds; or she may use
Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the gray sky.

She was an elfin pinnace; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colors of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

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

And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
I heeded not their summons; happy time
It was indeed for all of us—for me
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud
The village clock tolled six,—I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,
We hissed along the polished ice in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle; with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.
Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex of a star
That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain; and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round!
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

From *Book IX*

A band of military Officers,
Then stationed in the city,[1] were the chief
Of my associates: some of these wore swords

[1] Orleans.

That had been seasoned in the wars, and all
Were men well-born; the chivalry of France.
In age and temper differing, they had yet
One spirit ruling in each heart; alike
(Save only one, hereafter to be named)
Were bent upon undoing what was done:
This was their rest and only hope; therewith
No fear had they of bad becoming worse,
For worst to them was come; nor would have stirred,
Or deemed it worth a moment's thought to stir,
In anything, save only as the act
Looked thitherward. One, reckoning by years,
Was in the prime of manhood, and erewhile
He had sat lord in many tender hearts;
Though heedless of such honors now, and changed:
His temper was quite mastered by the times,
And they had blighted him, had eaten away
The beauty of his person, doing wrong
Alike to body and to mind: his port,
Which once had been erect and open, now
Was stooping and contracted, and a face,
Endowed by Nature with her fairest gifts
Of symmetry and light and bloom, expressed,
As much as any that was ever seen,
A ravage out of season, made by thoughts
Unhealthy and vexatious. With the hour,
That from the press of Paris duly brought
Its freight of public news, the fever came,
A punctual visitant, to shake this man,
Disarmed his voice and fanned his yellow cheek
Into a thousand colors; while he read,
Or mused, his sword was haunted by his touch
Continually, like an uneasy place
In his own body. 'Twas in truth an hour
Of universal ferment; mildest men
Were agitated; and commotions, strife
Of passion and opinion, filled the walls
Of peaceful houses with unquiet sounds.
The soil of common life was, at that time,
Too hot to tread upon. Oft said I then,
And not then only, "What a mockery this
Of history, the past and that to come!
Now do I feel how all men are deceived,
Reading of nations and their works, in faith,
Faith given to vanity and emptiness;
Oh! laughter for the page that would reflect
To future times the face of what now is!"
The land all swarmed with passion, like a plain
Devoured by locusts,—Carra, Gorsas,[2]—add
A hundred other names, forgotten now,
Nor to be heard of more; yet, they were powers,
Like earthquakes, shocks repeated day by day,
And felt through every nook of town and field.
Such was the state of things. Meanwhile the chief
Of my associates stood prepared for flight
To augment the band of emigrants in arms
Upon the borders of the Rhine, and leagued
With foreign foes mustered for instant war.
This was their undisguised intent, and they
Were waiting with the whole of their desires
The moment to depart.
An Englishman,
Born in a land whose very name appeared
To license some unruliness of mind;
A stranger, with youth's further privilege,
And the indulgence that a half-learnt speech
Wins from the courteous; I, who had been else
Shunned and not tolerated, freely lived
With these defenders of the Crown, and talked,
And heard their notions; nor did they disdain
The wish to bring me over to their cause.

But though untaught by thinking or by books
To reason well of polity or law,
And nice distinctions, then on every tongue,
Of natural rights and civil; and to acts
Of nations and their passing interests
(If with unworldly ends and aims compared)
Almost indifferent, even the historian's tale
Prizing but little otherwise than I prized
Tales of the poets, as it made the heart
Beat high, and filled the fancy with fair forms,
Old heroes and their sufferings and their deeds;
Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp
Of orders and degrees, I nothing found
Then, or had ever, even in crudest youth,
That dazzled me, but rather what I mourned
And ill could brook, beholding that the best
Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.

For, born in a poor district, and which yet
Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,
Than any other nook of English ground,
It was my fortune scarcely to have seen,
Through the whole tenor of my school-day time,
The face of one, who, whether boy or man,
Was vested with attention or respect
Through claims of wealth or blood; nor was it least
Of many benefits, in later years
Derived from academic institutes
And rules, that they held something up to view
Of a Republic, where all stood thus far

[2] Revolutionary journalists.

Upon equal ground; that we were brothers all
In honor, as in one community,
Scholars and gentlemen; where, furthermore,
Distinction open lay to all that came,
And wealth and titles were in less esteem
Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry.
Add unto this, subservience from the first
To presences of God's mysterious power
Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty,
And fellowship with venerable books,
To sanction the proud workings of the soul,
And mountain liberty. It could not be
But that one tutored thus should look with awe
Upon the faculties of man, receive
Gladly the highest promises, and hail,
As best, the government of equal rights
And individual worth. And hence, O Friend!
If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced
Less than might well befit my youth, the cause
In part lay here, that unto me the events
Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,
A gift that was come rather late than soon.
No wonder, then, if advocates like these,
Inflamed by passion, blind with prejudice,
And stung with injury, at this riper day,
Were impotent to make my hopes put on
The shape of theirs, my understanding bend
In honor to their honor: zeal which yet
Had slumbered, now in opposition burst
Forth like a Polar summer: every word
They uttered was a dart, by counter-winds
Blown back upon themselves; their reason seemed
Confusion-stricken by a higher power
Than human understanding, their discourse
Maimed, spiritless; and, in their weakness strong,
I triumph.

Meantime, day by day, the roads
Were crowded with the bravest youth of France,
And all the promptest of her spirits, linked
In gallant soldiership, and posting on
To meet the war upon her frontier bounds.
Yet at this very moment do tears start
Into mine eyes: I do not say I weep—
I wept not then,—but tears have dimmed my sight,
In memory of the farewells of that time,
Domestic severings, female fortitude
At dearest separation, patriot love
And self-devotion, and terrestrial hope,
Encouraged with a martyr's confidence;
Even files of strangers merely seen but once,
And for a moment, men from far with sound
Of music, martial tunes, and banners spread,
Entering the city, here and there a face,
Or person, singled out among the rest,
Yet still a stranger and beloved as such;
Even by these passing spectacles my heart
Was oftentimes uplifted, and they seemed
Arguments sent from Heaven to prove the cause
Good, pure, which no one could stand up against,
Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud,
Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved,
Hater perverse of equity and truth.

Among that band of Officers was one,
Already hinted at, of other mold—
A patriot, thence rejected by the rest,
And with an oriental loathing spurned,
As of a different caste. A meeker man
Than this lived never, nor a more benign,
Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries
Made *him* more gracious, and his nature then
Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,
As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf,
When foot hath crushed them. He through the events
Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,
As through a book, an old romance, or tale
Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought
Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked
With the most noble, but unto the poor
Among mankind he was in service bound,
As by some tie invisible, oaths professed
To a religious order. Man he loved
As man; and, to the mean and the obscure,
And all the homely in their homely works,
Transferred a courtesy which had no air
Of condescension; but did rather seem
A passion and a gallantry, like that
Which he, a soldier, in his idler day
Had paid to woman: somewhat vain he was,
Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity,
But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy
Diffused around him, while he was intent
On works of love or freedom, or revolved
Complacently the progress of a cause,
Whereof he was a part: yet this was meek
And placid, and took nothing from the man
That was delightful. Oft in solitude
With him did I discourse about the end
Of civil government, and its wisest forms;
Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,
Custom and habit, novelty and change;
Of self-respect, and virtue in the few
For patrimonial honor set apart,
And ignorance in the laboring multitude.

For he, to all intolerance indisposed,
Balanced these contemplations in his mind;
And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped
Into the turmoil, bore a sounder judgment
Than later days allowed; carried about me,
With less alloy to its integrity,
The experience of past ages, as, through help
Of books and common life, it makes sure way
To youthful minds, by objects over near
Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled
By struggling with the crowd for present ends.

But though not deaf, nor obstinate to find
Error without excuse upon the side
Of them who strove against us, more delight
We took, and let this freely be confessed,
In painting to ourselves the miseries
Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life
Unfeeling, where the man who is of soul
The meanest thrives the most; where dignity,
True personal dignity, abideth not;
A light, a cruel, and vain world cut off
From the natural inlets of just sentiment,
From lowly sympathy and chastening truth;
Where good and evil interchange their names,
And thirst for bloody spoils abroad is paired
With vice at home. We added dearest themes—
Man and his noble nature, as it is
The gift which God has placed within his power,
His blind desires and steady faculties
Capable of clear truth, the one to break
Bondage, the other to build liberty
On firm foundations, making social life,
Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,
As just in regulation, and as pure
As individual in the wise and good.

We summoned up the honorable deeds
Of ancient Story, thought of each bright spot,
That would be found in all recorded time,
Of truth preserved and error passed away;
Of single spirits that catch the flame from Heaven,
And how the multitudes of men will feed
And fan each other; thought of sects, how keen
They are to put the appropriate nature on,
Triumphant over every obstacle
Of custom, language, country, love, or hate,
And what they do and suffer for their creed;
How far they travel, and how long endure;
How quickly mighty Nations have been formed,
From least beginnings; how, together locked
By new opinions, scattered tribes have made
One body, spreading wide as clouds in heaven.

To aspirations then of our own minds
Did we appeal; and, finally, beheld
A living confirmation of the whole
Before us, in a people from the depth
Of shameful imbecility uprisen,
Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked
Upon their virtues; saw, in rudest men,
Self-sacrifice the firmest; generous love,
And continence of mind, and sense of right,
Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.

From *Book XI*

. O pleasant exercise of hope and joy!
For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
Upon our side, us who were strong in love!
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!—O times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights,
When most intent on making of herself
A prime enchantress—to assist the work,
Which then was going forward in her name!
Not favored spots alone, but the whole earth
The beauty wore of promise—that which sets
(As at some moments might not be unfelt
Among the bowers of Paradise itself)
The budding rose above the rose full-blown.
What temper at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,
The playfellows of fancy,—who had made
All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength
Their ministers,—who in lordly wise had stirred
Among the grandest objects of the sense,
And dealt with whatsoever they found there
As if they had within some lurking right
To wield it;—they, too, who of gentle mood
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,
And in the region of their peaceful selves;—
Now was it that both found, the meek and lofty
Did both find, helpers to their hearts' desire,
And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish,
Were called upon to exercise their skill,
Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!

But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us,—the place where, in the end,
We find our happiness, or not at all!

Why should I not confess that earth was then
To me, what an inheritance, new-fallen,
Seems, when the first time visited, to one
Who thither comes to find in it his home?
He walks about and looks upon the spot
With cordial transport, moulds it and remoulds,
And is half-pleased with things that are amiss,
'T will be such joy to see them disappear.

An active partisan, I thus convoked
From every object pleasant circumstance
To suit my ends; I moved among mankind
With genial feelings still predominant;
When erring, erring on the better part,
And in the kinder spirit; placable,
Indulgent, as not uninformed that men
See as they have been taught—Antiquity
Gives rights to error; and aware, no less
That throwing off oppression must be work
As well of License as of Liberty;
And above all—for this was more than all—
Not caring if the wind did now and then
Blow keen upon an eminence that gave
Prospect so large into futurity;
In brief, a child of Nature, as at first,
Diffusing only those affections wider
That from the cradle had grown up with me,
And losing, in no other way than light
Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.

(1799-1805; revised by 1839; pub. 1850)

Michael

A PASTORAL POEM

Written at Town-end, Grasmere, about the same time as "The Brothers." The Sheepfold, on which so much of the poem turns, remains, or rather the ruins of it. The character and circumstances of Luke were taken from a family to whom had belonged, many years before, the house we lived in at Town-end, along with some fields and woodlands on the eastern shore of Grasmere. The name of the Evening Star was not in fact given to this house, but to another on the same side of the valley, more to the north.—*Wordsworth.*

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
But, courage! for around that boisterous brook
The mountains have all opened out themselves,
And made a hidden valley of their own.
No habitation can be seen; but they
Who journey thither find themselves alone
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
That overhead are sailing in the sky.
It is in truth an utter solitude;
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
But for one object which you might pass by,
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones!
And to that simple object appertains
A story—unenriched with strange events,
Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,
Or for the summer shade. It was the first
Of those domestic tales that spake to me
Of shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men
Whom I already loved; not verily
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills
Where was their occupation and abode.
And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy
Careless of books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects, led me on to feel
For passions that were not my own, and think
(At random and imperfectly indeed)
On man, the heart of man, and human life.
Therefore, although it be a history
Homely and rude, I will relate the same
For the delight of a few natural hearts;
And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
Of youthful Poets who among these hills
Will be my second self when I am gone.

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale[1]
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name;
An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,
And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone; and, oftentimes,
When others heeded not, he heard the South
Make subterraneous music, like the noise
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,

[1] the valley in which Wordsworth lived many years.

"The winds are now devising work for me!"
And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives
The traveller to a shelter, summoned him
Up to the mountains: he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him, and left him, on the heights.
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
The common air; hills, which with vigorous step
He had so often climbed; which had impressed
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
Which, like a book, preserved the memory
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts
The certainty of honorable gain;
Those fields, those hills—what could they less?—had laid
Strong hold on his affections, were to him
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.
His Helpmate was a comely matron, old,
Though younger than himself full twenty years.
She was a woman of a stirring life,
Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
Of antique form; this large, for spinning wool;
That small, for flax; and if one wheel had rest,
It was because the other was at work.
The Pair had but one inmate in their house,
An only Child, who had been born to them
When Michael, telling o'er his years, began
To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase,
With one foot in the grave. This only Son,
With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,
The one of an inestimable worth,
Made all their household. I may truly say,
That they were as a proverb in the vale
For endless industry. When day was gone,
And from their occupations out of doors
The Son and Father were come home, even then,
Their labor did not cease; unless when all
Turned to the cleanly supper-board, and there,
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk,
Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the meal
Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)
And his old Father both betook themselves
To such convenient work as might employ
Their hands by the fireside; perhaps to card
Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,
That in our ancient uncouth country style
With huge and black projection overbrowed
Large space beneath, as duly as the light
Of day grew dim, the Housewife hung a lamp;
An aged utensil, which had performed
Service beyond all others of its kind.
Early at evening did it burn—and late,
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
Which, going by from year to year, had found,
And left, the couple neither gay perhaps
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
Living a life of eager industry.
And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,
There by the light of this old lamp they sate,
Father and Son, while far into the night
The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
Making the cottage through the silent hours
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
This light was famous in its neighborhood,
And was a public symbol of the life
That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
And westward to the village near the lake;
And from this constant light, so regular
And so far seen, the House itself, by all
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR.

Thus living on through such a length of years,
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart
This son of his old age was yet more dear—
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all—
Than that a child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail.
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use

Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.
And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
Sat with a fettered sheep before him stretched
Under the large old oak, that near his door
Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,
Chosen for the Shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was called
The CLIPPING TREE, a name which yet it bears.
There, while they two were sitting in the shade,
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.
And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up
A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek
Two steady roses that were five years old,
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
With iron, making it throughout in all
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipt
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;
And, to his office prematurely called,
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
Something between a hindrance and a help;
And for this cause not always, I believe,
Receiving from his Father hire of praise;
Though nought was left undone which staff, or voice,
Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.
But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights,
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
He with his Father daily went, and they
Were as companions, why should I relate
That objects which the Shepherd loved before
Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came
Feelings and emanations—things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind;
And that the old Man's heart seemed born again?
Thus in his Father's sight the Boy grew up:
And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year,
He was his comfort and his daily hope.
While in this sort the simple household lived
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
Distressful tidings. Long before the time
Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound
In surety for his brother's son, a man
Of an industrious life, and ample means;
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
Had prest upon him; and old Michael now
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture,
A grievous penalty, but little less
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,
At the first hearing, for a moment took
More hope out of his life than he supposed
That any old man ever could have lost.
As soon as he had armed himself with strength
To look his trouble in the face, it seemed
The Shepherd's sole resource to sell at once
A portion of his patrimonial fields.
Such was his first resolve; he thought again,
And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,
Two evenings after he had heard the news,
"I have been toiling more than seventy years,
And in the open sunshine of God's love
Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself
Has scarcely been more diligent than I;
And I have lived to be a fool at last
To my own family. An evil man
That was, and made an evil choice, if he
Were false to us; and if he were not false,
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him;—but
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.
"When I began, my purpose was to speak
Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free;
He shall possess it, free as is the wind
That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
Another kinsman,—he will be our friend
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
Thriving in trade,—and Luke to him shall go,
And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
He quickly will repair this loss, and then
He may return to us. If here he stay,
What can be done? Where every one is poor,
What can be gained?"
At this the old Man paused,
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
Was busy, looking back into past times.

There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,
He was a parish-boy;—at the churchdoor
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence
And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbors bought
A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares;
And, with this basket on his arm, the lad
Went up to London, found a master there,
Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas; where he grew wondrous rich,
And left estates and monies to the poor,
And, at his birth-place, built a chapel, floored
With marble which he sent from foreign lands.
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,
And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,
And thus resumed:—"Well, Isabel! this scheme
These two days, has been meat and drink to me.
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
—We have enough;—I wish indeed that I
Were younger;—but this hope is a good hope.
—Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth
To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:
—If he *could* go, the Boy should go to-night."
Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. The Housewife for five days
Was restless morn and night, and all day long
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
Things needful for the journey of her son.
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
To stop her in her work: for, when she lay
By Michael's side, she through the last two nights
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go:
We have no other Child but thee to lose,
None to remember;—do not go away,
For if thou leave thy Father he will die."
The Youth made answer with a jocund voice;
And Isabel, when she had told her fears,
Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.
With daylight Isabel resumed her work;
And all the ensuing week the house appeared
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length
The expected letter from their kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy;
To which, requests were added, that forthwith
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over; Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbors round;
Nor was there at that time on English land
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,
"He shall depart to-morrow." To this word
The Housewife answered, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.
Near the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,
In that deep valley, Michael had designed
To build a Sheepfold; and, before he heard
The tidings of his melancholy loss,
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked:
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped,
And thus the old Man spake to him:—"My Son,
To-morrow thou wilt leave me: with full heart
I look upon thee, for thou art the same
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,
And all thy life has been my daily joy.
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good
When thou art from me, even if I should touch
On things thou canst not know of.—After thou
First cam'st into the world—as oft befalls
To new-born infants—thou didst sleep away
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
And still I loved thee with increasing love.
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds
Than when I heard thee by our own fireside
First uttering, without words, a natural tune;
While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,
And in the open fields my life was passed
And on the mountains; else I think that thou
Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.
But we were playmates, Luke: among these hills,
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
Have played together, nor with me didst thou
Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."
Luke had a manly heart; but at these words
He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,
And said, "Nay, do not take it so—I see

That these are things of which I need not speak.
—Even to the utmost I have been to thee
A kind and a good Father: and herein
I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands; for, though now old
Beyond the common life of man, I still
Remember them who loved me in my youth.
Both of them sleep together: here they lived,
As all their Forefathers had done; and when
At length their time was come, they were not loth
To give their bodies to the family mold.
I wished that thou should'st live the life they lived:
But, 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
And see so little gain from threescore years.
These fields were burthened when they came to me;
Till I was forty years of age, not more
Than half of my inheritance was mine.
I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,
And till these three weeks past the land was free.
—It looks as if it never could endure
Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou should'st go."
At this the old Man paused;
Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,
Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:
"This was a work for us; and now, my Son,
It is a work for me. But, lay one stone,—
Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.
Nay, Boy, be of good hope;—we both may live
To see a better day. At eighty-four
I still am strong and hale;—do thou thy part;
I will do mine.—I will begin again
With many tasks that were resigned to thee:
Up to the heights, and in among the storms,
Will I without thee go again, and do
All works which I was wont to do alone,
Before I knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, Boy!
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
With many hopes; it should be so;—yes—yes—
I knew that thou could'st never have a wish
To leave me, Luke: thou hast been bound to me
Only by links of love: when thou art gone,
What will be left to us!—But, I forget
My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,
As I requested; and hereafter, Luke,
When thou art gone away, should evil men
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,
And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts,
And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou
May'st bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,
Who, being innocent, did for that cause
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well;
When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see
A work which is not here: a covenant
'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave."
The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped down,
And, as his Father had requested, laid
The first stone of the Sheepfold. At the sight
The old Man's grief broke from him; to his heart
He pressed his Son, he kissèd him and wept;
And to the house together they returned.
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell:—with morrow's dawn the Boy
Began his journey, and when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face;
And all the neighbors, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight.
A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well-doing: and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout
"The prettiest letters that were ever seen."
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on: and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour
He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the Sheepfold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty; and, at length,
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses: ignominy and shame
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.
There is a comfort in the strength of love;
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart:
I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember the old Man, and what he was
Years after he had heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
And listened to the wind; and, as before,
Performed all kinds of labor for his sheep,
And for the land, his small inheritance.

And to that hollow dell from time to time
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
The pity which was then in every heart
For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all
That many and many a day he thither went,
And never lifted up a single stone.

There, by the Sheepfold, sometimes was he seen
Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog,
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years, from time to time,
He at the building of this Sheepfold wrought,
And left the work unfinished when he died.
Three years, or little more, did Isabel
Survive her Husband: at her death the estate
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.
The Cottage which was named the EVENING STAR
Is gone;—the ploughshare has been through the ground
On which it stood; great changes have been wrought
In all the neighborhood:—yet the oak is left
That grew beside their door; and the remains
Of the unfinished Sheepfold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Greenhead Ghyll.

(1800)

My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold

Written at Town-end, Grasmere.—*Wordsworth.*

My heart leaps up when I behold
  A rainbow in the sky.
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
  Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

(1802)

Resolution and Independence

Written at Town-end, Grasmere. This old Man I met a few hundred yards from my cottage; and the account of him is taken from his own mouth. I was in the state of feeling described in the beginning of the poem, while crossing over Barton Fell from Mr. Clarkson's, at the foot of Ullswater, towards Askham. The image of the hare I then observed on the ridge of the Fell.—*Wordsworth.*

There was a roaring in the wind all night;
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;
The birds are singing in the distant woods;
Over his own sweet voice the stock-dove broods;
The jay makes answer as the magpie chatters;
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

All things that love the sun are out of doors;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
The grass is bright with rain-drops;—on the moors
The hare is running races in her mirth;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist; that, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

I was a Traveller then upon the moor;
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;
I heard the woods and distant waters roar;
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:
The pleasant season did my heart employ:
My old remembrances went from me wholly;
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
Of joy in minds that can no further go,
As high as we have mounted in delight
In our dejection do we sink as low;
To me that morning did it happen so;
And fears and fancies thick upon me came;
Dim sadness, and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor could name.

I heard the skylark warbling in the sky;
And I bethought me of the playful hare:
Even such a happy child of earth am I;
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare;
Far from the world I walk, and all from care;
But there may come another day to me,—
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty.

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,
As if life's business were a summer mood;
As if all needful things would come unsought
To genial faith, still rich in genial good;
But how can he expect that others should
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all?

I thought of Chatterton,[1] the marvellous Boy,

[1] Cf. Vol. II, p. 35.

The sleepless soul that perished in his pride;
Of him[2] who walked in glory and in joy,
Following his plough, along the mountainside:
By our own spirits we are deified:
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace,
A leading from above, a something given,
Yet it befell, that, in this lonely place,
When I with these untoward thoughts had striven,
Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven,
I saw a man before me unawares:
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore gray hairs.

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couched on the bald top of an eminence,
Wonder to all who do the same espy,
By what means it could thither come, and whence:
So that it seems a thing endued with sense;—
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf
Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun itself;—

Such seemed this man, not all alive nor dead,
Nor all asleep, in his extreme old age:
His body was bent double, feet and head
Coming together in life's pilgrimage;
As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage
Of sickness felt by him in times long past,
A more than human weight upon his frame had cast.

Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,
Upon a long gray staff of shaven wood:
And, still as I drew near with gentle pace,
Upon the margin of that moorish flood
Motionless as a cloud the old man stood,
That heareth not the loud winds when they call,
And moveth all together, if it move at all.

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look
Upon that muddy water, which he conned,
As if he had been reading in a book:
And now a stranger's privilege I took;
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,
"This morning gives us promise of a glorious day."

A gentle answer did the old man make,
In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew;
And him with further words I thus bespake:

[2] Burns; cf. Vol. II, p. 55.

"What occupation do you there pursue?
This is a lonesome place for one like you."
Ere he replied, a flash of mild surprise
Broke from the sable orbs of his yet vivid eyes.

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,
But each in solemn order followed each,
With something of a lofty utterance drest,—
Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach
Of ordinary men; a stately speech;
Such as grave livers do in Scotland use,
Religious men, who give to God and man their dues.

He told, that to these waters he had come
To gather leeches, being old and poor:
Employment hazardous and wearisome!
And he had many hardships to endure:
From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor,
Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance;
And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.

The old man still stood talking by my side;
But now his voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;
And the whole body of the man did seem
Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
Or like a man from some far region sent,
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

My former thoughts returned: the fear that kills
And hope that is unwilling to be fed;
Cold, pain, and labor, and all fleshly ills;
And mighty poets in their misery dead.
—Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,
My question eagerly did I renew,
"How is it that you live, and what is it you do?"

He with a smile did then his words repeat;
And said, that, gathering leeches, far and wide
He travelled; stirring thus about his feet
The waters of the pools where they abide.
"Once I could meet with them on every side;
But they have dwindled long by slow decay;
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may."

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
The old man's shape, and speech,—all troubled me:
In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,

Wandering about alone and silently.
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.

And soon with this he other matter blended,
Cheerfully uttered, with demeanor kind,
But stately in the main; and when he ended,
I could have laughed myself to scorn, to find
In that decrepit man so firm a mind.
"God," said I, "be my help and stay secure;
I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!"

(1802)

Composed by the Seaside near Calais, August, 1802

Fair Star of evening, Splendor of the west,
Star of my country!—on the horizon's brink
Thou hangest, stooping, as might seem, to sink
On England's bosom; yet well pleased to rest,
Meanwhile, and be to her a glorious crest
Conspicuous to the nations. Thou, I think,
Should'st be my Country's emblem; and should'st wink,
Bright Star! with laughter on her banners, drest
In thy fresh beauty. There! that dusky spot
Beneath thee, that is England; there she lies.
Blessings be on you both! one hope, one lot,
One life, one glory! I with many a fear
For my dear Country, many heartfelt sighs,
Among men who do not love her, linger here.

It Is a Beauteous Evening, Calm and Free

This was composed on the beach near Calais, in the autumn of 1802.—*Wordsworth.*

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free.
The holy time is quiet as a nun,
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the sea;
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.

Dear Child! dear Girl![1] that walkest with me here,
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine;
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year,
And worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

Near Dover, September, 1802

Inland, within a hollow vale, I stood;
And saw, while sea was calm and air was clear,
The coast of France—the coast of France how near!
Drawn almost into frightful neighborhood.
I shrunk; for verily the barrier flood
Was like a lake, or river bright and fair,
A span of waters; yet what power is there!
What mightiness for evil and for good!
Even so doth God protect us if we be
Virtuous and wise. Winds blow, and waters roll,
Strength to the brave, and Power, and Deity;
Yet in themselves are nothing! One decree
Spake laws to *them*, and said that by the soul
Only, the Nations shall be great and free.

On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic[2]

Once did She hold the gorgeous east in fee;
And was the safeguard of the west: the worth
Of Venice did not fall below her birth,
Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty.
She was a maiden City, bright and free;
No guile seduced, no force could violate;
And when she took unto herself a Mate,
She must espouse the everlasting Sea.[3]
And what if she had seen those glories fade,
Those titles vanish, and that strength decay;
Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
When her long life hath reached its final day:
Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade
Of that which once was great, is passed away.

[1] Wordsworth's French daughter, who met him at Calais for a visit.

[2] Venice, which had had a glorious period of commercial prosperity in the Eastern trade during the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, was finally conquered by Napoleon in 1797 and her territory divided between France and Austria.

[3] It was a custom for the Doge of Venice to drop a ring annually into the Adriatic as a symbol of this espousal.

To Toussaint L'Ouverture[1]

Toussaint, the most unhappy man of men!
Whether the whistling Rustic tend his plough
Within thy hearing, or thy head be now
Pillowed in some deep dungeon's earless den;—
O miserable Chieftain! where and when
Wilt thou find patience? Yet die not; do thou
Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow:
Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,
Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exaltations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

Composed upon Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1802

Earth has not anything to show more fair;
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This city now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theaters, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendor valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will.
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

Written in London, 1802

This was written immediately after my return from France to London, when I could not but be struck, as here described, with the vanity and parade of our own country, especially in great towns and cities, as contrasted with the quiet, and I may say the desolation, that the revolution had produced in France. This must be borne in mind, or else the reader may think that in this and the succeeding Sonnets I have exaggerated the mischief engendered and fostered among us by undisturbed wealth. It would not be easy to conceive with what a depth of feeling I entered into the struggle carried on by the Spaniards for their deliverance from the usurped power of the French. Many times have I gone from Allan Bank in Grasmere vale, where we were then residing, to the top of the Raise-gap as it is called, so late as two o'clock in the morning, to meet the carrier bringing the newspaper from Keswick. Imperfect traces of the state of mind in which I then was may be found in my Tract on the Convention of Cintra, as well as in these Sonnets.—*Wordsworth.*

O Friend! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being, as I am, opprest
To think that now our life is only drest
For show; mean handy-work of craftsman, cook,
Or groom!—We must run glittering like a brook
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest;
The wealthiest man among us is the best.
No grandeur now in nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
This is idolatry; and these we adore:
Plain living and high thinking are no more:
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws.

London, 1802

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee; she is a fen
Of stagnant waters; altar, sword and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy Soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea;
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

Yew Trees

Written at Grasmere. These yew-trees are still standing, but the spread of that at Lorton is much diminished by mutilation. I will here mention that a little way up the hill, on the road leading from Rosthwaite to Stonethwaite (in Borrowdale), lay the trunk of a yew-tree, which appeared as you approached, so vast was its diameter, like

[1] Toussaint L'Ouverture (1743-1803) was a negro slave who led a revolution and temporarily secured independence for Haiti. He was eventually conquered and died in a French prison.

the entrance of a cave, and not a small one. Calculating upon what I have observed of the slow growth of this tree in rocky situations, and of its durability, I have often thought that the one I am describing must have been as old as the Christian era. The tree lay in the line of a fence. Great masses of its ruins were strewn about, and some had been rolled down the hillside and lay near the road at the bottom. As you approached the tree, you were struck with the number of shrubs and young plants, ashes, etc., which had found a bed upon the decayed trunk and grew to no inconsiderable height, forming, as it were, a part of the hedgerow. In no part of England, or of Europe, have I ever seen a yew-tree at all approaching this in magnitude, as it must have stood. By the bye, Hutton, the old Guide, of Keswick, had been so impressed with the remains of this tree, that he used gravely to tell strangers that there could be no doubt of its having been in existence before the flood.—*Wordsworth.*

There is a Yew-tree, pride of Lorton Vale,
Which to this day stands single, in the midst
Of its own darkness, as it stood of yore;
Not loth to furnish weapons for the bands
Of Umfraville or Percy[1] ere they marched
To Scotland's heaths; or those that crossed the sea
And drew their sounding bows at Azincour,
Perhaps at earlier Crecy, or Poictiers.[2]
Of vast circumference and gloom profound
This solitary Tree! a living thing
Produced too slowly ever to decay;
Of form and aspect too magnificent
To be destroyed. But worthier still of note
Are those fraternal Four of Borrowdale,[3]
Joined in one solemn and capacious grove;
Huge trunks! and each particular trunk a growth
Of intertwisted fibres serpentine
Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved;
Nor uninformed with Phantasy, and looks
That threaten the profane;—a pillared shade,
Upon whose grassless floor of red-brown hue,
By sheddings from the pining umbrage tinged
Perennially—beneath whose sable roof
Of boughs, as if for festal purpose, decked
With unrejoicing berries—ghostly Shapes
May meet at noontide; Fear and trembling Hope,
Silence and Foresight; Death the Skeleton
And Time the Shadow;—there to celebrate,
As in a natural temple scattered o'er
With altars undisturbed of mossy stone,
United worship; or in mute repose
To lie, and listen to the mountain flood
Murmuring from Glaramara's[4] inmost caves.

(1803)

[1] English noblemen prominent in border warfare.
[2] Battles in the Hundred Years' War between England and France occurring in 1346 and 1356 respectively.
[3] a vale in the Lake District of England south of Derwentwater.

At the Grave of Burns, 1803

SEVEN YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH

For illustration, see my Sister's Journal.—*Wordsworth.* (Cf. p. 152, *below*).

I shiver, Spirit fierce and bold,
At thought of what I now behold:
As vapors breathed from dungeons cold,
Strike pleasure dead,
So sadness comes from out the mould
Where Burns is laid.

And have I then thy bones so near,
And thou forbidden to appear?
As if it were thyself that's here
I shrink with pain;
And both my wishes and my fear
Alike are vain.

Off weight—nor press on weight!—away
Dark thoughts!—they came, but not to stay;
With chastened feelings would I pay
The tribute due
To him, and aught that hides his clay
From mortal view.

Fresh as the flower, whose modest worth
He sang, his genius "glinted" forth,
Rose like a star that touching earth,
For so it seems,
Doth glorify its humble birth
With matchless beams.

The piercing eye, the thoughtful brow,
The struggling heart, where be they now?
Full soon the Aspirant of the plough,
The prompt, the brave,
Slept, with the obscurest, in the low
And silent grave.

I mourned with thousands, but as one
More deeply grieved, for He was gone

[4] a mountain rising out of Borrowdale valley.

Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
And showed my youth
How Verse may build a princely throne
On humble truth.

Alas! where'er the current tends,
Regret pursues and with it blends,—
Huge Criffel's hoary top ascends
By Skiddaw[1] seen,—
Neighbors we were, and loving friends
We might have been;

True friends though diversely inclined;
But heart with heart and mind with mind,
Where the main fibres are entwined,
Through Nature's skill,
May even by contraries be joined
More closely still.

The tear will start, and let it flow;
Thou "poor Inhabitant below,"
At this dread moment—even so—
Might we together
Have sat and talked where gowans[2] blow,
Or on wild heather.

What treasures would have then been placed
Within my reach; of knowledge graced
By fancy what a rich repast!
But why go on?—
Oh! spare to sweep, thou mournful blast,
His grave grass-grown.

There, too, a Son, his joy and pride,
(Not three weeks past the Stripling died,)
Lies gathered to his Father's side,
Soul-moving sight!
Yet one to which is not denied
Some sad delight:

For *he* is safe, a quiet bed
Hath early found among the dead,
Harbored where none can be misled,
Wronged, or distrest;
And surely here it may be said
That such are blest.

And oh for Thee, by pitying grace
Checked oft-times in a devious race,
May He who halloweth the place
Where Man is laid
Receive thy Spirit in the embrace
For which it prayed!

Sighing I turned away; but ere
Night fell I heard, or seemed to hear,
Music that sorrow comes not near,
A ritual hymn,
Chaunted in love that casts out fear
By Seraphim.

[1] a mountain in the Lake District.
[2] daisies.

Stepping Westward

While my Fellow-traveler and I were walking by the side of Loch Ketterine, one fine evening after sunset, in our road to a Hut where, in the course of our Tour, we had been hospitably entertained some weeks before, we met, in one of the loneliest parts of that solitary region, two well-dressed Women, one of whom said to us, by way of greeting, "What, you are stepping westward?"—*Wordsworth.*[1]

"What, you are stepping westward?"—"Yea."
—'Twould be a *wildish* destiny,
If we, who thus together roam
In a strange Land, and far from home,
Were in this place the guests of Chance:
Yet who would stop, or fear to advance,
Though home or shelter he had none,
With such a sky to lead him on?

The dewy ground was dark and cold;
Behind, all gloomy to behold;
And stepping westward seemed to be
A kind of *heavenly* destiny:
I liked the greeting; 'twas a sound
Of something without place or bound;
And seemed to give me spiritual right
To travel through that region bright.

The voice was soft, and she who spake
Was walking by her native lake:
The salutation had to me
The very sound of courtesy:
Its power was felt; and while my eye
Was fixed upon the glowing Sky,
The echo of the voice enwrought
A human sweetness with the thought
Of traveling through the world that lay
Before me in my endless way.

(1803)

[1] cf. Dorothy Wordsworth, Vol. II, p. 157.

The Solitary Reaper

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travelers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands.
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In springtime from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.[1]

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago.
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of today?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

(1803)

Yarrow Unvisited

See the various Poems the scene of which is laid upon the banks of the Yarrow; in particular, the exquisite Ballad of Hamilton beginning

"Busk ye, busk ye, my bonny, bonny Bride,
Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome Marrow!—"

—*Wordsworth.*

From Sterling Castle[1] we had seen
The mazy Forth unraveled.

[1] islands to the west of Scotland.
[1] cf. Dorothy Wordsworth, Vol. II, p. 159.

Had trod the banks of Clyde, and Tay,
And with the Tweed had traveled:
And when we came to Clovenford,
Then said my *winsome Marrow*,
'Whate'er betide, we 'll turn aside,
And see the Braes of Yarrow.'

'Let Yarrow folk, *frae* Selkirk town,
Who have been buying, selling,
Go back to Yarrow, 't is their own;
Each maiden to her dwelling!
On Yarrow's banks let herons feed,
Hares couch, and rabbits burrow!
But we will downward with the Tweed,
Nor turn aside to Yarrow.

'There's Gala Water, Leader Haughs,[2]
Both lying right before us;
And Dryburgh,[3] where with chiming Tweed
The lintwhites sing in chorus;
There's pleasant Teviot dale, a land
Made blithe with plough and harrow:
Why throw away a needful day
To go in search of Yarrow?

'What 's Yarrow but a river bare,
That glides the dark hills under?
There are a thousand such elsewhere
As worthy of your wonder.'
Strange words they seemed of slight and scorn:
My True love sighed for sorrow:
And looked me in the face, to think
I thus could speak of Yarrow!

'Oh! green,' s. i, 'are Yarrow's holms,
And sweet is Yarrow flowing!
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,[4]
But we will leave it growing.
O'er hilly path, and open Strath,[5]
We' ll wander Scotland thorough;
But, though so near, we will not turn
Into the dale of Yarrow.

'Let beeves and home-bred kine partake
The sweets of Burn-mill meadow;
The swan on still St. Mary's Lake

[2] The Gala flows into the Tweed near Abbotsford. The Leader joins the Tweed near Melrose. Haughs are low-lying lands occasionally overflowed.
[3] a ruined abbey.
[4] a quotation from *The Braes of Yarrow* by Hamilton of Bangour. The "apple" was probably the rowan-berry.
[5] a river valley.

Float double, swan and shadow!
We will not see them; will not go,
To-day, nor yet to-morrow;
Enough if in our hearts we know
There 's such a place as Yarrow.

'Be Yarrow stream unseen, unknown!
It must, or we shall rue it:
We have a vision of our own;
Ah! why should we undo it?
The treasured dreams of times long past,
We'll keep them, winsome Marrow!
For when we 're there, although 't is fair,
'T will be another Yarrow!

'If Care, with freezing years should come,
And wandering seem but folly,—
Should we be loath to stir from home,
And yet be melancholy;
Should life be dull, and spirits low,
'T will soothe us in our sorrow,
That earth has something yet to show,
The bonny holms of Yarrow!'

(1803)

She Was a Phantom of Delight

Written at Town-end, Grasmere. The germ of this poem was four lines composed as a part of the verses on the Highland Girl. Though beginning in this way, it was written from my heart, as is sufficiently obvious.—*Wordsworth.*

She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair;
Like twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From Maytime and the cheerful dawn;
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

I saw her upon nearer view,
A spirit, yet a woman, too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eyes serene
The very pulse of the machine:
A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveler between life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.

(1804)

I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud

Written at Town-end, Grasmere. The Daffodils grew and still grow on the margin of Ullswater, and probably may be seen to this day as beautiful in the month of March, nodding their golden heads beside the dancing and foaming waves.—*Wordsworth.*

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils,
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay;
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee—
A poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company.
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

(1804)

The World Is Too Much With Us

The world is too much with us: late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers.
Little we see in nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus[1] rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

(1806)

Ode

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

This was composed during my residence at Town-end, Grasmere. Two years at least passed between the writing of the four first stanzas and the remaining part. To the attentive and competent reader the whole sufficiently explains itself; but there may be no harm in adverting here to particular feelings or *experiences* of my own mind on which the structure of the poem partly rests. Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being. I have said elsewhere—

> "A simple child,
> That lightly draws its breath,
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What should it know of death!"—

But it was not so much from feelings of animal vivacity that *my* difficulty came as from a sense of the indomitableness of the Spirit within me. I used to brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah, and almost to persuade myself that, whatever might become of others, I should be translated, in something of the same way, to heaven. With a feeling congenial to this, I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over the remembrances, as is expressed in the lines—

> "Obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things,
> Fallings from us, vanishings;" etc.

To that dream-like vividness and splendor which invest objects of sight in childhood, every one, I believe, if he would look back, could bear testimony, and I need not dwell upon it here: but having in the poem regarded it as presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence, I think it right to protest against a conclusion, which has given pain to some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief. It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith, as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. But let us bear in mind that, though the idea is not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of Man presents an analogy in its favor. Accordingly, a pre-existent state has entered into the popular creeds of many nations; and, among all persons acquainted with classic literature, is known as an ingredient in Platonic philosophy. Archimedes said that he could move the world if he had a point whereon to rest his machine. Who has not felt the same aspirations as regards the world of his own mind? Having to wield some of its elements when I was impelled to write this poem on the "Immortality of the Soul," I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorising me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a poet.

> "The Child is Father of the Man;
> And I could wish my days to be
> Bound each to each by natural piety."
> —*Wordsworth.*

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Appareled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore—
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

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

[1] a sea-god in the service of Neptune; Triton was also a sea-god.

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound,
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief;
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong.
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday—
Thou child of joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy shepherd-boy!

Ye blessèd creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee.
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fullness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
O evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May-morning,
And the children are culling
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm—
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
—But there's a tree, of many, one,
A single field which I have looked upon;
Both of them speak of something that is gone.
The pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

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

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim,
The homely nurse doth all she can
To make her foster-child, her inmate man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

Behold the child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' darling of a pygmy size!
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes!
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learnèd art;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song;
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife.
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
With all the persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.

Thou whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy soul's immensity;
Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted forever by the eternal mind—
Mighty prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,

In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy immortality
Broods like the day, a master o'er a slave,
A presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That Nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction; not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest—
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast—
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts before which our mortal nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised.
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,
Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts today
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

And O, ye fountains, meadows, hills, and groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
Is lovely yet;
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober coloring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

(1802-6)

Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland

This was composed while pacing to and fro between the Hall of Coleorton, then rebuilding, and the principal Farm-house of the Estate, in which we lived for nine or ten months. I will here mention that the Song on the Restoration of Lord Clifford, as well as that on the feast of Brougham Castle, were produced on the same ground. —*Wordsworth.*

Two Voices are there; one is of the sea,
One of the mountains; each a mighty Voice:

In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
They were thy chosen music, Liberty!
There came a Tyrant,[1] and with holy glee
Thou fought'st against him; but hast vainly striven.
Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.
Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft;
Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left;
For, high-souled Maid, what sorrow would it be
That Mountain floods should thunder as before,
And Ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
And neither awful Voice be heard by thee!

(1807)

Yarrow Visited

SEPTEMBER, 1814

As mentioned in my verses on the death of the Ettrick Shepherd, my first visit to Yarrow was in his company. We had lodged the night before at Traquhair, where Hogg had joined us and also Dr. Anderson, the Editor of the British Poets, who was on a visit at the Manse. Dr. A. walked with us till we came in view of the Vale of Yarrow, and, being advanced in life, he then turned back. The old Man was passionately fond of poetry, though with not much of a discriminating judgment, as the Volumes he edited sufficiently show. But I was much pleased to meet with him, and to acknowledge my obligation to his collection, which had been my brother John's companion in more than one voyage to India, and which he gave me before his departure from Grasmere, never to return. Through these Volumes I became first familiar with Chaucer, and so little money had I then to spare for books, that, in all probability, but for this same work, I should have known little of Drayton, Daniel, and other distinguished poets of the Elizabethan age, and their immediate successors, till a much later period of my life I am glad to record this, not from any importance of its own, but as a tribute of gratitude to this simple-hearted old man, whom I never again had the pleasure of meeting. I seldom read or think of this poem without regretting that my dear Sister was not of the party, as she would have had so much delight in recalling the time when, travelling together in Scotland, we declined going in search of this celebrated stream, not altogether, I will frankly confess, for the reasons assigned in the poem on the occasion.—*Wordsworth.*

And is this—Yarrow?—*This* the Stream
Of which my fancy cherished,
So faithfully, a waking dream?
An image that hath perished!

[1] Napoleon Bonaparte.

O that some Minstrel's harp were near,
To utter notes of gladness,
And chase this silence from the air,
That fills my heart with sadness!

Yet why?—a silvery current flows
With uncontrolled meanderings;
Nor have these eyes by greener hills
Been soothed, in all my wanderings.
And, through her depths, Saint Mary's Lake
Is visibly delighted;
For not a feature of those hills
Is in the mirror slighted.

A blue sky bends o'er Yarrow vale,
Save where that pearly whiteness
Is round the rising sun diffused,
A tender hazy brightness;
Mild dawn of promise! that excludes
All profitless dejection;
Though not unwilling here to admit
A pensive recollection.

Where was it that the famous Flower
Of Yarrow Vale lay bleeding?
His bed perchance was yon smooth mound
On which the herd is feeding:
And haply from this crystal pool,
Now peaceful as the morning,
The Water-wraith ascended thrice—
And gave his doleful warning.

Delicious is the Lay that sings
The haunts of happy Lovers,
The path that leads them to the grove,
The leafy grove that covers:
And Pity sanctifies the Verse
That paints, by strength of sorrow,
The unconquerable strength of love;
Bear witness, rueful Yarrow!

But thou, that didst appear so fair
To fond imagination,
Dost rival in the light of day
Her delicate creation:
Meek loveliness is round thee spread,
A softness still and holy;
The grace of forest charms decayed,
And pastoral melancholy.

That region left, the vale unfolds
Rich groves of lofty stature,
With Yarrow winding through the pomp

Of cultivated nature;
And, rising from those lofty groves,
Behold a Ruin hoary!
The shattered front of Newark's Towers,
Renowned in Border story.

Fair scenes for childhood's opening bloom,
For sportive youth to stray in;
For manhood to enjoy his strength;
And age to wear away in!
Yon cottage seems a bower of bliss,
A covert for protection
Of tender thoughts, that nestle there—
The brood of chaste affection.

How sweet, on this autumnal day,
The wild-wood fruits to gather,
And on my True-love's forehead plant
A crest of blooming heather!
And what if I enwreathed my own!
'Twere no offence to reason;
The sober Hills thus deck their brows
To meet the wintry season.

I see—but not by sight alone,
Loved Yarrow, have I won thee;
A ray of fancy still survives—
Her sunshine plays upon thee!
Thy ever-youthful waters keep
A course of lively pleasure;
And gladsome notes my lips can breathe,
Accordant to the measure.

The vapors linger round the Heights,
They melt, and soon must vanish;
One hour is theirs, no more is mine—
Sad thought, which I would banish,
But that I know, where'er I go
Thy genuine image, Yarrow!
Will dwell with me—to heighten joy,
And cheer my mind in sorrow.

(1814)

The River Duddon

It is with the little river Duddon as it is with most other rivers, Ganges and Nile not excepted, —many springs might claim the honor of being its head. In my own fancy I have fixed its rise near the noted Shire-stones placed at the meeting-point of the counties, Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Lancashire. They stand by the wayside on the top of the Wrynose Pass, and it used to be reckoned a proud thing to say that, by touching them at the same time with feet and hands, one had been in the three counties at once. At what point of its course the stream takes the name of Duddon I do not know. I first became acquainted with the Duddon, as I have good reason to remember, in early boyhood. Upon the banks of the Derwent I had learnt to be very fond of angling. Fish abound in that large river; not so in the small streams in the neighborhood of Hawkshead; and I fell into the common delusion that the farther from home the better sport would be had. Accordingly, one day I attached myself to a person living in the neighborhood of Hawkshead, who was going to try his fortune as an angler near the source of the Duddon. We fished a great part of the day with very sorry success, the rain pouring torrents, and long before we got home I was worn out with fatigue; and, if the good man had not carried me on his back, I must have lain down under the best shelter I could find. Little did I think then it would be my lot to celebrate, in a strain of love and admiration, the stream which for many years I never thought of without recollections of disappointment and distress.

During my college vacation, and two or three years afterwards, before taking my Bachelor's degree, I was several times resident in the house of a near relative who lived in the small town of Broughton. I passed many delightful hours upon the banks of this river, which becomes an estuary about a mile from that place. The remembrances of that period are the subject of the 21st Sonnet. The subject of the 27th is in fact taken from a tradition belonging to Rydal Hall, which once stood, as is believed, upon a rocky and woody hill on the right hand as you go from Rydal to Ambleside, and was deserted from the superstitious fear here described, and the present site fortunately chosen instead. The present Hall was erected by Sir Michael le Fleming, and it may be hoped that at some future time there will be an edifice more worthy of so beautiful a position. With regard to the 30th Sonnet it is odd enough that this imagination was realised in the year 1840, when I made a tour through that district with my wife and daughter, Miss Fenwick and her niece, and Mr. and Miss Quillinan. Before our return from Seathwaite chapel the party separated. Mrs. Wordsworth, while most of us went further up the stream, chose an opposite direction, having told us that we should overtake her on our way to Ulpha. But she was

tempted out of the main road to ascend a rocky eminence near it, thinking it impossible we should pass without seeing her. This, however, unfortunately happened, and then ensued vexation and distress, especially to me, which I should be ashamed to have recorded, for I lost my temper entirely. Neither I nor those that were with me saw her again till we reached the Inn at Broughton, seven miles. This may perhaps in some degree excuse my irritability on the occasion, for I could not but think she had been much to blame. It appeared, however, on explanation, that she had remained on the rock, calling out and waving her handkerchief as we were passing, in order that we also might ascend and enjoy a prospect which had much charmed her. "But on we went, her signals proving vain." How then could she reach Broughton before us? When we found she had not gone on before to Ulpha Kirk, Mr. Quillinan went back in one of the carriages in search of her. He met her on the road, took her up, and by a shorter way conveyed her to Broughton, where we were all reunited and spent a happy evening.

I have many affecting remembrances connected with this stream. Those I forbear to mention; especially things that occurred on its banks during the later part of that visit to the seaside of which the former part is detailed in my "Epistle to Sir George Beaumont."

The river Duddon rises upon Wrynose Fell, on the confines of Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Lancashire; and, having served as a boundary to the last two counties for the space of about twenty-five miles, enters the Irish Sea, between the Isle of Walney and the Lordship of Millum. —*Wordsworth.*

V

Sole listener, Duddon! to the breeze that played
With thy clear voice, I caught the fitful sound
Wafted o'er sullen moss and craggy mound—
Unfruitful solitudes, that seemed to upbraid
The sun in heaven!—but now, to form a shade
For Thee, green alders have together wound
Their foliage; ashes flung their arms around;
And birch-trees risen in silver colonnade.
And thou hast also tempted here to rise,
'Mid sheltering pines, this cottage rude and grey;
Whose ruddy children, by the mother's eyes
Carelessly watched, sport through the summer day,
Thy pleased associates:—light as endless May
On infant bosoms lonely Nature lies.

XX

The old inventive Poets, had they seen,
Or rather felt, the entrancement that detains
Thy waters, Duddon! 'mid these flowery plains—
The still repose, the liquid lapse serene,
Transferred to bowers imperishably green,
Had beautified Elysium! But these chains
Will soon be broken;—a rough course remains,
Rough as the past; where thou, of placid mien,
Innocuous as a firstling of the flock,
And countenanced like a soft cerulean sky,
Shalt change thy temper; and with many a shock
Given and received in mutual jeopardy,
Dance, like a Bacchanal,[1] from rock to rock,
Tossing her frantic thyrsus[2] wide and high!

[1] a woman who celebrates the dance of Bacchus.
[2] a staff surmounted by a bunch of vine or ivy leaves.

XXVI

Return, Content! for fondly I pursued,
Even when a child, the Streams—unheard, unseen;
Through tangled woods, impending rocks between;
Or, free as air, with flying inquest viewed
The sullen reservoirs whence their bold brood—
Pure as the morning, fretful, boisterous, keen,
Green as the salt-sea billows, white and green—
Poured down the hills, a choral multitude!
Nor have I tracked their course for scanty gains;
They taught me random cares and truant joys,
That shield from mischief and preserve from stains
Vague minds, while men are growing out of boys;
Maturer fancy owes to their rough noise
Impetuous thoughts that brook not servile reins.

XXXIV

I thought of thee, my partner and my guide,
As being past away,—Vain sympathies!
For, backward, Duddon! as I cast my eyes,
I see what was, and is, and will abide;
Still glides the Stream, and shall forever glide;
The Form remains, the Function never dies;
While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
We Men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish;—be it so!
Enough, if something from our hands have power
To live, and act, and serve the future hour;
And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know.

(1820)

Mutability

From low to high doth dissolution climb,
And sink from high to low, along a scale
Of awful notes, whose concord shall not fail;
A musical but melancholy chime,
Which they can hear who meddle not with crime,
Nor avarice, nor over-anxious care.
Truth fails not; but her outward forms that bear
The longest date do melt like frosty rime,
That in the morning whitened hill and plain
And is no more; drop like the tower sublime
Of yesterday, which royally did wear
His crown of weeds, but could not even sustain
Some casual shout that broke the silent air,
Or the unimaginable touch of Time.

(1821)

Inside of King's College Chapel, Cambridge

Tax not the royal Saint[1] with vain expense,
With ill-matched aims the Architect who planned
(Albeit laboring for a scanty band
Of white-robed Scholars only) this immense
And glorious work of fine intelligence!
—Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely-calculated less or more:—
So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense
These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof
Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
Lingering—and wandering on as loth to die;
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality.

(1821)

To a Sky-lark

Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!
Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound?
Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground?
Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,
Those quivering wings composed, that music still!

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
A privacy of glorious light is thine;
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with instinct more divine;
Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!

(1825)

Yarrow Revisited

In the autumn of 1831, my daughter and I set off from Rydal to visit Sir Walter Scott before his departure for Italy. This journey had been delayed by an inflammation in my eyes till we found that the time appointed for his leaving home would be too near for him to receive us without considerable inconvenience. Nevertheless we proceeded and reached Abbotsford on Monday I was then scarcely able to lift up my eyes to the light. How sadly changed did I find him from the man I had seen so healthy, gay, and hopeful, a few years before, when he said at the inn at Paterdale, in my presence, his daughter Anne also being there, with Mr. Lockhart, my own wife and daughter, and Mr. Quillinan,—"I mean to live till I am *eighty*, and shall write as long as I live." But to return to Abbotsford, the inmates and guests we found there were Sir Walter, Major Scott, Anne Scott, and Mr. and Mrs. Lockhart, Mr. Liddell, his Lady and Brother, and Mr. Allan the painter, and Mr. Laidlow, a very old friend of Sir Walter's. One of Burns's sons, an officer in the Indian service, had left the house a day or two before, and had kindly expressed his regret that he could not await my arrival, a regret that I may truly say was mutual. In the evening, Mr. and Mrs. Liddell sang, and Mrs. Lockhart chanted old ballads to her harp; and Mr. Allan, hanging over the back of a chair, told and acted odd stories in a humorous way. With this exhibition and his daughter's singing, Sir Walter was much amused, as indeed were we all as far as circumstances would allow. But what is most worthy of mention is the admirable demeanor of Major Scott during the following evening, when the Liddells were gone and only ourselves and Mr. Allan were present. He had much to suffer from the sight of his father's infirmities and from the great change that was about to take place at the residence he had built, and where he had long lived in so much prosperity and happiness. But what struck me most

[1] King Henry VI, who founded King's College.

was the patient kindness with which he supported himself under the many fretful expressions that his sister Anne addressed to him or uttered in his hearing. She, poor thing, as mistress of that house, had been subject, after her mother's death, to a heavier load of care and responsibility and greater sacrifices of time than one of such a constitution of body and mind was able to bear. Of this, Dora and I were made so sensible, that, as soon as we had crossed the Tweed on our departure, we gave vent at the same moment to our apprehensions that her brain would fail and she would go out of her mind, or that she would sink under the trials she had passed and those which awaited her. On Tuesday morning Sir Walter Scott accompanied us and most of the party to Newark Castle on the Yarrow. When we alighted from the carriages he walked pretty stoutly, and had great pleasure in revisiting those of his favorite haunts. Of that excursion the verses "Yarrow revisited" are a memorial. Notwithstanding the romance that pervades Sir Walter's works and attaches to many of his habits, there is too much pressure of fact for these verses to harmonise as much as I could wish with other poems. On our return in the afternoon we had to cross the Tweed directly opposite Abbotsford. The wheels of our carriage grated upon the pebbles in the bed of the stream, that there flows somewhat rapidly; a rich but sad light of rather a purple than a golden hue was spread over the Eildon hills at that moment; and, thinking it probable that it might be the last time Sir Walter would cross the stream, I was not a little moved, and expressed some of my feelings in the sonnet beginning—"A trouble, not of clouds, or weeping rain." At noon on Thursday we left Abbotsford, and in the morning of that day Sir Walter and I had a serious conversation *tête-à-tête*, when he spoke with gratitude of the happy life which upon the whole he had led. He had written in my daughter's Album, before he came into the breakfast-room that morning, a few stanzas addressed to her, and, while putting the book into her hand, in his own study, standing by his desk, he said to her in my presence—"I should not have done anything of this kind but for your father's sake: they are probably the last verses I shall ever write." They show how much his mind was impaired, not by the strain of thought but by the execution, some of the lines being imperfect, and one stanza wanting corresponding rhymes: one letter, the initial S, had been omitted in the spelling of his own name. In this interview also it was that, upon my expressing a hope of his health being benefited by the climate of the country to which he was going, and by the interest he would take in the classic remembrances of Italy, he made use of the quotation from "Yarrow unvisited" as recorded by me in the "Musings at Aquapendente" six years afterwards. Mr. Lockhart has mentioned in his Life of him what I heard from several quarters while abroad, both at Rome and elsewhere, that little seemed to interest him but what he could collect or heard of the fugitive Stuarts and their adherents who had followed them into exile. Both the "Yarrow revisited" and the "Sonnet" were sent him before his departure from England. Some further particulars of the conversations which occurred during this visit I should have set down had they not been already accurately recorded by Mr. Lockhart. I first became acquainted with this great and amiable man—Sir Walter Scott—in the year 1803, when my sister and I, making a tour in Scotland, were hospitably received by him in Lasswade upon the banks of the Esk, where he was then living. We saw a good deal of him in the course of the following week: the particulars are given in my sister's Journal of that tour.—*Wordsworth.*

The gallant Youth, who may have gained,
  Or seeks, a 'winsome Marrow,'
Was but an Infant in the lap
  When first I looked on Yarrow;
Once more, by Newark's Castle-gate
  Long left without a warder,
I stood, looked, listened, and with Thee,
  Great Minstrel of the Border![1]

Grave thoughts ruled wide on that sweet day,
  Their dignity installing
In gentle bosoms, while sere leaves
  Were on the bough, or falling;
But breezes played, and sunshine gleamed—
  The forest to embolden;
Reddened the fiery hues, and shot
  Transparent through the golden.

For busy thoughts the Stream flowed on
  In foamy agitation;
And slept in many a crystal pool
  For quiet contemplation:
No public and no private care
  The freeborn mind enthralling,
We made a day of happy hours,
  Our happy days recalling.

[1] Sir Walter Scott.

Brisk Youth appeared, the Morn of Youth,
With freaks of graceful folly,—
Life's temperate Noon, her sober Eve,
Her Night not melancholy;
Past, present, future, all appeared
In harmony united,
Like guests that meet, and some from far,
By cordial love invited.

And if, as Yarrow, through the woods
And down the meadow ranging,
Did meet us with unaltered face,
Though we were changed and changing;
If, *then*, some natural shadows spread
Our inward prospect over,
The soul's deep valley was not slow
Its brightness to recover.

Eternal blessings on the Muse,
And her divine employment!
The blameless Muse, who trains her Sons
For hope and calm enjoyment;
Albeit sickness, lingering yet,
Has o'er their pillow brooded;
And Care waylays their steps—a Sprite
Not easily eluded.

For thee, O Scott! compelled to change
Green Eildon-hill and Cheviot
For warm Vesuvio's vine-clad slopes;[2]
And leave thy Tweed and Tiviot
For mild Sorrento's breezy waves;
May classic Fancy, linking
With native Fancy her fresh aid,
Preserve thy heart from sinking!

Oh! while they minister to thee,
Each vying with the other,
May Health return to mellow Age,
With Strength, her venturous brother;
And Tiber, and each brook and rill
Renowned in song and story,
With unimagined beauty shine,
Nor lose one ray of glory!

For Thou, upon a hundred streams,
By tales of love and sorrow,
Of faithful love, undaunted truth,
Hast shed the power of Yarrow;
And streams unknown, hills yet unseen,
Wherever they invite Thee,
At parent Nature's grateful call,
With gladness must requite Thee.

A gracious welcome shall be thine,
Such looks of love and honor
As thy own Yarrow gave to me
When first I gazed upon her;
Beheld what I had feared to see,
Unwilling to surrender
Dreams treasured up from early days,
The holy and the tender.

And what, for this frail world, were all
That mortals do or suffer,
Did no responsive harp, no pen,
Memorial tribute offer?
Yea, what were mighty Nature's self?
Her features, could they win us,
Unhelped by the poetic voice
That hourly speaks within us?

Nor deem that localised Romance
Plays false with our affections;
Unsanctifies our tears—made sport
For fanciful dejections:
Ah, no! the visions of the past
Sustain the heart in feeling
Life as she is—our changeful Life,
With friends and kindred dealing.

Bear witness, Ye, whose thoughts that day
In Yarrow's groves were centred;
Who through the silent portal arch
Of mouldering Newark entered;
And climb the winding stair that once
Too timidly was mounted
By the 'last Minstrel,'[3] (not the last!)
Ere he his Tale recounted.

Flow on for ever, Yarrow Stream!
Fulfil thy pensive duty,
Well pleased that future Bards should chant
For simple hearts thy beauty;
To dream-light dear while yet unseen,
Dear to the common sunshine,
And dearer still, as now I feel,
To memory's shadowy moonshine!

(1831)

[2] Scott's ill health had compelled him to go to Italy.

[3] a reference to Scott's *The Lay of The Last Minstrel*

The Trosachs[1]

As recorded in my sister's Journal, I had first seen the Trosachs in her and Coleridge's company. The sentiment that runs through this Sonnet was natural to the season in which I again saw this beautiful spot; but this and some other sonnets that follow were colored by the remembrance of my recent visit to Sir Walter Scott, and the melancholy errand on which he was going.—*Wordsworth.*

There's not a nook within this solemn Pass,
But were an apt confessional for One
Taught by his summer spent, his autumn gone,
That Life is but a tale of morning grass
Withered at eve. From scenes of art which chase
That thought away, turn, and with watchful eyes
Feed it 'mid Nature's old felicities,
Rocks, rivers, and smooth lakes more clear than glass
Untouched, unbreathed upon:—Thrice happy quest,
If from a golden perch of aspen spray
(October's workmanship to rival May),
The pensive warbler of the ruddy breast
That moral sweeten by a heaven-taught lay,
Lulling the year, with all its cares, to rest!

(1831)

Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*

The first Volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a Poet may rationally endeavor to impart.

I had formed no very inaccurate estimate of the probable effect of those Poems: I flattered myself that they who should be pleased with them would read them with more than common pleasure; and, on the other hand, I was well aware, that by those who should dislike them they would be read with more than common dislike. The result has differed from my expectation in this only, that a greater number have been pleased than I ventured to hope I should please.

Several of my Friends are anxious for the success of these Poems, from a belief that, if the views with which they were composed were indeed realized, a class of poetry would be produced, well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and not unimportant in the quality and in the multiplicity of its moral relations: and on this account they have advised me to prefix a systematic defence of the theory upon which the Poems were written. But I was unwilling to undertake the task, knowing that on this occasion the Reader would look coldly upon my arguments, since I might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish and foolish hope of *reasoning* him into an approbation of these particular Poems: and I was still more unwilling to undertake the task, because adequately to display the opinions, and fully to enforce the arguments, would require a space wholly disproportionate to a preface. For, to treat the subject with the clearness and coherence of which it is susceptible, it would be necessary to give a full account of the present state of the public taste in this country, and to determine how far this taste is healthy or depraved; which, again, could not be determined without pointing out in what manner language and the human mind act and re-act on each other, and without retracing the revolutions, not of literature alone, but likewise of society itself. I have therefore altogether declined to enter regularly upon this defence; yet I am sensible that there would be some impropriety in abruptly obtruding upon the Public, without a few words of introduction, Poems so materially different from those upon which general approbation is at present bestowed.

It is supposed that by the act of writing in verse an Author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association; that he not only thus apprises the Reader that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that others will be carefully excluded. This exponent or symbol held forth by metrical language must in different eras of literature have excited very different expectations: for example, in the age of Catullus, Terence, and Lucretius,[1] and that of Statius or Claudian[2]; and in our own country, in the age of Shakespeare and Beaumont and

[1] a romantic valley in the Highlands, made famous by Scott in his *The Lady of the Lake.*

[1] Latin poets of the first century before Christ.

[2] Latin poets of the later Empire.

Fletcher,[2a] and that of Donne and Cowley,[3] or Dryden, or Pope.[4] I will not take upon me to determine the exact import of the promise which, by the act of writing in verse, an Author in the present day makes to his reader; but it will undoubtedly appear to many persons that I have not fulfilled the terms of an engagement thus voluntarily contracted. They who have been accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will, no doubt, frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness: they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title. I hope, therefore, the reader will not censure me for attempting to state what I have proposed to myself to perform; and also (as far as the limits of a preface will permit) to explain some of the chief reasons which have determined me in the choice of my purpose: that at least he may be spared any unpleasant feeling of disappointment, and that I myself may be protected from one of the most dishonorable accusations which can be brought against an Author, namely, that of an indolence which prevents him from endeavoring to ascertain what is his duty, or, when his duty is ascertained, prevents him from performing it.

The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems, was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them throughout, as far as was possible, in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect, and further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings; and from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. The language, too, of these men is adopted (purified indeed from what appears to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust), because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets, who think that they are conferring honor upon themselves and their art, in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes and fickle appetites of their own creation.[5]

I cannot, however, be insensible to the present outcry against the triviality and meanness, both of thought and language, which some of my contemporaries have occasionally introduced into their metrical compositions; and I acknowledge that this defect, where it exists, is more dishonorable to the Writer's own character than false refinement or arbitrary innovation, though I should contend at the same time that it is far less pernicious in the sum of its consequences. From such verses the Poems in these volumes will be found distinguished at least by one mark of difference, that each of them has a worthy *purpose*. Not that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formally conceived: but habits of meditation have, I trust, so prompted and regulated my feelings, as that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry along with them a *purpose*. If this opinion be erroneous, I can have little right to the name of a Poet. For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any

[2a] dramatists of the Elizabethan Age.
[3] poets of the next succeeding generation.
[4] poets of the Classical Revival.

[5] It is worth while here to observe that the affecting parts of Chaucer are almost always expressed in language pure and universally intelligible even to this day. (Wordsworth.)

variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and as, by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced that, by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits, we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature, and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified.

It has been said that each of these Poems has a purpose. Another circumstance must be mentioned which distinguishes these Poems from the popular Poetry of the day; it is this, that the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling.

A sense of false modesty shall not prevent me from asserting that the Reader's attention is pointed to this mark of distinction, far less for the sake of these particular Poems than from the general importance of the subject. The subject is indeed important! For the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know, that one being is elevated above another, in proportion as he possesses this capability. It has therefore appeared to me, that to endeavor to produce or enlarge this capability is one of the best services in which, at any period, a Writer can be engaged; but this service, excellent at all times, is especially so at the present day. For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies. To this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves. The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse.—When I think upon this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation, I am almost ashamed to have spoken of the feeble endeavor made in these volumes to counteract it; and, reflecting upon the magnitude of the general evil, I should be oppressed with no dishonorable melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it, which are equally inherent and indestructible; and were there not added to this impression a belief that the time is approaching when the evil will be systematically opposed by men of greater powers, and with far more distinguished success.

Having dwelt thus long on the subjects and aim of these Poems, I shall request the Reader's permission to apprise him of a few circumstances relating to their *style*, in order, among other reasons, that he may not censure me for having performed what I never attempted. The Reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes, and are utterly rejected as an ordinary device to elevate the style and raise it above prose. My purpose was to imitate, and, as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language. They are, indeed, a figure of speech occasionally prompted by passion, and I have made use of them as such; but have endeavored utterly to reject them as a mechanical device of style, or as a family language which Writers in metre seem to lay claim to by prescription. I have wished to keep the Reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing I shall interest him. Others who pursue a different track will interest him likewise; I do not interfere with their claim, but wish to prefer a claim of my own. There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; as much pains has been taken to avoid it as is ordinarily taken to produce it; this has been done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men; and further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of

poetry. Without being culpably particular, I do not know how to give my Reader a more exact notion of the style in which it was my wish and intention to write, than by informing him that I have at all times endeavored to look steadily at my subject; consequently there is, I hope, in these Poems little falsehood of description, and my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance. Something must have been gained by this practice, as it is friendly to one property of all good poetry, namely, good sense; but it has necessarily cut me off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of Poets. I have also thought it expedient to restrict myself still further, having abstained from the use of many expressions, in themselves proper and beautiful, but which have been foolishly repeated by bad Poets, till such feelings of disgust are connected with them as it is scarcely possible by any art of association to overpower.

If in a poem there should be found a series of lines, or even a single line, in which the language, though naturally arranged, and according to the strict laws of metre, does not differ from that of prose, there is a numerous class of critics who, when they stumble upon these prosaisms, as they call them, imagine that they have made a notable discovery, and exult over the Poet as over a man ignorant of his own profession. Now these men would establish a canon of criticism which the Reader will conclude he must utterly reject, if he wishes to be pleased with these volumes. And it would be a most easy task to prove to him that not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose when prose is well written. The truth of this assertion might be demonstrated by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical writings, even of Milton himself. To illustrate the subject in a general manner, I will here adduce a short composition of Gray, who was at the head of those who, by their reasonings, have attempted to widen the space of separation betwixt Prose and Metrical composition, and was more than any other man curiously elaborate in the structure of his own poetic diction.

In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire:
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire.
These ears, alas! for other notes repine;
A different object do these eyes require;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire:
Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
And new-born pleasure brings to happier men;
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;
To warm their little loves the birds complain.
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
And weep the more because I weep in vain.

It will easily be perceived, that the only part of this Sonnet which is of any value is the lines printed in Italics; it is equally obvious that, except in the rhyme, and in the use of the single word "fruitless" for fruitlessly, which is so far a defect, the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose.

By the foregoing quotation it has been shown that the language of Prose may yet be well adapted to poetry; and it was previously asserted that a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good Prose. We will go further. It may be safely affirmed that there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between Poetry and Painting, and, accordingly, we call them Sisters: but where shall we find bonds of connection sufficiently strict to typify the affinity betwixt metrical and prose composition? They both speak by and to the same organs; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance, their affections are kindred, and almost identical, not necessarily differing in degree; Poetry[6] sheds no tears "such as angels weep," but natural and human tears; she can boast of no celestial ichor that distinguishes her vital juices from those of Prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both.

If it be affirmed that rhyme and metrical arrangement of themselves constitute a distinction which

[6] I here use the word "Poetry" (though against my own judgment) as opposed to the word Prose, and synonymous with metrical composition. But much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of Fact, or Science. The only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre; nor is this, in truth, a *strict* antithesis; because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose, that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even were it desirable. (Wordsworth.)

overturns what has just been said on the strict affinity of metrical language with that of Prose, and paves the way for other artificial distinctions which the mind voluntarily admits, I answer that the language of such Poetry as is here recommended is, as far as is possible, a selection of the language really spoken by men; that this selection, wherever it is made with true taste and feeling, will of itself form a distinction far greater than would at first be imagined, and will entirely separate the composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life; and, if metre be superadded thereto, I believe that a dissimilitude will be produced altogether sufficient for the gratification of a rational mind. What other distinction would we have? Whence is it to come? And where is it to exist? Not, surely, where the Poet speaks through the mouths of his characters: it cannot be necessary here, either for elevation of style, or any of its supposed ornaments: for, if the Poet's subject be judiciously chosen, it will naturally, and upon fit occasion, lead him to passions, the language of which, if selected truly and judiciously, must necessarily be dignified and variegated, and alive with metaphors and figures. I forbear to speak of an incongruity which would shock the intelligent Reader, should the Poet interweave any foreign splendor of his own with that which the passion naturally suggests: it is sufficient to say that such addition is unnecessary. And, surely, it is more probable that those passages, which with propriety abound with metaphors and figures, will have effect if, upon other occasions where the passions are of a milder character, the style also be subdued and temperate.

But, as the pleasure which I hope to give by the Poems now presented to the reader must depend entirely on just notions upon this subject, and as it is in itself of high importance to our taste and moral feelings, I cannot content myself with these detached remarks. And if, in what I am about to say, it shall appear to some that my labor is unnecessary, and that I am like a man fighting a battle without enemies, such persons may be reminded that, whatever may be the language outwardly holden by men, a practical faith in the opinions which I am wishing to establish is almost unknown. If my conclusions are admitted, and carried as far as they must be carried if admitted at all, our judgments concerning the works of the greatest Poets, both ancient and modern, will be far different from what they are at present, both when we praise and when we censure: and our moral feelings influencing and influenced by these judgments will, I believe, be corrected and purified.

Taking up the subject, then, upon general grounds, let me ask what is meant by the word Poet? What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him?—He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events than anything which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves;—whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement.

But, whatever portion of this faculty we may suppose even the greatest Poet to possess, there cannot be a doubt that the language which it will suggest to him must often, in liveliness and truth, fall short of that which is uttered by men in real life, under the actual pressure of those passions, certain shadows of which the Poet thus produces, or feels to be produced, in himself.

However exalted a notion we would wish to cherish of the character of a Poet, it is obvious that, while he describes and imitates passions, his employment is in some degree mechanical, compared with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering. So that it will be the wish of the Poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay, for short spaces of time, perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs; modifying only the

language which is thus suggested to him by a consideration that he describes for a particular purpose, that of giving pleasure. Here, then, he will apply the principle of selection which has been already insisted upon. He will depend upon this for removing what would otherwise be painful or disgusting in the passion; he will feel that there is no necessity to trick out or to elevate nature: and, the more industriously he applies this principle the deeper will be his faith that no words, which *his* fancy or imagination can suggest, will be to be compared with those which are the emanations of reality and truth.

But it may be said by those who do not object to the general spirit of these remarks, that, as it is impossible for the Poet to produce upon all occasions language as exquisitely fitted for the passion as that which the real passion itself suggests, it is proper that he should consider himself as in the situation of a translator, who does not scruple to substitute excellencies of another kind for those which are unattainable by him; and endeavors occasionally to surpass his original, in order to make some amends for the general inferiority to which he feels that he must submit. But this would be to encourage idleness and unmanly despair. Further, it is the language of men who speak of what they do not understand; who talk of Poetry as of a matter of amusement and idle pleasure; who will converse with us as gravely about a *taste* for Poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for rope-dancing or Frontiniac[7] or Sherry. Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing[8]: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature. The obstacles which stand in the way of the fidelity of the Biographer and Historian, and of their consequent utility, are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by the Poet who comprehends the dignity of his art. The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, that of the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man. Except this one restriction, there is no object standing between the Poet and the image of things; between this, and the Biographer and Historian, there are a thousand.

Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the Poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgment the more sincere because not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love: further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves. We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure: I would not be misunderstood; but wherever we sympathize with pain, it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle combinations with pleasure. We have no knowledge, that is, no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone. The Man of science, the Chemist and Mathematician, whatever difficulties and disgusts they may have had to struggle with, know and feel this. However painful may be the objects with which the Anatomist's knowledge is connected, he feels that his knowledge is pleasure; and where he has no pleasure he has no knowledge. What then does the Poet? He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure; he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions, and deductions, which from habit acquire the quality of intuitions; he considers him as looking upon this complex scene of ideas and sensations, and finding everywhere objects that immediately excite in him sympathies which, from the necessities of his nature, are accompanied by an overbalance of enjoyment.

To this knowledge which all men carry about with them, and to these sympathies in which, without any other discipline than that of our daily life, we are fitted to take delight, the Poet principally directs his attention. He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting qualities of nature. And thus the Poet, prompted by this feeling of pleasure which accompanies him through the whole course of his

[7] a wine made from a certain type of muscat grape grown near Frontignan in France.

[8] Cf. Vol. I, p. 526.

studies, converses with general nature, with affections akin to those which, through labor and length of time, the Man of science has raised up in himself, by conversing with those particular parts of nature which are the objects of his studies. The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and inalienable inheritance; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The Man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, "that he looks before and after." He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed, the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and sense of man are, it is true, his favorite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labors of Men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then no more than at present; he will be ready to follow the steps of the Man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man.—It is not, then, to be supposed that any one, who holds that sublime notion of Poetry which I have attempted to convey, will break in upon the sanctity and truth of his pictures by transitory and accidental ornaments, and endeavor to excite admiration of himself by arts, the necessity of which must manifestly depend upon the assumed meanness of his subject.

What I have thus far said applies to Poetry in general; but especially to those parts of composition where the Poet speaks through the mouths of his characters; and upon this point it appears to authorize the conclusion that there are few persons of good sense who would not allow that the dramatic parts of composition are defective in proportion as they deviate from the real language of nature, and are colored by a diction of the Poet's own, either peculiar to him as an individual Poet or belonging simply to Poets in general; to a body of men who, from the circumstance of their compositions being in metre, it is expected will employ a particular language.

It is not, then, in the dramatic parts of composition that we look for this distinction of language; but still it may be proper and necessary where the Poet speaks to us in his own person and character. To this I answer by referring the Reader to the description which I have before given of a Poet. Among the qualities there enumerated as principally conducing to form a Poet, is implied nothing differing in kind from other men, but only in degree. The sum of what was said is, that the poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner. But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men. And with what are they connected? Undoubtedly with our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes which excite these; with the operations of the elements, and the appearances of the visible universe; with storm and sunshine, with the revolutions of the seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friends and kindred, with injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow. These, and the like, are the sensations and ob-

jects which the Poet describes, as they are the sensations of other men, and the objects which interest them. The Poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions. How, then, can his language differ in any material degree from that of all other men who feel vividly and see clearly? It might be *proved* that it is impossible. But supposing that this were not the case, the Poet might then be allowed to use a peculiar language when expressing his feelings for his own gratification, or that of men like himself. But Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men. Unless, therefore, we are advocates for that admiration which subsists upon ignorance, and that pleasure which arises from hearing what we do not understand, the Poet must descend from this supposed height; and, in order to excite rational sympathy, he must express himself as other men express themselves. To this it may be added, that while he is only selecting from the real language of men, or, which amounts to the same thing, composing accurately in the spirit of such selection, he is treading upon safe ground, and we know what we are to expect from him. Our feelings are the same with respect to metre; for, as it may be proper to remind the Reader, the distinction of metre is regular and uniform, and not, like that which is produced by what is usually called POETIC DICTION, arbitrary, and subject to infinite caprices upon which no calculation whatever can be made. In the one case, the Reader is utterly at the mercy of the Poet respecting what imagery or diction he may choose to connect with the passion; whereas, in the other, the metre obeys certain laws, to which the Poet and Reader both willingly submit because they are certain, and because no inteference is made by them with the passion but such as the concurring testimony of ages has shown to heighten and improve the pleasure which co-exists with it.

It will now be proper to answer an obvious question, namely, Why, professing these opinions, have I written in verse? To this, in addition to such answer as is included in what I have already said, I reply, in the first place, Because however I may have restricted myself, there is still left open to me what confessedly constitutes the most valuable object of all writing, whether in prose or verse; the great and universal passions of men, the most general and interesting of their occupations, and the entire world of nature before me—to supply endless combinations of forms and imagery. Now, supposing for a moment that whatever is interesting in these objects may be as vividly described in prose, why should I be condemned for attempting to superadd to such description the charm which, by the consent of all nations, is acknowledged to exist in metrical language? To this, by such as are yet unconvinced, it may be answered that a very small part of the pleasure given by Poetry depends upon the metre, and that it is injudicious to write in metre, unless it be accompanied with the other artificial distinctions of style with which metre is usually accompanied, and that, by such deviation, more will be lost from the shock which will thereby be given to the Reader's associations than will be counterbalanced by any pleasure which he can derive from the general power of numbers. In answer to those who still contend for the necessity of accompanying metre with certain appropriate colors of style in order to the accomplishment of its appropriate end, and who also, in my opinion, greatly underrate the power of metre in itself, it might, perhaps, as far as relates to these Volumes, have been almost sufficient to observe, that poems are extant, written upon more humble subjects, and in a more naked and simple style than I have aimed at, which poems have continued to give pleasure from generation to generation. Now, if nakedness and simplicity be a defect, the fact here mentioned affords a strong presumption that poems somewhat less naked and simple are capable of affording pleasure at the present day; and, what I wished *chiefly* to attempt, at present, was to justify myself for having written under the impression of this belief.

But various causes might be pointed out why, when the style is manly, and the subject of some importance, words metrically arranged will long continue to impart such a pleasure to mankind as he who proves the extent of that pleasure will be desirous to impart. The end of poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure; but, by the supposition, excitement is an unusual and irregular state of the mind; ideas and feelings do not, in that state, succeed each other in accustomed order. If the words, however, by which this excitement is produced be in themselves powerful, or the images and feelings have an undue proportion of pain connected with them, there is some danger that the excitement may be carried beyond its proper bounds. Now the co-presence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed in various moods and in a less excited state, cannot but have great efficacy in tempering and restraining the passion by an intertexture of ordinary feeling, and of feeling not strictly and necessarily connected with the passion. This is unquestionably true; and hence, though the opinion

will at first appear paradoxical, from the tendency of metre to divest language, in a certain degree, of its reality, and thus to throw a sort of half-consciousness of unsubstantial existence over the whole composition, there can be little doubt but that more pathetic situations and sentiments, that is, those which have a greater proportion of pain connected with them, may be endured in metrical composition, especially in rhyme, than in prose. The metre of the old ballads is very artless, yet they contain many passages which would illustrate this opinion; and, I hope, if the following poems be attentively perused, similar instances will be found in them. This opinion may be further illustrated by appealing to the Reader's own experience of the reluctance with which he comes to the reperusal of the distressful parts of *Clarissa Harlowe*,[9] or *The Gamester*;[10] while Shakespeare's writings, in the most pathetic scenes, never act upon us, as pathetic, beyond the bounds of pleasure—an effect which, in a much greater degree than might at first be imagined, is to be ascribed to small, but continual and regular impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical arrangement.—On the other hand (what it must be allowed will much more frequently happen), if the Poet's words should be incommensurate with the passion, and inadequate to raise the Reader to a height of desirable excitement, then (unless the Poet's choice of his metre has been grossly injudicious), in the feelings of pleasure which the reader has been accustomed to connect with metre in general, and in the feeling, whether cheerful or melancholy, which he has been accustomed to connect with that particular movement of metre, there will be found something which will greatly contribute to impart passion to the words, and to effect the complex end which the Poet proposes to himself.

If I had undertaken a SYSTEMATIC defence of the theory here maintained, it would have been my duty to develop the various causes upon which the pleasure received from metrical language depends. Among the chief of these causes is to be reckoned a principle which must be well known to those who have made any of the Arts the object of accurate reflection; namely, the pleasure which the mind derives from the perception of similitude in dissimilitude. This principle is the great spring of the activity of our minds, and their chief feeder. From this principle the direction of the sexual appetite, and all the passions connected with it, take their origin: it is the life of our ordinary conversation; and upon the accuracy with which similitude in dissimilitude, and dissimilitude in similitude, are perceived, depend our taste and our moral feelings. It would not be a useless employment to apply this principle to the consideration of metre, and to show that metre is hence enabled to afford much pleasure, and to point out in what manner that pleasure is produced. But my limits will not permit me to enter upon this subject, and I must content myself with a general summary.

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity; the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, from various causes, is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment. If Nature be thus cautious to preserve in a state of enjoyment a being so employed, the Poet ought to profit by the lesson held forth to him, and ought especially to take care, that, whatever passions he communicates to his Reader, those passions, if his Reader's mind be sound and vigorous, should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure. Now the music of harmonious metrical language, the sense of difficulty overcome, and the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rhyme or metre of the same or similar construction, an indistinct perception perpetually renewed of language closely resembling that of real life, and yet, in the circumstance of metre, differing from it so widely—all these imperceptibly make up a complex feeling of delight, which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling always found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions. This effect is always produced in pathetic and impassioned poetry; while, in lighter compositions, the ease and gracefulness with which the Poet manages his numbers are themselves confessedly a principal source of the gratification of the Reader. All that it is *necessary* to say, however, upon this subject, may be effected by affirming, what few persons will deny, that of two

[9] a novel by Samuel Richardson (1689-1761).

[10] a tragedy by Edward Moore (1712-1757). It was presented in 1753.

descriptions either of passions, manners, or characters, each of them equally well executed, the one in prose and the other in verse, the verse will be read a hundred times where the prose is read once.

Having thus explained a few of my reasons for writing in verse, and why I have chosen subjects from common life, and endeavored to bring my language near to the real language of men, if I have been too minute in pleading my own cause, I have at the same time been treating a subject of general interest; and for this reason a few words shall be added with reference solely to these particular poems, and to some defects which will probably be found in them. I am sensible that my associations must have sometimes been particular instead of general, and that, consequently, giving to things a false importance, I may have sometimes written upon unworthy subjects; but I am less apprehensive on this account, than that my language may frequently have suffered from those arbitrary connections of feelings and ideas with particular words and phrases from which no man can altogether protect himself. Hence I have no doubt that, in some instances, feelings, even of the ludicrous, may be given to my Readers by expressions which appeared to me tender and pathetic. Such faulty expressions, were I convinced they were faulty at present, and that they must necessarily continue to be so, I would willingly take all reasonable pains to correct. But it is dangerous to make these alterations on the simple authority of a few individuals, or even of certain classes of men; for where the understanding of an author is not convinced, or his feelings altered, this cannot be done without great injury to himself: for his own feelings are his stay and support; and, if he set them aside in one instance, he may be induced to repeat this act till his mind shall lose all confidence in itself, and becomes utterly debilitated. To this it may be added, that the Reader ought never to forget that he is himself exposed to the same errors as the Poet, and, perhaps, in a much greater degree: for there can be no presumption in saying of most readers, that it is not probable they will be so well acquainted with the various stages of meaning through which words have passed, or with the fickleness or stability of the relations of particular ideas to each other; and, above all, since they are so much less interested in the subject, they may decide lightly and carelessly.

Long as the reader has been detained, I hope he will permit me to caution him against a mode of false criticism which has been applied to poetry, in which the language closely resembles that of life and nature. Such verses have been triumphed over in parodies of which Dr. Johnson's stanza is a fair specimen:

> "I put my hat upon my head
> And walked into the Strand,
> And there I met another man
> Whose hat was in his hand."

Immediately under these lines I will place one of the most justly-admired stanzas of the "Babes in the Wood."

> "These pretty Babes with hand in hand
> Went wandering up and down;
> But never more they saw the Man
> Approaching from the Town."

In both these stanzas the words, and the order of the words, in no respect differ from the most unimpassioned conversation. There are words in both, for example, "the Strand," and "the Town," connected with none but the most familiar ideas; yet the one stanza we admit as admirable, and the other as a fair example of the superlatively contemptible. Whence arises this difference? Not from the metre, not from the language, not from the order of the words; but the *matter* expressed in Dr. Johnson's stanza is contemptible. The proper method of treating trivial and simple verses, to which Dr. Johnson's stanza would be a fair parallelism, is not to say, this is a bad kind of poetry, or, this is not poetry; but, this wants sense; it is neither interesting in itself, nor can *lead* to anything interesting; the images neither originate in that sane state of feeling which arises out of thought, nor can excite thought or feeling in the Reader. This is the only sensible manner of dealing with such verses. Why trouble yourself about the species till you have previously decided upon the genus? Why take pains to prove that an ape is not a Newton,[11] when it is self-evident that he is not a man?

One request I must make of my Reader, which is, that in judging these Poems he would decide by his own feelings genuinely, and not by reflection upon what will probably be the judgment of others. How common is it to hear a person say, I myself do not object to this style of composition, or this or that expression, but, to such and such classes of people it will appear mean or ludicrous! This mode

[11] Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), the famous English mathematician and philosopher.

of criticism, so destructive of all sound unadulterated judgment, is almost universal: let the Reader then abide independently by his own feelings, and, if he finds himself affected, let him not suffer such conjectures to interfere with his pleasure.

If an Author, by any single composition, has impressed us with respect for his talents, it is useful to consider this as affording a presumption, that on other occasions where we have been displeased he, nevertheless, may not have written ill or absurdly; and further, to give him so much credit for this one composition as may induce us to review what has displeased us, with more care than we should otherwise have bestowed upon it. This is not only an act of justice, but, in our decisions upon poetry especially, may conduce, in a high degree, to the improvement of our own taste: for an *accurate* taste in poetry, and in all the other arts, as Sir Joshua Reynolds[12] has observed, is an *acquired* talent, which can only be produced by thought and a long-continued intercourse with the best models of composition. This is mentioned, not with so ridiculous a purpose as to prevent the most inexperienced Reader from judging for himself (I have already said that I wish him to judge for himself), but merely to temper the rashness of decision, and to suggest, that, if Poetry be a subject on which much time has not been bestowed, the judgment may be erroneous; and that, in many cases, it necessarily will be so.

Nothing would, I know, have so effectually contributed to further the end which I have in view, as to have shown of what kind the pleasure is, and how that pleasure is produced, which is confessedly produced by metrical composition essentially different from that which I have here endeavored to recommend: for the Reader will say that he has been pleased by such composition; and what more can be done for him? The power of any art is limited; and he will suspect that, if it be proposed to furnish him with new friends, that can be only upon condition of his abandoning his old friends. Besides, as I have said, the Reader is himself conscious of the pleasure which he has received from such composition, composition to which he has peculiarly attached the endearing name of Poetry; and all men feel an habitual gratitude, and something of an honorable bigotry, for the objects which have long continued to please them; we not only wish to be pleased, but to be pleased in that particular way in which we have been accustomed to be pleased. There is in these feelings enough to resist a host of arguments; and I should be the less able to combat them successfully, as I am willing to allow that, in order entirely to enjoy the Poetry which I am recommending, it would be necessary to give up much of what is ordinarily enjoyed. But would my limits have permitted me to point out how this pleasure is produced, many obstacles might have been removed, and the Reader assisted in perceiving that the powers of language are not so limited as he may suppose; and that it is possible for poetry to give other enjoyments, of a purer, more lasting, and more exquisite nature. This part of the subject has not been altogether neglected, but it has not been so much my present aim to prove, that the interest excited by some other kinds of poetry is less vivid, and less worthy of the nobler powers of the mind, as to offer reasons for presuming that if my purpose were fulfilled, a species of poetry would be produced which is genuine poetry; in its nature well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and likewise important in the multiplicity and quality of its moral relations.

From what has been said, and from a perusal of the Poems, the Reader will be able clearly to perceive the object which I had in view: he will determine how far it has been attained, and, what is a much more important question, whether it be worth attaining; and upon the decision of these two questions will rest my claim to the approbation of the Public.

(1800-1845)

[12] noted English portrait painter and theorist (1723-1792)

Dorothy Wordsworth

(1771-1855)

If it is impossible to consider Dorothy Wordsworth's biography other than as an appendage to her brother's, the point of view is nonetheless one which she herself would have sanctioned. With enough talent to make the beginnings of a promising literary career, she desired no career, no life, indeed, distinct from his. It is true that the few examples of verse which she composed for her diary indicate no propensity for the creation of poetry. But the lively and warm observations of her notes prove that she had an eye for detail that might easily have been cultivated for literary purposes.

She was born on Christmas Day, a year after William, at Cockermouth. Even as a child she was devoted to him, and was his companion in rambles over the countryside. A clue to her character is afforded by Wordsworth's note to the *Second Evening Voluntary*: "My sister, when she first heard the voice of the sea from this point (the high ground on the coast of Cumberland overlooking Whitehaven and the sea beyond it) and beheld the sea spread before her, burst into tears. Our family then lived at Cockermouth, and this fact was often mentioned among us as indicating the sensibility for which she was so remarkable." After their mother's death, while William was at Hawkshead, she was sent to live with her maternal grandparents at Penrith, and later with her cousin at Halifax. For a number of years, in consequence, brother and sister were separated for long intervals. During one of his first vacations from Cambridge, William went to see her at Penrith; of this occasion mention is made in *The Prelude*:

> *". . . blest*
> *Between these sundry wanderings with a joy*
> *Above all joys, that seemed another morn*
> *Risen on mid noon; blest with the presence*
> *Of that sole Sister—*
> *Now after separation desolate,*
> *Restored to me—such absence that she seemed*
> *A gift then first bestowed."*

When he was on the Continent with Jones, he wrote to her: "I have thought of you perpetually." In 1793 he wrote again: "Oh, my dear, dear sister, with what transport shall I again meet you! with what rapture shall I again wear out the day in your sight!"

His affair with Annette Vallon had determined Dorothy's guardians to keep William and his sister apart. But his inheritance of some money in 1795 enabled the two at last to live together under one roof at Racedown. Her life was now complete, and her history until his death in 1850 is his history. When she came to know Coleridge, she loved him. But he was not a free man, and her existence belonged to William; so she managed to smother her natural instincts and satisfy herself with friendship. She meant much to both men, and neither William's nor Coleridge's wife had her power (or privilege) to feed the flames of their genius. Indispensable to them, she was always with them on their creative walks and their imaginative expeditions. She never regretted her unselfish, all-encompassing love for her brother; later, when William Hazlitt proposed to her, she rejected him.

On January 20, 1798, she began to keep a journal, for the purpose of providing a reservoir, if William should have need of it, of their shared impressions and experiences. Her entries afford us an invaluable commentary on the background of William's poetry. This is especially true of the diary she kept during her tour of Scotland with her brother in 1803, published as *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* (1874). The journey was

productive of some of Wordsworth's finest lyrics; and our enjoyment of them can be vastly enhanced by recapturing from his sister's vivid account the actual circumstances which stimulated him to write them. But these *Recollections* are valuable in themselves for the sincere poetic sensitivity which marks every page. It has been said that no better guide to the Scottish Lakes can be found than this volume.

In 1832 Dorothy was seized with an attack of brain fever from which she never again completely recovered. By 1836 she was a confirmed invalid. One by one most of her friends died while she lived on, her intellectual and physical powers decaying year by year. After her brother's death there were few moments of clarity left to her wrecked mind. But this final darkness was a refuge to her, for in it she lived over again her years of happiness. "She forgot near events," but "could remember quite well what took place in her girlhood." Unable to read, she "would frequently amuse herself by reciting poetry and other scraps." She died January 25, 1855, in her eighty-third year.

In addition to the bibliography suggested for Wordsworth and for Coleridge, the following books are recommended for a study of Dorothy Wordsworth: E. De Selincourt's *Dorothy Wordsworth* (1933), *Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth* (1935), and *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth, The Middle Years;* E. Lee's *Dorothy Wordsworth* (1894); and C. MacD. MacLean's *Dorothy Wordsworth* (1932). W. Knight edited her *Journals* (1930), and J. C. Shairp her *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland* (1894).

Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland, A. D. 1803

Sunday, August 28th.—We were desirous to have crossed the mountains above Glengyle to Glenfalloch, at the head of Loch Lomond,[1] but it rained so heavily that it was impossible, so the ferryman engaged to row us to the point where Coleridge and I had rested, while William was going on our doubtful adventure. The hostess provided us with tea and sugar for our breakfast; the water was boiled in an iron pan, and dealt out to us in a jug, a proof that she does not often drink tea, though she said she had always tea and sugar in the house. She and the rest of the family breakfasted on curds and whey, as taken out of the pot in which she was making cheese; she insisted upon my taking some also; and her husband joined in with the old story, that it was 'varra halesome.' I thought it exceedingly good, and said to myself that they lived nicely with their cow: she was meat, drink, and company. Before breakfast the housewife was milking behind the chimney, and I thought I had seldom heard a sweeter fire-side sound; in an evening, sitting over a sleepy, low-burnt fire, it would lull one like the purring of a cat.

When we departed, the good woman shook me cordially by the hand, saying she hoped that if ever we came into Scotland again, we would come and see her. The lake was calm, but it rained so heavily that we could see little. Landed at about ten o'clock almost wet to the skin, and, with no prospect but of streaming rains, faced the mountainroad to Loch Lomond. We recognised the same objects passed before,—the tarn, the potato-bed, and the cottages with their burnies,[2] which were no longer, as one might say, household streams, but made us only think of the mountains and rocks they came from. Indeed, it is not easy to imagine how different everything appeared: the mountains with mists and torrents alive and always changing; but the low grounds where the inhabitants had been at work the day before were melancholy, with here and there a few haycocks and hay scattered about.

Wet as we were, William and I turned out of our path to the Garrison house. A few rooms of it seemed to be inhabited by some wretchedly poor families, and it had all the desolation of a large decayed mansion in the suburbs of a town, abandoned of its proper inhabitants, and become the abode of paupers. In spite of its outside bravery, it was but a poor protection against 'the sword of winter, keen and cold.' We looked at the building through the arch of a broken gateway of the courtyard, in the middle of which it stands. Upon

[1] a beautiful lake in western Scotland.

[2] little brooks.

that stormy day it appeared more than desolate; there was something about it even frightful.

When beginning to descend the hill towards Loch Lomond, we overtook two girls, who told us we could not cross the ferry till evening, for the boat was gone with a number of people to church. One of the girls was exceedingly beautiful; and the figures of both of them, in grey plaids falling to their feet, their faces only being uncovered, excited our attention before we spoke to them; but they answered us so sweetly that we were quite delighted, at the same time that they stared at us with an innocent look of wonder. I think I never heard the English language sound more sweetly than from the mouth of the elder of these girls, while she stood at the gate answering our inquiries, her face flushed with the rain; her pronunciation was clear and distinct: without difficulty, yet slow, like that of a foreign speech. They told us we might sit in the ferry-house till the return of the boat, went in with us, and made a good fire as fast as possible to dry our wet clothes. We learnt that the taller was the sister of the ferryman, and had been left in charge with the house for the day, that the other was his wife's sister, and was come with her mother on a visit,—an old woman, who sate in a corner beside the cradle, nursing her little grandchild. We were glad to be housed, with our feet upon a warm hearthstone; and our attendants were so active and good-humored that it was pleasant to have to desire them to do anything. The younger was a delicate and unhealthy-looking girl; but there was an uncommon meekness in her countenance, with an air of premature intelligence, which is often seen in sickly young persons. The other made me think of Peter Bell's 'Highland Girl':

> *'As light and beauteous as a squirrel,*
> *As beauteous and as wild.'*

She moved with unusual activity, which was chastened very delicately by a certain hesitation in her looks when she spoke, being able to understand us but imperfectly. They were both exceedingly desirous to get me what I wanted to make me comfortable. I was to have a gown and petticoat of the mistress's; so they turned out her whole wardrobe upon the parlor floor, talking Erse[8] to one another, and laughing all the time. It was long before they could decide which of the gowns I was to have; they chose at last, no doubt thinking that it was the best, a light-colored sprigged cotton, with long sleeves, and they both laughed while I was putting it on, with the blue linsey petticoat, and one or the other, or both together, helped me to dress, repeating at least half a dozen times, 'You never had on the like of that before.' They held a consultation of several minutes over a pair of coarse woollen stockings, gabbling Erse as fast as their tongues could move, and looked as if uncertain what to do: at last, with great diffidence, they offered them to me, adding, as before, that I had never worn 'the like of them.' When we entered the house we had been not a little glad to see a fowl stewing in barley-broth; and now, when the wettest of our clothes were stripped off, began again to recollect that we were hungry, and asked if we could have dinner. 'Oh yes, ye may get that,' the elder replied, pointing to the pan on the fire.

Monday, August 29th.—It rained heavily this morning, and, having heard so much of the long rains since we came into Scotland, as well as before, we had no hope that it would be over in less than three weeks at the least, so poor Coleridge, being very unwell, determined to send his clothes to Edinburgh and make the best of his way thither, being afraid to face much wet weather in an open carriage. William and I were unwilling to be confined at Tarbet, so we resolved to go to Arrochar, a mile and a half on the road to Inverary, where there is an inn celebrated as a place of good accommodation for travellers. Coleridge and I set off on foot, and William was to follow with the car, but a heavy shower coming on, Coleridge left me to shelter in a hut and wait for William while he went on before. This hut was unplastered, and without windows, crowded with beds, uncomfortable, and not in the simplicity of the ferryman's house. A number of good clothes were hanging against the walls, and a green silk umbrella was set up in a corner. I should have been surprised to see an umbrella in such a place before we came into the Highlands; but umbrellas are not so common anywhere as there—a plain proof of the wetness of the climate; even five minutes after this a girl passed us without shoes and stockings, whose gown and petticoat were not worth half a crown, holding an umbrella over her bare head.

We turned at a guide-post, 'To the New Inn,' and, after descending a little, and winding round the bottom of a hill, saw, at a small distance, a white house half hidden by tall trees upon a lawn that slopes down to the side of Loch Long, a

[8] Gaelic, the language of Highland Scotland.

sea-loch,[4] which is here very narrow. Right before us, across the lake, was The Cobbler, which appeared to rise directly from the water; but, in fact, it overtopped another hill, being a considerable way behind. The inn looked so much like a gentleman's house that we could hardly believe it was an inn. We drove down the broad gravel walk, and, making a sweep, stopped at the front door, were shown into a large parlor with a fire, and my first thought was, How comfortable we should be! but Coleridge, who had arrived before us, checked my pleasure: the waiter had shown himself disposed to look coolly upon us, and there had been a hint that we could not have beds;—a party was expected, who had engaged all the beds. We conjectured this might be but a pretence, and ordered dinner in the hope that matters would clear up a little, and we thought they could not have the heart to turn us out in so heavy a rain if it were possible to lodge us. We had a nice dinner, yet would have gladly changed our roasted lamb and pickles, and the gentleman-waiter with his napkin in his pocket, for the more homely fare of the smoky hut at Loch Ketterine, and the good woman's busy attentions, with the certainty of a hospitable shelter at night. After dinner I spoke to the landlord himself, but he was not to be moved: he could not even provide one bed for me, so nothing was to be done but either to return to Tarbet with Coleridge, or that William and I should push on the next stage, to Cairndow. We had an interesting close view from the windows of the room where we sate, looking across the lake, which did not differ in appearance, as we saw it here, from a fresh-water lake. The sloping lawn on which the house stood was prettily scattered over with trees; but we had seen the place to great advantage at our first approach, owing to the mists upon the mountains, which had made them seem exceedingly high, while the strange figures on The Cobbler appeared and disappeared, like living things; but, as the day cleared we were disappointed in what was more like the permanent effect of the scene: the mountains were not so lofty as we had supposed, and the low grounds not so fertile; yet still it is a very interesting, I may say beautiful, place.

The rain ceased entirely, so we resolved to go on to Cairndow, and had the satisfaction of seeing that our landlord had not told us an untruth concerning the expected company; for just before our departure we saw, on the opposite side of the vale, a coach with four horses, another carriage, and two or three men on horseback—a striking procession, as it moved along between the bare mountain and the lake. Twenty years ago, perhaps, such a sight had not been seen here except when the Duke of Argyle, or some other Highland chieftain, might chance to be going with his family to London or Edinburgh. They had to cross a bridge at the head of the lake, which we could not see, so, after disappearing about ten minutes, they drove up to the door—three old ladies, two waiting-women, and store of men-servants. The old ladies were as gaily dressed as bullfinches in spring-time. We heard the next day that they were the renowned Miss Waughs of Carlisle, and that they enjoyed themselves over a game at cards in the evening.

Left Arrochar at about four o'clock in the afternoon. Coleridge accompanied us a little way; we portioned out the contents of our purse before our parting; and, after we had lost sight of him, drove heavily along. Crossed the bridge, and looked to the right, up the vale, which is soon terminated by mountains: it was of a yellow green, with but few trees and few houses; sea-gulls were flying above it. Our road—the same along which the carriages had come—was directly under the mountains on our right hand, and the lake was close to us on our left, the waves breaking among stones overgrown with yellow sea-weed; fishermen's boats, and other larger vessels than are seen on fresh-water lakes were lying at anchor near the opposite shore; sea-birds flying overhead; the noise of torrents mingled with the beating of the waves, and misty mountains enclosed the vale;—a melancholy but not a dreary scene. Often have I, in looking over a map of Scotland, followed the intricate windings of one of these sea-lochs, till, pleasing myself with my own imaginations, I have felt a longing, almost painful, to travel among them by land or by water.

This was the first sea-loch we had seen. We came prepared for a new and great delight, and the first impression which William and I received, as we drove rapidly through the rain down the lawn of Arrochar, the objects dancing before us, was even more delightful than we had expected. But, as I have said, when we looked through the window, as the mists disappeared and the objects were seen more distinctly, there was less of sheltered valley-comfort than we had fancied to ourselves, and the mountains were not so grand; and now that we were near to the shore of the lake, and could see

[4] a "loch" in Scotland is a body of water entirely or nearly enclosed. It may therefore be either fresh or salt. The sea-loch is really a bay.

that it was not of fresh water, the wreck, the broken sea-shells, and scattered sea-weed gave somewhat of a dull and uncleanly look to the whole lake, and yet the water was clear, and might have appeared as beautiful as that of Loch Lomond, if with the same pure pebbly shore. Perhaps, had we been in a more cheerful mood of mind we might have seen everything with a different eye. The stillness of the mountains, the motion of the waves, the streaming torrents, the sea-birds, the fishing-boats were all melancholy; yet still, occupied as my mind was with other things, I thought of the long windings through which the waters of the sea had come to this inland retreat, visiting the inner solitudes of the mountains, and I could have wished to have mused out a summer's day on the shores of the lake. From the foot of these mountains whither might not a little barque carry one away? Though so far inland, it is but a slip of the great ocean: seamen, fishermen, and shepherds here find a natural home. We did not travel far down the lake, but, turning to the right through an opening of the mountains, entered a glen called Glen Croe.

Our thoughts were full of Coleridge, and when we were enclosed in the narrow dale, with a length of winding road before us, a road that seemed to have insinuated itself into the very heart of the mountains—the brook, the road, bare hills, floating mists, scattered stones, rocks, and herds of black cattle being all that we could see,—I shivered at the thought of his being sickly and alone, travelling from place to place.

Sunday, September 11th.—Immediately after breakfast, the morning being fine, we set off with cheerful spirits towards the Trossachs, intending to take up our lodging at the house of our old friend the ferryman. A boy accompanied us to convey the horse and car back to Callander from the head of Loch Achray. The country near Callander is very pleasing; but, as almost everywhere else, imperfectly cultivated. We went up a broad vale, through which runs the stream from Loch Ketterine, and came to Loch Vennachar, a larger lake than Loch Achray, the small one which had given us such unexpected delight when we had conceived of its neighbor, and so the reality proved to us when we came up to that little lake, and saw it before us in its true shape in the cheerful sunshine. The Trossachs, overtopped by Benledi and other high mountains, enclose the lake at the head; and those houses which we had seen before, with their corn fields sloping towards the water, stood very prettily under low woods. The fields did not appear so rich as when we had seen them through the veil of mist; but yet, as in framing our expectations we had allowed for a much greater difference, so we were even a second time surprised with pleasure at the same spot.

Went as far as these houses of which I have spoken in the car, and then walked on, intending to pursue the road up the side of Loch Ketterine along which Coleridge had come; but we had resolved to spend some hours in the neighborhood of the Trossachs, and accordingly coasted the head of Loch Achray, and pursued the brook between the two lakes as far as there was any track. Here we found, to our surprise—for we had expected nothing but heath and rocks, like the rest of the neighborhood of the Trossachs—a secluded farm, a plot of verdant ground with a single cottage and its company of out-houses. We turned back, and went to the very point from which we had first looked upon Loch Achray when we were here with Coleridge. It was no longer a visionary scene: the sun shone into every crevice of the hills, and the mountain-tops were clear. After some time we went into the pass from the Trossachs, and were delighted to behold the forms of objects fully revealed, and even surpassing in loveliness and variety what we had conceived. The mountains, I think, appeared not so high; but on the whole we had not the smallest disappointment; the heather was fading, though still beautiful.

Sate for half-an-hour in Lady Perth's shed, and scrambled over the rocks and through the thickets at the head of the lake. I went till I could make my way no further, and left William to go to the top of the hill, whence he had a distinct view, as on a map, of the intricacies of the lake and the course of the river. Returned to the huts, and, after having taken a second dinner of the food we had brought from Callander, set our faces towards the head of Loch Ketterine. I can add nothing to my former description of the Trossachs, except that we departed with our old delightful remembrances endeared, and many new ones. The path or road—for it was neither the one nor the other, but something between both—is the pleasantest I have ever travelled in my life for the same length of way,—now with marks of sledges or wheels, or none at all, bare or green, as it might happen; now a little descent, now a level; sometimes a shady lane, at others an open track through green pastures; then again it would lead us into thick coppice-woods, which often entirely shut out the lake, and again admitted it by glimpses. We have never had a more delightful walk than this evening. Ben Lomond, and the three

pointed-topped mountains of Loch Lomond, which we had seen from the Garrison, were very majestic under the clear sky, the lake perfectly calm, the air sweet and mild. I felt that it was much more interesting to visit a place where we had been before than it can possibly be the first time, except under peculiar circumstances. The sun had been set for some time, when, being within a quarter of a mile of the ferryman's hut, our path having led us close to the shore of the calm lake, we met two neatly dressed women, without hats, who had probably been taking their Sunday evening's walk. One of them said to us in a friendly, soft tone of voice, 'What! you are stepping westward?' I cannot describe how affecting this simple expression was in that remote place, with the western sky in front, yet glowing with the departed sun. William wrote the following poem long after, in remembrance of his feelings and mine:—

'What! you are stepping westward?' 'Yea, . . . etc.'[5]

Tuesday, 13th September.—Again a fine morning. I strolled into the green field in which the house stands while the woman was preparing breakfast, and at my return found one of her neighbors sitting by the fire, a feeble paralytic old woman. After having inquired concerning our journey the day before, she said, 'I have travelled far in my time,' and told me she had married an English soldier who had been stationed at the Garrison; they had had many children, who were all dead or in foreign countries; and she had returned to her native place, where now she had lived several years, and was more comfortable than she could ever have expected to be, being very kindly dealt with by all her neighbors. Pointing to the ferryman and his wife, she said they were accustomed to give her a day of their labor in digging peats, in common with others, and in that manner she was provided with fuel, and, by like voluntary contributions, with other necessaries. While this infirm old woman was relating her story in a tremulous voice, I could not but think of the changes of things, and the days of her youth, when the shrill fife, sounding from the walls of the Garrison, made a merry noise through the echoing hills. I asked myself, if she were to be carried again to the deserted spot after her course of life, no doubt a troublesome one, would the silence appear to her the silence of desolation or of peace?

After breakfast we took a final leave of our hostess, and, attended by her husband, again set forward on foot. My limbs were a little stiff, but the morning being uncommonly fine I did not fear to aim at the accomplishment of a plan we had laid of returning to Callander by a considerable circuit. We were to go over the mountains from Loch Ketterine, a little below the ferryhouse on the same side of the water, descending to Loch Voil, a lake from which issues the stream that flows through Strath Eyer into Loch Lubnaig. Our road, as is generally the case in passing from one vale into another, was through a settling between the hills, not far from a small stream. We had to climb considerably, the mountain being much higher than it appears to be, owing to its retreating in what looks like a gradual slope from the lake, though we found it steep enough in the climbing. Our guide had been born near Loch Voil, and he told us that at the head of the lake, if we would look about for it, we should see the burying-place of a part of his family, the MacGregors, a clan who had long possessed that district, a circumstance which he related with no unworthy pride of ancestry. We shook hands with him at parting, not without a hope of again entering his hut in company with others whom we loved.

Continued to walk for some time along the top of the hill, having the high mountains of Loch Voil before us, and Ben Lomond and the steeps of Loch Ketterine behind. Came to several deserted mountain huts or shiels, and rested for some time beside one of them, upon a hillock of its green plot of monumental herbage. William here conceived the notion of writing an ode upon the affecting subject of those relics of human society found in that grand and solitary region. The spot of ground where we sate was even beautiful, the grass being uncommonly verdant, and of a remarkably soft and silky texture.

After this we rested no more till we came to the foot of the mountain, where there was a cottage, at the door of which a woman invited me to drink some whey: this I did, while William went to inquire respecting the road at a new stone house a few steps further. He was told to cross the brook, and proceed to the other side of the vale, and that no further directions were necessary, for we should find ourselves at the head of the lake, and on a plain road which would lead us downward. We waded the river and crossed the vale, perhaps half a mile or more. The mountains all round are very high; the vale pastoral and unenclosed, not many dwellings, and but few trees; the mountains in general smooth near the bottom. They are in large

[5] cf. Vol. II, p. 129.

unbroken masses, combining with the vale to give an impression of bold simplicity.

Near the head of the lake, at some distance from us, we discovered the burial-place of the MacGregors, and did not view it without some interest, with its ornamental balls on the four corners of the wall, which, I daresay, have been often looked at with elevation of heart by our honest friend of Loch Ketterine. The lake is divided right across by a narrow slip of flat land, making a small lake at the head of the large one. The whole may be about five miles long.

As we descended, the scene became more fertile, our way being pleasantly varied—through coppices or open fields, and passing farm-houses, though always with an inter-mixture of uncultivated ground. It was harvest-time, and the fields were quietly—might I be allowed to say pensively?—enlivened by small companies of reapers. It is not uncommon in the more lonely parts of the Highlands to see a single person so employed. The following poem was suggested to William by a beautiful sentence in Thomas Wilkinson's 'Tour in Scotland':—

'Behold her single in the field, . . . etc.'[6]

Sunday, September 18th.—The town of Peebles looks very pretty from the road in returning: it is an old town, built of grey stone, the same as the castle. Well-dressed people were going to church. Sent the car before, and walked ourselves, and while going along the main street William was called aside in a mysterious manner by a person who gravely examined him—whether he was an Irishman or a foreigner, or what he was; I suppose our car was the occasion of suspicion at a time when every one was talking of the threatened invasion. We had a day's journey before us along the banks of the Tweed, a name which has been sweet to my ears almost as far back as I can remember anything. After the first mile or two our road was seldom far from the river, which flowed in gentleness, though perhaps never silent; the hills on either side high and sometimes stony, but excellent pasturage for sheep. In some parts the vale was wholly of this pastoral character, in others we saw extensive tracts of corn ground, even spreading along whole hill-sides, and without visible fences, which is dreary in a flat country; but there is no dreariness on the banks of the Tweed,—the hills, whether smooth or stony, uncultivated or covered with ripe corn, had the same pensive softness. Near the corn tracts were large farm-houses, with many corn-stacks; the stacks and the house and out-houses together, I recollect, in one or two places upon the hills, at a little distance, seemed almost as large as a small village or hamlet. It was a clear autumnal day, without wind, and, being Sunday, the business of the harvest was suspended, and all that we saw, and felt, and heard, combined to excite one sensation of pensive and still pleasure.

Passed by several old halls yet inhabited, and others in ruin; but I have hardly a sufficiently distinct recollection of any of them to be able to describe them, and I now at this distance of time regret that I did not take notes. In one very sweet part of the vale a gate crossed the road, which was opened by an old woman who lived in a cottage close to it; I said to her, 'You live in a very pretty place!' 'Yes,' she replied, 'the water of Tweed is a bonny water.' The lines of the hills are flowing and beautiful, the reaches of the vale long; in some places appear the remains of a forest, in others you will see as lovely a combination of forms as any traveller who goes in search of the picturesque need desire, and yet perhaps without a single tree; or at least if trees there are, they shall be very few, and he shall not care whether they are there or not.

The road took us through one long village, but I do not recollect any other; yet I think we never had a mile's length before us without a house, though seldom several cottages together. The loneliness of the scattered dwellings, the more stately edifices decaying or in ruin, or, if inhabited, not in their pride and freshness, aided the general effect of the gently varying scenes, which was that of tender pensiveness; no bursting torrents when we were there, but the murmuring of the river was heard distinctly, often blended with the bleating of sheep. In one place we saw a shepherd lying in the midst of a flock upon a sunny knoll, with his face towards the sky, happy picture of shepherd life.

The transitions of this vale were all gentle except one, a scene of which a gentleman's house was the centre, standing low in the vale, the hills above it covered with gloomy fir plantations, and the appearance of the house itself, though it could scarcely be seen, was gloomy. There was an allegorical air—a person fond of Spenser will understand me—in this uncheerful spot, single in such a country,

'The house was hears'd about with a black wood.'

[6] cf. Vol. II, p. 130.

We have since heard that it is the residence of Lord Traquair, a Roman Catholic nobleman, of a decayed family.

We left the Tweed when we were within about a mile and a half or two miles of Clovenford, where we were to lodge. Turned up the side of a hill, and went along sheep-grounds till we reached the spot—a single stone house, without a tree near it or to be seen from it. On our mentioning Mr. Scott's name the woman of the house showed us all possible civility, but her slowness was really amusing. I should suppose it is a house little frequented, for there is no appearance of an inn. Mr. Scott, who she told me was a very clever gentleman, 'goes there in the fishing season'; but indeed Mr. Scott is respected everywhere; I believe that by favor of his name one might be hospitably entertained throughout all the borders of Scotland. We dined and drank tea—did not walk out, for there was no temptation; a confined barren prospect from the window.

At Clovenford, being so near to the Yarrow, we could not but think of the possibility of going thither, but came to the conclusion of reserving the pleasure for some future time, in consequence of which, after our return, William wrote the poem[7] which I shall here transcribe:

'*From Stirling Castle we had seen* . . . etc.'

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

(1772-1834)

The career of Samuel Taylor Coleridge is one of the most tragic in the annals of English poetry. In Oliver Elton's eloquent words, "the history of his life is largely one of designs unfulfilled—mere broken arcs—and of surmises thrown out rather than worked out." His genius was of the most splendid order, yet few critics would maintain that to form a collection of his great poetry it would be necessary to add more than two or three poems to the handful we print in these pages. Like Wordsworth, he long outlived his period of poetic fertility, though, unlike him, he wrote little verse during the later years. During that part of his life, however, his creative mind was as active as ever in its concern with criticism and philosophy, and if he produced no poetry of importance, he was the author of some significant prose.

He was born October 21, 1772, the thirteenth child of the rector of Ottery St. Mary's, in Devonshire. By his third year he was reading the Bible, and soon developed, like his father, into a bookworm. Of all that he read in his childhood, no work made a profounder impression on him than *The Book of a Thousand Nights and a Night* (cf. Vol. I, pp. 728 ff.). It opened to him that world of magic and mystery which was to be mirrored in most of his great poetry, and was partly responsible for his lifelong tendency to find the world of his imagination more real than the everyday world about him. The similarity in character between the boy and his father drew them close to each other, and the good vicar did little to discourage or to discipline his son in the bookish dream-world in which he was already living.

The death of his father in 1781, however, put an end to this happy existence as well as to his adventures in the Devonshire countryside that he had come to love dearly. Through the influence of one of his father's former pupils, he was sent, just before his tenth birthday, to Christ's Hospital in London. There he met his fellow student Charles Lamb, who remained, except for an interval occasioned by a misunderstanding, his close friend for the rest of his days. A graphic picture of life at this charity school for the gifted poor was penned years later by Lamb in his *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago* (cf. *below*).

Still without funds, he was admitted as a sizar to Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1791, the year in which Wordsworth left that university. The next year he received a gold

[7] cf. Vol. II, p. 130.

medal for his Greek ode on the slave trade, and in 1793 he won a scholarship. He was reading everything, and had fallen particularly under the spell of Bowles, Chatterton, and Macpherson (cf. *above*). But his books could not cure the restlessness he felt because of the exciting happenings across the Channel. This was the year in which Louis XVI was beheaded, and in which, also, England and France engaged in war against each other. Moreover, his debts at Cambridge were mounting, and his reckless life was not improving his health. Already he had formed the habit of taking opium for every kind of physical illness to deaden pain, which he could never bear. For no apparent reason, he suddenly left Cambridge in November 1793 for London. Within a few days, in sheer desperation over his impecuniousness and his general dissatisfaction with himself, he had enlisted in His Majesty's Light Dragoons for a period of eight years under the incredible name of Silas Tomkyn Comberbacke. An avowed detester of war, a disciple of Godwin, and a dreamer who dreaded mounting a horse, Coleridge was thus already manifesting his talent for doing precisely the thing to make himself most miserable. Through the intercession of a brother, however, the young poet was released and allowed to return to Cambridge.

During the summer of 1794 he went on a visit to Oxford and became acquainted with the young Robert Southey, then on fire with the writings of Voltaire (cf. Vol. I, p. 755). Both lads were staunchly republican and were disgusted with the conservatism of England when measured by French standards. Together they elaborated a plan for forming a new life to be lived Rousseauistically in America in a colony which they would form on the banks of the Susquehanna. "Pantisocracy," Coleridge named this new order of society in which all would be equal. With his mother as a first recruit, Southey began to look around for other followers. His sweetheart, Edith Fricker, was ready to follow him anywhere. Her sister, Mary, married to Southey's friend Robert Lovell, was enthusiastic too. In order to raise money for their experiment, Coleridge and Southey planned to lecture and print their poems. In the meantime, it would also be necessary that each be provided with a mate; Lovell was already married, Southey would soon be, but Coleridge was unattached. There were still three unengaged sisters of Edith and Mary Fricker; and since the family seemed to be involved with the destiny of Pantisocracy, Coleridge allowed himself to become betrothed to the eldest, Sara. He was far too busy with other matters to give much attention to this detail; the theory of their new society engrossed him. "In the book of pantisocracy," he said, "I hope to have comprised all that is good in Godwin." His boundless enthusiasm can be read in the absurd poem he wrote *To a Young Ass, Its Mother Chained to It near a Log* (1794):

> *"Poor little Foal of an oppressed race!*
> *I love the languid patience of thy face: . . .*
> *Do thy prophetic fears anticipate,*
> *Meek Child of Misery! thy future fate?*
> *The starving meal, and all the thousand aches*
> *'Which patient Merit of the Unworthy takes'? . . .*
> *It seems to say, 'And have I then* one *friend?'*
> *Innocent foal! thou poor despis'd forlorn!*
> *I hail thee* Brother*—spite of the fool's scorn!*
> *And fain would take thee with me, in the Dell*
> *Where high-soul'd Pantisocracy shall dwell!*
> *Where Mirth shall tickle Plenty's ribless side,*
> *And smiles from Beauty's Lip on sunbeams glide,*
> *Where Toil shall wed young Health that charming Lass!*
> *And use his sleek cows for a looking-glass—*
> *Where Rats shall mess with Terriers hand-in-glove*
> *And Mice with Pussy's Whiskers sport in Love. . ."*

Other plans failing to provide enough money, Southey and Coleridge collaborated on a play, *The Fall of Robespierre* (1794). Before the year was out both pantisocrats had married their respective Miss Frickers. Before another year had passed, Coleridge was so

overwhelmed with financial responsibilities that the Pantisocratic dream was shattered before the impact of hard necessity. Southey, following the gleam of financial security, abandoned their ideal altogether, by such venality shocking Coleridge into a complete loss of regard for him.

In 1796 Coleridge published a volume of *Poems*, and another in 1797. Though uneven in merit, these efforts give ample testimony of the genius that had not yet found its manner. Of them *Lewti, or the Circassian Love-Chaunt* is truly beautiful and characteristic of its author's best style; *Religious Musings* has many fine flashes; and *France* is interesting as an expression of the disillusionment he had come to feel for the French Revolution, though not for the cause of Freedom.

Tentative schemes, meanwhile, for grand literary projects were buzzing through his head; he managed to think of a new one before he could do anything to realize its predecessor. Nothing was easier for his fertile brain than to conceive splendid plans; nothing was more difficult for it than to acquire the patience to carry them out. He found relief from the hauntings of his literary conscience by editing a short-lived newspaper, *The Watchman,* by preaching occasionally as a Unitarian, and by his favorite method of escape—talk. At last in 1797, while he was established at Nether Stowey, he came to know the Wordsworths (cf. p. 103, *above*). William he worshiped at once as the greatest man he had ever met, and Wordsworth was not unwilling to accept the homage from another of such gifts. Dorothy Wordsworth, too, was soon dear to Coleridge. And when brother and sister removed to Alfoxden to be near their new friend, the three would take long walks daily, enriching one another by the exchange of personalities, impressions, and ideas. "Three persons and one soul," as one of them put it, they became. And the fruit of this unity was *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) in which appeared Coleridge's great poem, *The Ancient Mariner* (cf. *below*).

Now he had found himself, and his incomparable imagination achieved expression within the space of a few months not only in *The Ancient Mariner*, but also in the priceless *Kubla Khan* (cf. *below*) and the first part of the magical *Christabel* (cf. *below*). For this complete realization Coleridge was undoubtedly deeply indebted to Wordsworth, from whom he was able to learn, for a while, habits of regular work, and who helped him, by his own example, to achieve simplicity and directness in his expression. On the other hand, Wordsworth's debt to him was no less great, for the contact with Coleridge's marvelous imagination sent sparks to his own brain, and inaugurated the period of his greatest composition. It was at this time that, while preaching at Shrewsbury, he met the young William Hazlitt, an occasion that the essayist well described in *First Acquaintance with Poets*. In 1799, aided by an annuity from the Wedgwood family, Coleridge set out with William and Dorothy for Germany. There he encountered the last great influence in his life, German philosophy and literature. Returning later than the Wordsworths, he moved with his family to Keswick, not distant from Grasmere, where William and Dorothy were now living.

In 1800 he published a translation of parts of Schiller's play, *Wallenstein,* and spent much time in London lecturing and writing for the periodicals. Already his powers of poetic concentration were weakening. In 1803 he again accompanied his friends on their tour of Scotland, but soon parted from them because of the unfortunate effect they seemed to be having on one another. The great friendship was cooling. Next year found him going to Malta as a secretary to a diplomatic attaché. And now he had gradually become more and more deeply involved in his studies of German philosophy. Three years after his return to England, he began publication of *The Friend* (1809), a magazine devoted to politics and philosophy. By this time nothing was left of his intimacy with the Wordsworths, and little of his poetic creativeness.

He thereafter turned his attention to lecturing, talking, and the writing of prose, though it is unlikely that he ever was free from the torturing thoughts of his lost genius. In the scholarly work which he was now doing, however, he made important contributions

to English literature. It was he who awoke England to the treasures of German philosophy and letters. Under the influence of his beloved Goethe (cf. *below*) and Lessing, he elaborated the literary philosophy of the Romantic Movement, marvelously exhibited in the *Biographia Literaria* (cf. *below*) of 1817, and in his superlative criticisms of Shakespeare (later collected as *Essays and Lectures*).

Great literary critic and theorist though he was, Coleridge the philosopher would by many not be exchanged for Coleridge the poet of *The Ancient Mariner, Kubla Khan, Dejection, Frost at Midnight,* and *Christabel.* Nowhere have all the virtues of romanticism been more magnificently given life than in these imaginative, deeply felt, and richly musical poems. Why was his period of poetic power so brief? The answers are many. For one, he never learned the discipline of patient labor, and was too dependent on having pen in hand at moments of inspiration. For another, his passion for reading afforded an easy pretense for not writing. Again, the opium habit, against which he fought an increasingly losing fight, crippled his will. German metaphysics, too, acted as a kind of drug that turned aside his original gifts into channels of intricate speculation. Moreover, the endless current of ideas surging through his mind made talking an inviting avenue of self-expression; his later days of retirement in Highgate were clouded with unceasing metaphysical talk. But perhaps more important than all these, as Frances Winwar has recently proved with much evidence, the poet in Coleridge was killed by Wordsworth. He had abased his genius before the latter, and allowed himself to depreciate and injure his own powers as a gift of love and reverence to the other. His own impetuous, unreserved affection fell on the strong wall of Wordsworth's character, and destroyed itself—and his poetic gifts. Wordsworth's inner hardness only co-operated to quench his friend's never too confident gifts; he accepted full love from Coleridge, was nourished by his adoration, and gave nothing but discouragement in exchange.

But the gentle-souled Coleridge, even when his own creative days were over, continued to inspire others. About him, in his older days, clustered young men to listen to his inspiring monologues, enkindled by the shining vistas of philosophy he opened to them. The great poet was succeeded by the great teacher.

The authoritative edition of his works is that of W. G. T. Shedd (1884). His interesting and revealing correspondence has been edited in various collections by E. H. Coleridge (1895), W. F. Prideaux (1913), and E. L. Griggs (1933). Important biographical studies are: J. D. Campbell's *S. T. Coleridge* (1894), S. Potter's *Coleridge and S. T. C.* (1935). H. D. Traill's *Coleridge* (1884), E. K. Chambers's *Coleridge* (1938), and F. Winwar's *Farewell the Banner: Three Persons and One Soul* (1938). The bibliography recommended for Wordsworth should also be consulted.

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

IN SEVEN PARTS

This, one of the greatest achievements in English poetry, found little favor when it first appeared in *Lyrical Ballads.* "The strangest story of a cock and a bull that we ever saw on paper," was the opinion of one critic. Never was contemporary criticism more put to shame by the judgment of time than in this instance.

Originally the poem was to have been done in collaboration by Coleridge and Wordsworth, but the latter actually contributed only two unimpressive lines (cf. p. 107, *above,* for his account of the genesis of the work). Coleridge's imagination was so fired by the subject that he evolved the whole rapidly. Certain alterations which he made in the second edition removed the few crudities of the first version. His use of the ballad stanza, a result

of his admiration for Percy's *Reliques*, is to be noted. But most remarkable is his uncanny power to make real the supernatural, a power itself almost eerie. He "reconstructed the process of a dream," Frances Winwar says, "imparting to it through the keenness of his senses the daylight truth of an ordinary happening. . . . It was as if on the brightest of days he had taken control of the sun and the elements, of life and death, of waking and dream, and mingled them all in a phantasy from which, wonderfully, one did not awaken. . . . Yet of all the elements he employed there was not one that could have been above the understanding of the simplest farmer about Nether Stowey."

Prof. J. L. Lowes's *The Road to Xanadu* (1927) presents an engrossing study of the literary origins of the poem.

Argument

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell: and in what manner the Ancient Mariner came back to his own Country.

Part I

An ancient Mariner meeteth three Gallants bidden to a wedding feast, and detaineth one

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
"By thy long gray beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

"The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin,
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din."

He holds him with his skinny hand;
"There was a ship," quoth he.
"Hold off! unhand me, gray-beard loon!"
Eftsoons[1] his hand dropt he.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child.
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest is spellbound by the eye of the old seafaring man and constrained to hear his tale

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

"The ship was cheered, the harbor cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the light-house top.

The Mariner tells how the ship sailed southward with a good wind and fair weather, till it reached the Line

"The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

"Higher and higher every day,
Till over the mast at noon—"
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

The Wedding-Guest heareth the bridal music, but the Mariner continueth his tale

The bride hath paced into the hall,
Red as a rose is she;
Nodding their heads before her goes
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
Yet he cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner.

The ship driven by a storm toward the south pole.

"And now the Storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong:
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,
And chased us south along.

"With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.

"And now there came both mist and snow,

[1] at length.

And it grew wondrous cold:
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald.

The land of ice, and of fearful sounds where no living thing was to be seen

"And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

"The ice was here, the ice was there,
The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!

Till a great sea-bird, called the Albatross, came through the snow-fog, and was received with great joy and hospitality

"At length did cross an Albatross,
Thorough the fog it came;
As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

"It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
The helmsman steered us through!

And lo! the Albatross proveth a bird of good omen, and followeth the ship as it returned northward through fog and floating ice

"And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!

"In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,[2]
It perched for vespers nine;
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,
Glimmered the white moon-shine."

The ancient Mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
Why look'st thou so?"—"With my cross-bow
I shot the Albatross!"

Part II

"The Sun now rose upon the right:
Out of the sea came he,
Still hid in mist, and on the left
Went down into the sea.

[2] rope running to the masthead.

"And the good south wind still blew behind,
But no sweet bird did follow,
Nor any day for food or play
Came to the mariners' hollo!

His shipmates cry out against the ancient Mariner, for killing the bird of good luck

"And I had done a hellish thing,
And it would work 'em woe:
For all averred, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

But when the fog cleared off they justify the same, and thus make themselves accomplices in the crime

"Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all averred, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair breeze continues, the ship enters the Pacific Ocean, and sails northward, even till it reaches the Line

"The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

The ship hath been suddenly becalmed

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

"All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

"Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

And the Albatross begins to be avenged

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

"The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!

Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

A Spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels, concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

"About, about, in reel and rout
The death-fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue and white.

"And some in dreams assured were
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

"And every tongue, through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

The shipmates, in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner, in sign whereof they hang the dead sea bird round his neck

"Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!
Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

Part III

"There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

The ancient Mariner beholdeth a sign in the element afar off

"At first it seemed a little speck,
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.[8]

"A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

At its nearer approach, it seemeth him to be a ship, and at a dear ransom he freeth his speech from the bonds of thirst.

"With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could not laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

[8] *ywis*, certainly.

"With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

A flash of joy.

"See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal,—
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

And horror follows. For can it be a *ship* that comes onward without wind or tide?

"The western wave was all aflame,
The day was well nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

It seemeth him but the skeleton of a ship

"And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

"Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

And its ribs are seen as bars on the face of the setting Sun

"Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that woman's mate?

The Spectre-Woman and her Death mate, and no other on board the skeleton-ship

Like vessel, like crew!

"Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

Death and Life-in-Death have diced for the ship's crew, and she (the latter) winneth the ancient Mariner.

"The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
'The game is done! I've won! I've won!'
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

No twilight within the courts of the Sun.

"The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

At the rising of the Moon,

"We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip—
Till climb above the eastern bar
The hornèd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

One after another,

"One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

His shipmates drop down dead

"Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

But Life-in-Death begins her work on the ancient Mariner.

"The souls did from their bodies fly,—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!"

Part IV

The Wedding-Guest feareth that a Spirit is talking to him,

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

"I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown."—

But the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance.

"Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

"Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

He despiseth the creatures of the calm

"The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

And envieth that they should live, and so many lie dead

"I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

"I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

"I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

But the curse liveth for him in the eye of the dead men

"The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they looked on me
Had never passed away.

In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward, and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected, and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival

"An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is a curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

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

"Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmèd water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

By the light of the Moon he beholdeth God's creatures of the great calm.

"Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:

They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

"Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

Their beauty and their happiness

"O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:

He blesseth them in his heart

A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware;

The spell begins to break

Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

"The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea."

Part V

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

By grace of the holy Mother, the ancient Mariner is refreshed with rain.

"The silly[4] buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

"My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

"I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

He heareth sounds and seeth strange sights and commotions in the sky and the elements

"And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

"The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about!
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

"And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge;
And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

"The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The bodies of the ship's crew are inspired, and the ship moves on,

"The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

"They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

"The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
We were a ghastly crew.

"The body of my brother's son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me."

But not by the souls of the men, nor by demons of earth or middle air, but by a blessed troop of angelic spirits, sent down by the invocation of the guardian saint.

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!"
"Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

[4] empty.

"For when it dawned—they dropped
their arms,
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their
mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

"Around, around, flew each sweet
sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

"Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the skylark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

"And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

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

"Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

The lonesome Spirit from the south pole carries on the ship as far as the Line, in obedience to the angelic troop, but still requireth vengeance

"Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The Spirit slid: and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

"The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion—
Backwards and forwards half her
length
With a short uneasy motion.

"Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swound.

The Polar Spirit's fellow demons, the invisible inhabitants of the element, take part in his wrong, and two of them relate, one to the other, that penance long and heavy for the ancient Mariner hath been accorded to the Polar Spirit, who returneth southward

"How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard, and in my soul discerned,
Two voices in the air.

"'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

"The Spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.'

"The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.'"

Part VI

FIRST VOICE

"'But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the ocean doing?'

SECOND VOICE

"'Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

"'If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him.'

FIRST VOICE

The Mariner hath been cast into a trance, for the angelic power causeth the vessel to drive northward faster than human life could endure

"'But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?'

SECOND VOICE

"'The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.'

"'Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

"I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
The supernatural motion is retarded, the Mariner awakes, and his penance begins anew. 'Twas night, calm night, the moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

"All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

"The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

"And now this spell was snapt: once more
The curse is finally expiated I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

"Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round, walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

"But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

"It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

"Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

And the ancient Mariner beholdeth his native country "Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

"We drifted o'er the harbor-bar,
And I with sobs did pray—
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.

"The harbor-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

"The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

"And the bay was white with silent light
Till, rising from the same,
The angelic spirits leave the dead bodies, Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colors came.

"A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck—
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

"Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
And appear in their own forms of light A man all light, a seraph-man,
On every corse there stood.

"This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

"This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart—
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

"But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot's cheer;
My head was turned perforce away,
And I saw a boat appear.

"The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

"I saw a third—I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

Part VII

The Hermit o the wood.

"This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

"He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

"The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
'Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?'

Approacheth the ship with wonder

"'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said—
'And they answered not our cheer!
The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were

"'Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf's young.'

"'Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared'—'Push on, push on!'
Said the Hermit cheerily.

"The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

The ship suddenly sinketh

"Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

The ancient Mariner is saved in the Pilot's boat

"Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

"Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

"I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

"I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
'Ha! ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.'

"And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

The ancient Mariner earnestly entreateth the Hermit to shrieve him, and the penance of life falls on him

"'O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!'
The Hermit crossed his brow.
'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou?'

"Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

And ever and anon throughout his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land,

"Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns;
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

"I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach.

"What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer!

"O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide, wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemèd there to be.

"Oh sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

"To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths and maidens gay!

And to teach by his own example love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth

"Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

"He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,
Whose beard with age is hoar,
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest
Turned from the bridegroom's door.

He went like one that hath been stunned,
And is of sense forlorn:
A sadder and a wiser man,
He rose the morrow morn.

(1798)

Kubla Khan

This wonderful poem is a "fragment" only in the sense that Coleridge captured in it but a segment of his dream. As a poem it is complete, and not a word could be added to it. The sheer magic by which the sense of the lines and their music are interfused is above description.

"In the summer of the year 1797 the author, then in ill health, had retired to a lonely farmhouse between Porlock and Linton, on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in Purchas's *Pilgrimage:* 'Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall.' The Author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as *things*, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awakening he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away, like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter.

'Then all the charm
Is broken—all that phantom-world so fair
Vanishes, and a thousand circlets spread,
And each misshapes the other. Stay awhile,
Poor youth! who scarcely dar'st lift up thine eyes—

The stream will soon renew its smoothness, soon
The visions will return! And lo, he stays,
And soon the fragments dim of lovely forms
Come trembling back, unite, and now once more
The pool becomes a mirror.'

Yet from the still surviving recollections in his mind, the author has frequently purposed to finish for himself what had been originally, as it were, given to him. Αὔριον ἄδιον ἄσω, but the tomorrow is yet to come."—*Coleridge.*

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree;
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round;
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

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

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!
A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw.
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.

Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

(1797)

Frost at Midnight

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owlet's cry
Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant[1] slumbers peacefully.
'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings-on of life,
Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks, the idling Spirit
By its own mood interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

But O! how oft,
How oft, at school,[2] with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
To watch that fluttering *stranger!* and as oft
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
Of my sweet birth-place, and the old church-tower,
Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang

[1] Hartley Coleridge, born 1796.
[2] Christ's Hospital; cf. Lamb's description, Vol. II, p. 378.

From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!
So gazed I, till the soothing things I dreamt,
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!
And so I brooded all the following morn,
Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book:
Save if the door half opened, and I snatched
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
For still I hoped to see the *stranger's* face,
Townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
My play-mate when we both were clothed alike!

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersed vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought!
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in Himself.
Great universal Teacher! He shall mould
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall,
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

(1798)

Christabel

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION. 1816

'The first part of the following poem was written in the year 1797, at Stowey, in the county of Somerset. The second part after my return from Germany, in the year 1800, at Keswick, Cumberland. Since the latter date my poetic powers have been, till very lately, in a state of suspended animation. But as, in my very first conception of the tale, I had the whole present to my mind, with the wholeness, no less than with the liveliness of a vision; I trust that I shall be able to embody in verse the three parts yet to come, in the course of the present year.

'It is probable, that if the poem had been finished at either of the former periods, or if even the first and second part had been published in the year 1800, the impression of its originality would have been much greater than I dare at present expect. But for this, I have only my own indolence to blame. . . .

'I have only to add, that the metre of the Christabel is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle: namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition, in the nature of the imagery or passion.'—*Coleridge.*

Part I

'Tis the middle of night by the castle clock,
And the owls have awakened the crowing cock,
Tu—whit!——Tu—whoo!
And hark, again! the crowing cock,
How drowsily it crew.

Sir Leoline, the Baron rich,
Hath a toothless mastiff bitch.
From her kennel beneath the rock
She maketh answer to the clock,
Four for the quarters, and twelve for the hour;
Ever and aye, by shine and shower,
Sixteen short howls, not over loud;
Some say, she sees my lady's shroud.

Is the night chilly and dark?
The night is chilly, but not dark.
The thin gray cloud is spread on high,
It covers but not hides the sky.
The moon is behind, and at the full;
And yet she looks both small and dull.
The night is chill, the cloud is gray:

'Tis a month before the month of May,
And the Spring comes slowly up this way.

The lovely lady, Christabel,
Whom her father loves so well,
What makes her in the wood so late,
A furlong from the castle gate?
She had dreams all yesternight
Of her own betrothèd knight;
And she in the midnight wood will pray
For the weal of her lover that's far away.

She stole along, she nothing spoke,
The sighs she heaved were soft and low,
And naught was green upon the oak
But moss and rarest mistletoe:
She kneels beneath the huge oak tree
And in silence prayeth she.

The lady sprang up suddenly,
The lovely lady, Christabel!
It moaned as near, as near can be,
But what it is she cannot tell.—
On the other side it seems to be,
Of the huge, broad-breasted, old oak tree.

The night is chill, the forest bare;
Is it the wind that moaneth bleak?
There is not wind enough in the air
To move away the ringlet curl
From the lovely lady's cheek—
There is not wind enough to twirl
The one red leaf, the last of its clan,
That dances as often as dance it can,
Hanging so light, and hanging so high,
On the topmost twig that looks up at the sky.

Hush, beating heart of Christabel!
Jesu Maria, shield her well!
She folded her arms beneath her cloak,
And stole to the other side of the oak.
What sees she there?

There she sees a damsel bright,
Drest in a silken robe of white,
That shadowy in the moonlight shone:
The neck that made that white robe wan,
Her stately neck, and arms were bare;
Her blue-veined feet unsandalled were,
And wildly glittered here and there
The gems entangled in her hair.
I guess, 'twas frightful there to see
A lady so richly clad as she—
Beautiful exceedingly!

"Mary mother, save me now!"
(Said Christabel,) "And who art thou?"

The lady strange made answer meet,
And her voice was faint and sweet:—
"Have pity on my sore distress,
I scarce can speak for weariness:
Stretch forth thy hand, and have no fear!"
Said Christabel, "How camest thou here?"
And the lady, whose voice was faint and sweet,
Did thus pursue her answer meet:—

"My sire is of a noble line,
And my name is Geraldine:
Five warriors seized me yestermorn,
Me, even me, a maid forlorn:
They choked my cries with force and fright,
And tied me on a palfrey white.
The palfrey was as fleet as wind,
And they rode furiously behind.
They spurred amain, their steeds were white:
And once we crossed the shade of night.
As sure as Heaven shall rescue me,
I have no thought what men they be;
Nor do I know how long it is
(For I have lain entranced, I wis)
Since one, the tallest of the five,
Took me from the palfrey's back,
A weary woman, scarce alive.
Some muttered words his comrades spoke:
He placed me underneath his oak;
He swore they would return with haste;
Whither they went I cannot tell—
I thought I heard, some minutes past,
Sounds as of a castle bell.
Stretch forth thy hand (thus ended she),
And help a wretched maid to flee."

Then Christabel stretched forth her hand,
And comforted fair Geraldine:
"Oh well, bright dame! may you command
The service of Sir Leoline:
And gladly our stout chivalry
Will he send forth, and friends withal,
To guide and guard you safe and free
Home to your noble father's hall."

She rose: and forth with steps they passed
That strove to be, and were not, fast.

Her gracious stars the lady blest,
And thus spake on sweet Christabel:
"All our household are at rest,
The hall as silent as the cell;
Sir Leoline is weak in health,
And may not well awakened be,
But we will move as if in stealth,
And I beseech your courtesy,
This night, to share your couch with me."

They crossed the moat, and Christabel
Took the key that fitted well;
A little door she opened straight,
All in the middle of the gate;
The gate that was ironed within and without,
Where an army in battle array had marched out.
The lady sank, belike through pain,
And Christabel with might and main
Lifted her up, a weary weight,
Over the threshold of the gate:
Then the lady rose again,
And moved, as she were not in pain.

So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.
And Christabel devoutly cried
To the lady by her side:
"Praise we the Virgin all divine
Who hath rescued thee from thy distress!"
"Alas, alas!" said Geraldine,
"I cannot speak for weariness."
So free from danger, free from fear,
They crossed the court: right glad they were.

Outside her kennel the mastiff old
Lay fast asleep, in moonshine cold.
The mastiff old did not awake,
Yet she an angry moan did make!
And what can ail the mastiff bitch?
Never till now she uttered yell
Beneath the eye of Christabel.
Perhaps it is the owlet's scritch:
For what can ail the mastiff bitch?

They passed the hall, that echoes still,
Pass as lightly as you will!
The brands were flat, the brands were dying,
Amid their own white ashes lying;
But when the lady passed, there came
A tongue of light, a fit of flame;
And Christabel saw the lady's eye,
And nothing else saw she thereby,
Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline tall,
Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall.
"Oh softly tread," said Christabel,
"My father seldom sleepeth well."

Sweet Christabel her feet doth bare,
And jealous of the listening air,
They steal their way from stair to stair,
Now in glimmer, and now in gloom,
And now they pass the Baron's room,
As still as death, with stifled breath!
And now have reached her chamber door;
And now doth Geraldine press down
The rushes of the chamber floor.

The moon shines dim in the open air,
And not a moonbeam enters here.
But they without its light can see
The chamber carved so curiously,
Carved with figures strange and sweet,
All made out of the carver's brain,
For a lady's chamber meet:
The lamp with twofold silver chain
Is fastened to an angel's feet.

The silver lamp burns dead and dim;
But Christabel the lamp will trim.
She trimmed the lamp, and made it bright,
And left it swinging to and fro,
While Geraldine, in wretched plight,
Sank down upon the floor below.

"O weary lady, Geraldine,
I pray you, drink this cordial wine!
It is a wine of virtuous powers;
My mother made it of wild flowers."

"And will your mother pity me,
Who am a maiden most forlorn?"
Christabel answered—"Woe is me!
She died the hour that I was born.
I have heard the gray-haired friar tell,
How on her death-bed she did say,
That she should hear the castle-bell
Strike twelve upon my wedding-day.
O mother dear! that thou wert here!"
"I would," said Geraldine, "she were!"

But soon with altered voice, said she—
"Off wandering mother! Peak and pine!
I have power to bid thee flee."
Alas! what ails poor Geraldine?
Why stares she with unsettled eye?
Can she the bodiless dead espy?

And why with hollow voice cries she.
"Off, woman, off! this hour is mine—
Though thou her guardian spirit be,
Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me."

Then Christabel knelt by the lady's side,
And raised to heaven her eyes so blue—
"Alas!" said she, "this ghastly ride—
Dear lady! it hath wildered you!"
The lady wiped her moist cold brow,
And faintly said, " 'tis over now!"

Again the wild-flower wine she drank:
Her fair large eyes 'gan glitter bright,
And from the floor whereon she sank,
The lofty lady stood upright;
She was most beautiful to see,
Like a lady of a far countrée.

And thus the lofty lady spake—
"All they, who live in the upper sky,
Do love you, holy Christabel!
And you love them, and for their sake
And for the good which me befell,
Even I in my degree, will try,
Fair maiden, to requite you well.
But now unrobe yourself; for I
Must pray, ere yet in bed I lie."

Quoth Christabel, "So let it be!"
And as the lady bade, did she.
Her gentle limbs did she undress,
And lay down in her loveliness.

But through her brain of weal and woe
So many thoughts moved to and fro,
That vain it were her lids to close:
So half-way from the bed she rose,
And on her elbow did recline
To look at the lady Geraldine.

Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,
And slowly rolled her eyes around;
Then drawing in her breath aloud,
Like one that shuddered, she unbound
The cincture from beneath her breast:
Her silken robe, and inner vest,
Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
Behold! her bosom and half her side—
A sight to dream of, not to tell!
Oh shield her! shield sweet Christabel!

Yet Geraldine nor speaks nor stirs;
Ah! what a stricken look was hers!
Deep from within she seems half-way
To lift some weight with sick assay,
And eyes the maid and seeks delay;
Then suddenly, as one defied,
Collects herself in scorn and pride,
And lay down by the maiden's side!—
And in her arms the maid she took,
Ah well-a-day!
And with low voice and doleful look
These words did say:
"In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,
Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!
Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow,
This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow:
But vainly thou warrest,
For this is alone in
Thy power to declare,
That in the dim forest
Thou heard'st a low moaning,
And found'st a bright lady, surpassingly fair:
And didst bring her home with thee in love and in charity,
To shield her and shelter her from the damp air."

The Conclusion to Part I

It was a lovely sight to see
The lady Christabel, when she
Was praying at the old oak tree.
Amid the jagged shadows
Of mossy leafless boughs,
Kneeling in the moonlight,
To make her gentle vows;
Her slender palms together prest,
Heaving sometimes on her breast;
Her face resigned to bliss or bale—
Her face, oh call it fair, not pale,
And both blue eyes more bright than clear,
Each about to have a tear.

With open eyes (ah woe is me!)
Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,
Fearfully dreaming, yet, I wis,
Dreaming that alone, which is—
O sorrow and shame! Can this be she,
The lady, who knelt at the old oak tree?
And lo! the worker of these harms,
That holds the maiden in her arms,
Seems to slumber still and mild,
As a mother with her child.

A star hath set, a star hath risen,
O Geraldine! since arms of thine
Have been the lovely lady's prison.
O Geraldine! one hour was thine—
Thou'st had thy will! By tairn and rill,
The night-birds all that hour were still.
But now they are jubilant anew,
From cliff and tower, tu—whoo! tu—whoo!
Tu—whoo! tu—whoo! from wood and fell!

And see! the lady Christabel
Gathers herself from out her trance;
Her limbs relax, her countenance
Grows sad and soft; the smooth thin lids
Close o'er her eyes; and tears she sheds—
Large tears that leave the lashes bright!
And oft the while she seems to smile
As infants at a sudden light!

Yea, she doth smile, and she doth weep,
Like a youthful hermitess,
Beauteous in a wilderness,
Who, praying always, prays in sleep,
And, if she move unquietly,
Perchance, 'tis but the blood so free
Comes back and tingles in her feet.
No doubt she hath a vision sweet.
What if her guardian spirit 'twere?
What if she knew her mother near?
But this she knows, in joys and woes,
That saints will aid if men will call:
For the blue sky bends over all!

Part II

Each matin bell, the Baron saith,
Knells us back to a world of death.
These words Sir Leoline first said,
When he rose and found his lady dead:
These words Sir Leoline will say,
Many a morn to his dying day!

And hence the custom and law began,
That still at dawn the sacristan,
Who duly pulls the heavy bell,
Five and forty beads must tell
Between each stroke—a warning knell,
Which not a soul can choose but hear
From Bratha Head to Wyndermere.

Saith Bracy the bard, "So let it knell!
And let the drowsy sacristan
Still count as slowly as he can!
There is no lack of such, I ween,
As well fill up the space between."
In Langdale Pike and Witch's lair,
And Dungeon-ghyll so foully rent,
With ropes of rock and bells of air
Three sinful sextons' ghosts are pent,
Who all give back, one after t'other,
The death-note to their living brother;
And oft too, by the knell offended,
Just as their one! two! three! is ended,
The devil mocks the doleful tale
With a merry peal from Borrowdale.

The air is still! through mist and cloud
That merry peal comes ringing loud;
And Geraldine shakes off her dread,
And rises lightly from the bed;
Puts on her silken vestments white,
And tricks her hair in lovely plight,
And nothing doubting of her spell
Awakens the lady Christabel.
"Sleep you, sweet lady Christabel?
I trust that you have rested well."

And Christabel awoke and spied
The same who lay down by her side—
Oh rather say, the same whom she
Raised up beneath the old oak tree!
Nay, fairer yet; and yet more fair!
For she belike hath drunken deep
Of all the blessedness of sleep!
And while she spake, her looks, her air,
Such gentle thankfulness declare,
That (so it seemed) her girded vests
Grew tight beneath her heaving breasts.
"Sure I have sinned!" said Christabel,
"Now heaven be praised if all be well!"
And in low faltering tones, yet sweet,
Did she the lofty lady greet,
With such perplexity of mind
As dreams too lively leave behind.

So quickly she rose, and quickly arrayed
Her maiden limbs, and having prayed
That He, who on the cross did groan,
Might wash away her sins unknown,
She forthwith led fair Geraldine
To meet her sire, Sir Leoline.

The lovely maid and lady tall
Are pacing both into the hall,
And pacing on through page and groom,
Enter the Baron's presence-room.

The Baron rose, and while he prest
His gentle daughter to his breast,
With cheerful wonder in his eyes
The lady Geraldine espies,
And gave such welcome to the same,
As might beseem so bright a dame!

But when he heard the lady's tale,
And when she told her father's name,
Why waxed Sir Leoline so pale,
Murmuring o'er the name again,
Lord Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine?

Alas! they had been friends in youth;
But whispering tongues can poison truth;
And constancy lives in realms above;
And life is thorny; and youth is vain;
And to be wroth with one we love
Doth work like madness in the brain.
And thus it chanced, as I divine,
With Roland and Sir Leoline.
Each spake words of high disdain
And insult to his heart's best brother:
They parted—ne'er to meet again!
But never either found another
To free the hollow heart from paining—
They stood aloof, the scars remaining,
Like cliffs which had been rent asunder;
A dreary sea now flows between:—
But neither heat, nor frost, nor thunder,
Shall wholly do away, I ween,
The marks of that which once hath been.

Sir Leoline, a moment's space,
Stood gazing on the damsel's face:
And the youthful Lord of Tryermaine
Came back upon his heart again.

Oh then, the Baron forgot his age,
His noble heart swelled high with rage;
He swore by the wounds in Jesu's side,
He would proclaim it far and wide,
With trump and solemn heraldry,
That they who thus had wronged the dame,
Were base as spotted infamy!
"And if they dare deny the same,
My herald shall appoint a week,
And let the recreant traitors seek
My tourney court—that there and then
I may dislodge their reptile souls
From the bodies and forms of men!"
He spake: his eye in lightning rolls!
For the lady was ruthlessly seized; and he kenned
In the beautiful lady the child of his friend!

And now the tears were on his face,
And fondly in his arms he took
Fair Geraldine, who met the embrace,
Prolonging it with joyous look.
Which when she viewed, a vision fell
Upon the soul of Christabel,
The vision of fear, the touch and pain!
She shrunk and shuddered, and saw again—
(Ah, woe is me! Was it for thee,
Thou gentle maid! such sights to see?)

Again she saw the bosom old,
Again she felt that bosom cold,
And drew in her breath with a hissing sound:
Whereat the Knight turned wildly round,
And nothing saw but his own sweet maid
With eyes upraised, as one that prayed.

The touch, the sight, had passed away,
And in its stead that vision blest,
Which comforted her after-rest
While in the lady's arms she lay,
Had put a rapture in her breast,
And on her lips and o'er her eyes
Spread smiles like light!
With new surprise,
"What ails then my beloved child?"
The Baron said—His daughter mild
Made answer, "All will yet be well!"
I ween, she had no power to tell
Aught else: so mighty was the spell.

Yet he, who saw this Geraldine,
Had deemed her sure a thing divine.
Such sorrow with such grace she blended,
As if she feared she had offended
Sweet Christabel, that gentle maid!
And with such lowly tones she prayed,
She might be sent without delay
Home to her father's mansion.

"Nay!
Nay, by my soul!" said Leoline.
"Ho! Bracy, the bard, the charge be thine!
Go thou, with music sweet and loud,
And take two steeds with trappings proud,
And take the youth whom thou lov'st best
To bear thy harp, and learn thy song,
And clothe you both in solemn vest,
And over the mountains haste along,

Lest wandering folk, that are abroad,
Detain you on the valley road.
And when he has crossed the Irthing flood,
My merry bard! he hastes, he hastes
Up Knorren Moor, through Halegarth Wood,
And reaches soon that castle good
Which stands and threatens Scotland's wastes.

"Bard Bracy! bard Bracy! your horses are fleet
Ye must ride up the hall, your music so sweet
More loud than your horses' echoing feet!
And loud and loud to Lord Roland call,
Thy daughter is safe in Langdale hall!
Thy beautiful daughter is safe and free—
Sir Leoline greets thee thus through me.
He bids thee come without delay
With all thy numerous array;
And take thy lovely daughter home:
And he will meet thee on the way
With all his numerous array
White with their panting palfreys' foam:
And by mine honor! I will say,
That I repent me of the day
When I spake words of fierce disdain
To Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine!
—For since that evil hour hath flown,
Many a summer's sun hath shone;
Yet ne'er found I a friend again
Like Roland de Vaux of Tryermaine."

The lady fell, and clasped his knees,
Her face upraised, her eyes o'erflowing;
And Bracy replied, with faltering voice,
His gracious hail on all bestowing!—
"Thy words, thou sire of Christabel,
Are sweeter than my harp can tell;
Yet might I gain a boon of thee,
This day my journey should not be,
So strange a dream hath come to me;
That I had vowed with music loud
To clear yon wood from thing unblest,
Warned by a vision in my rest!
For in my sleep I saw that dove,
That gentle bird, whom thou dost love,
And call'st by thy own daughter's name—
Sir Leoline! I saw the same
Fluttering, and uttering fearful moan,
Among the green herbs in the forest alone.
Which when I saw and when I heard,
I wondered what might ail the bird;
For nothing near it could I see,
Save the grass and green herbs underneath the old tree.

"And in my dream methought I went
To search out what might there be found;
And what the sweet bird's trouble meant,
That thus lay fluttering on the ground.
I went and peered, and could descry
No cause for her distressful cry;
But yet for her dear lady's sake
I stooped, methought, the dove to take,
When lo! I saw a bright green snake
Coiled around its wings and neck.
Green as the herbs on which it couched,
Close by the dove's its head it crouched;
And with the dove it heaves and stirs,
Swelling its neck as she swelled hers!
I woke; it was the midnight hour,
The clock was echoing in the tower;
But though my slumber was gone by,
This dream it would not pass away—
It seems to live upon my eye!
And thence I vowed this self-same day,
With music strong and saintly song
To wander through the forest bare,
Lest aught unholy loiter there."

Thus Bracy said: the Baron, the while,
Half-listening heard him with a smile;
Then turned to Lady Geraldine,
His eyes made up of wonder and love;
And said in courtly accents fine,
"Sweet maid, Lord Roland's beauteous dove,
With arms more strong than harp or song,
Thy sire and I will crush the snake!"
He kissed her forehead as he spake,
And Geraldine, in maiden wise,
Casting down her large bright eyes,
With blushing cheek and courtesy fine
She turned her from Sir Leoline;
Softly gathering up her train,
That o'er her right arm fell again;
And folded her arms across her chest,
And couched her head upon her breast,
And looked askance at Christabel—
Jesu Maria, shield her well!

A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy,
And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,
Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,
And with somewhat of malice, and more of dread,
At Christabel she looked askance!—
One moment—and the sight was fled!
But Christabel in dizzy trance
Stumbling on the unsteady ground
Shuddered aloud, with a hissing sound;

And Geraldine again turned round,
And like a thing that sought relief,
Full of wonder and full of grief,
She rolled her large bright eyes divine
Wildly on Sir Leoline.

The maid, alas! her thoughts are gone,
She nothing sees—no sight but one!
The maid, devoid of guile and sin,
I know not how, in fearful wise
So deeply had she drunken in
That look, those shrunken serpent eyes,
That all her features were resigned
To this sole image in her mind;
And passively did imitate
That look of dull and treacherous hate!
And thus she stood, in dizzy trance,
Still picturing that look askance
With forced unconscious sympathy
Full before her father's view—
As far as such a look could be
In eyes so innocent and blue!

And when the trance was o'er, the maid
Paused awhile, and inly prayed:
Then falling at the Baron's feet,
"By my mother's soul do I entreat
That thou this woman send away!"
She said: and more she could not say:
For what she knew she could not tell,
O'ermastered by the mighty spell.

Why is thy cheek so wan and wild,
Sir Leoline? Thy only child
Lies at thy feet, thy joy, thy pride,
So fair, so innocent, so mild;
The same, for whom thy lady died!
O, by the pangs of her dear mother
Think thou no evil of thy child!
For her, and thee, and for no other,
She prayed the moment ere she died:
Prayed that the babe for whom she died,
Might prove her dear lord's joy and pride!
That prayer her deadly pangs beguiled,
Sir Leoline!
And wouldst thou wrong thy only child,
Her child and thine?

Within the Baron's heart and brain
If thoughts, like these, had any share,
They only swelled his rage and pain,
And did but work confusion there.
His heart was cleft with pain and rage,
His cheeks they quivered, his eyes were wild,
Dishonored thus in his old age;
Dishonored by his only child,
And all his hospitality
To the insulted daughter of his friend
By more than woman's jealousy
Brought thus to a disgraceful end—
He rolled his eye with stern regard
Upon the gentle minstrel bard,
And said in tones abrupt, austere—
"Why, Bracy! dost thou loiter here?
I bade thee hence!" The bard obeyed;
And turning from his own sweet maid,
The aged knight, Sir Leoline,
Led forth the lady Geraldine!

The Conclusion to Part II

A little child, a limber elf,
Singing, dancing to itself,
A fairy thing with red round cheeks,
That always finds, and never seeks,
Makes such a vision to the sight,
As fills a father's eyes with light;
And pleasures flow in so thick and fast
Upon his heart, that he at last
Must needs express his love's excess
With words of unmeant bitterness.
Perhaps 'tis pretty to force together
Thoughts so all unlike each other;
To mutter and mock a broken charm,
To dally with wrong that does no harm.
Perhaps 'tis tender too and pretty
At each wild word to feel within
A sweet recoil of love and pity.
And what, if in a world of sin
(O sorrow and shame should this be true!)
Such giddiness of heart and brain
Comes seldom save from rage and pain,
So talks as it's most used to do.

(1797-1800)

Dejection: An Ode

WRITTEN APRIL 4, 1802

Though intended by Coleridge to celebrate Wordsworth's marriage, this ode is "no prothalamion, but an epitaph, the last word on his own death as a poet." When it appeared in print, the poet withheld the references to Wordsworth by substituting Otway's name in the seventh stanza and the phrase "Dear Lady!" in the eighth.

> Late, late yestreen I saw the new Moon,
> With the old Moon in her arms;
> And I fear, I fear, my Master dear!
> We shall have a deadly storm.
> *Ballad of* SIR PATRICK SPENCE

1

Well! If the Bard was weather-wise, who made
  The grand old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence,
  This night, so tranquil now, will not go hence
Unroused by winds, that ply a busier trade
Than those which mold yon cloud in lazy flakes,
Or the dull sobbing draft, that moans and rakes
  Upon the strings of this Æolian lute
  Which better far were mute.
  For lo! the New-moon winter-bright!
  And overspread with phantom light,
  (With swimming phantom light o'erspread
  But rimmed and circled by a silver thread)
I see the old Moon in her lap, foretelling
  The coming-on of rain and squally blast.
And oh! that even now the gust were swelling,
  And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!
Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,
  And sent my soul abroad,
Might now perhaps their wonted impulse give,
Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

2

A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
  A stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief,
  Which finds no natural outlet, no relief,
  In word, or sigh, or tear—
O Lady! in this wan and heartless mood,
To other thoughts by yonder throstle wooed,
  All this long eve, so balmy and serene,
Have I been gazing on the western sky,
  And its peculiar tint of yellow green:
And still I gaze—and with how blank an eye!
And those thin clouds above, in flakes and bars,
That give away their motion to the stars;
Those stars, that glide behind them or between,
Now sparkling, now bedimmed, but always seen:
Yon crescent Moon, as fixed as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue;
I see them all so excellently fair,
I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!

3

  My genial spirits fail;
  And what can these avail
To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?
  It were a vain endeavor,
  Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within.

4

O Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!
  And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
  Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
  Enveloping the Earth—
And from the soul itself must there be sent
  A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

5

O pure of heart! thou need'st not ask of me
What this strong music in the soul may be!
What, and wherein it doth exist,
This light, this glory, this fair luminous mist,
This beautiful and beauty-making power.
  Joy, virtuous Lady! Joy that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Life, and Life's effluence, cloud at once and shower,
Joy, Lady! is the spirit and the power,
Which, wedding Nature to us, gives in dower
  A new Earth and new Heaven,
Undreamt of by the sensual and the proud—

Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud—
We in ourselves rejoice!
And thence flows all that charms or ear or sight,
All melodies the echoes of that voice,
All colors a suffusion from that light.

6

There was a time when, though my path was rough,
This joy within me dallied with distress,
And all misfortunes were but as the stuff
Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:
For Hope grew round me, like the twining vine,
And fruits, and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.
But now afflictions bow me down to earth:
Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth;
But oh! each visitation
Suspends what nature gave me at my birth,
My shaping spirit of Imagination.
For not to think of what I needs must feel,
But to be still and patient, all I can;
And haply by abstruse research to steal
From my own nature all the natural man—
This was my sole resource, my only plan:
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.

7

Hence, viper thoughts, that coil around my mind,
Reality's dark dream!
I turn from you, and listen to the wind,
Which long has raved unnoticed.
What a scream
Of agony by torture lengthened out
That lure sent forth! Thou Wind, that rav'st without,
Bare crag, or mountain-tairn, or blasted tree,
Or pine-grove whither woodman never clomb,
Or lonely house, long held the witches' home,
Methinks were fitter instruments for thee,
Mad Lutanist! who in this month of showers,
Of dark-brown gardens, and of peeping flowers,
Mak'st Devil's yule, with worse than wintry song,
The blossoms, buds, and timorous leaves among.
Thou Actor, perfect in all tragic sounds!
Thou mighty Poet, even to frenzy bold!
What tell'st thou now about?
'Tis of the rushing of an host in rout,
With groans of trampled men, with smarting wounds—
At once they groan with pain, and shudder with the cold!
But hush! there is a pause of deepest silence!
And all that noise, as of a rushing crowd,
With groans, and tremulous shudderings—all is over—
It tells another tale, with sounds less deep and loud!
A tale of less affright,
And tempered with delight,
As Otway's[1] self had framed the tender lay,
'Tis of a little child[2]
Upon a lonesome wild,
Not far from home, but she hath lost her way:
And now moans low in bitter grief and fear,
And now screams loud, and hopes to make her mother hear.

8

'Tis midnight, but small thoughts have I of sleep:
Full seldom may my friend such vigils keep!
Visit her, gentle Sleep! with wings of healing,
And may this storm be but a mountain-birth,
May all the stars hang bright above her dwelling,
Silent as though they watched the sleeping Earth!
With light heart may she rise,
Gay fancy, cheerful eyes,
Joy lift her spirit, joy attune her voice;
To her may all things live, from pole to pole,
Their life the eddying of her living soul!
O simple spirit, guided from above,
Dear Lady! friend devoutest of my choice,
Thus mayest thou ever, evermore rejoice.

Work without Hope

All Nature seems at work. Slugs leave their lair—
The bees are stirring—birds are on the wing—
And Winter slumbering in the open air,
Wears on his smiling face a dream of Spring!
And I the while, the sole unbusy thing,
Nor honey make, nor pair, nor build, nor sing.

Yet well I ken the banks where amaranths blow,
Have traced the fount whence streams of nectar flow,

[1] Thomas Otway (1652-1685), author of *Venice Preserved.*
[2] Wordsworth's *Lucy Gray.*

Bloom, O ye amaranths! bloom for whom ye may.
For me ye bloom not! Glide, rich streams, away!
With lips unbrightened, wreathless brow, I stroll;
And would you learn the spells that drowse my soul?
Work without Hope draws nectar in a sieve,
And Hope without an object cannot live.

(1825)

From *Biographia Literaria*

Chapter XIV

Occasion of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and the objects originally proposed—Preface to the second edition—The ensuing controversy, its causes and acrimony—Philosophic definitions of a Poem and Poetry with scholia.

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbors, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself—(to which of us I do not recollect)—that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them or to notice them, when they present themselves.

In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads*; in which it was agreed, that my endeavors should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention to the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

With this view I wrote *The Ancient Mariner*, and was preparing among other poems, *The Dark Ladie*, and the *Christabel*, in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal, than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth's industry had proved so much more successful, and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction, which is characteristic of his genius. In this form the *Lyrical Ballads* were published; and were presented by him, as an experiment, whether subjects, which from their nature rejected the usual ornaments and extra-colloquial style of poems in general, might not be so managed in the language of ordinary life as to produce the pleasurable interest, which it is the peculiar business of poetry to impart. To the second edition he added a preface of considerable length; in which, notwithstanding some passages of apparently a contrary import, he was understood to contend for the extension of this style to poetry of all kinds, and to reject as vicious and indefensible all phrases and forms of speech that were not included in what he (unfortunately, I think, adopting an equivocal expression) called the language of real life. From this preface, prefixed to poems in which it was impossible to deny the presence of original genius, however mistaken

its direction might be deemed, arose the whole long-continued controversy. For from the conjunction of perceived power with supposed heresy I explain the inveteracy and in some instances, I grieve to say, the acrimonious passions, with which the controversy has been conducted by the assailants.

Had Mr. Wordsworth's poems been the silly, the childish things, which they were for a long time described as being: had they been really distinguished from the compositions of other poets merely by meanness of language and inanity of thought; had they indeed contained nothing more than what is found in the parodies and pretended imitations of them; they must have sunk at once, a dead weight, into the slough of oblivion, and have dragged the preface along with them. But year after year increased the number of Mr. Wordsworth's admirers. They were found too not in the lower classes of the reading public, but chiefly among young men of strong sensibility and meditative minds; and their admiration (inflamed perhaps in some degree by opposition) was distinguished by its intensity, I might almost say, by its religious fervor. These facts, and the intellectual energy of the author, which was more or less consciously felt, where it was outwardly and even boisterously denied, meeting with sentiments of aversion to his opinions, and of alarm at their consequences, produced an eddy of criticism, which would of itself have borne up the poems by the violence with which it whirled them round and round. With many parts of this preface in the sense attributed to them and which the words undoubtedly seem to authorize, I never concurred; but on the contrary objected to them as erroneous in principle, and as contradictory (in appearance at least) both to other parts of the same preface, and to the author's own practice in the greater part of the poems themselves. Mr. Wordsworth in his recent collection has, I find, degraded this prefatory disquisition to the end of his second volume, to be read or not at the reader's choice. But he has not, as far as I can discover, announced any change in his poetic creed. At all events, considering it as the source of a controversy, in which I have been honored more than I deserve by the frequent conjunction of my name with his, I think it expedient to declare once for all, in what points I coincide with the opinions supported in that preface, and in what points I altogether differ. But in order to render myself intelligible I must previously, in as few words as possible, explain my views, first, of a Poem; and secondly, of Poetry itself, in kind, and in essence.

The office of philosophical disquisition consists in just distinction; while it is the privilege of the philosopher to preserve himself constantly aware, that distinction is not division. In order to obtain adequate notions of any truth, we must intellectually separate its distinguishable parts; and this is the technical process of philosophy. But having so done, we must then restore them in our conceptions to the unity, in which they actually co-exist; and this is the result of philosophy. A poem contains the same elements as a prose composition; the difference therefore must consist in a different combination of them, in consequence of a different object being proposed. According to the difference of the object will be the difference of the combination. It is possible, that the object may be merely to facilitate the recollection of any given facts or observations by artificial arrangement; and the composition will be a poem, merely because it is distinguished from prose by metre, or by rhyme, or by both conjointly. In this, the lowest sense, a man might attribute the name of a poem to the well-known enumeration of the days in the several months;

> "Thirty days hath September,
> April, June, and November," etc.

and others of the same class and purpose. And as a particular pleasure is found in anticipating the recurrence of sounds and quantities, all compositions that have this charm super-added, whatever be their contents, *may* be entitled poems.

So much for the superficial form. A difference of object and contents supplies an additional ground of distinction. The immediate purpose may be the communication of truths; either of truth absolute and demonstrable, as in works of science; or of facts experienced and recorded, as in history. Pleasure, and that of the highest and most permanent kind, may result from the attainment of the end; but it is not itself the immediate end. In other works the communication of pleasure may be the immediate purpose; and though truth, either moral or intellectual, ought to be the ultimate end, yet this will distinguish the character of the author, not the class to which the work belongs. Blest indeed is that state of society, in which the immediate purpose would be baffled by the perversion of

the proper ultimate end; in which no charm of diction or imagery could exempt the *Bathyllus* even of an Anacreon, or the *Alexis* of Virgil, from disgust and aversion!

But the communication of pleasure may be the immediate object of a work not metrically composed; and that object may have been in a high degree attained, as in novels and romances. Would then the mere superaddition of metre, with or without rhyme, entitle these to the name of poems? The answer is, that nothing can permanently please, which does not contain in itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise. If metre be superadded, all other parts must be made consonant with it. They must be such, as to justify the perpetual and distinct attention to each part, which an exact correspondent recurrence of accent and sound are calculated to excite. The final definition then, so deduced, may be thus worded. A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its *immediate* object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species—(having *this* object in common with it)—it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the *whole*, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component *part*.

Controversy is not seldom excited in consequence of the disputants attaching each a different meaning to the same word; and in few instances has this been more striking, than in disputes concerning the present subject. If a man chooses to call every composition a poem, which is rhyme, or measure, or both, I must leave his opinion uncontroverted. The distinction is at least competent to characterize the writer's intention. If it were subjoined, that the whole is likewise entertaining or affecting, as a tale, or as a series of interesting reflections, I of course admit this as another fit ingredient of a poem, and an additional merit. But if the definition sought for be that of a *legitimate* poem, I answer, it must be one, the parts of which mutually support and explain each other; all in their proportion harmonizing with, and supporting the purpose and known influences of metrical arrangement. The philosophic critics of all ages coincide with the ultimate judgment of all countries, in equally denying the praises of a just poem, on the other hand, to a series of striking lines or distiches, each of which, absorbing the whole attention of the reader to itself, becomes disjoined from its context, and forms a separate whole, instead of a harmonizing part; and on the other hand, to an unsustained composition, from which the reader collects rapidly the general result unattracted by the component parts. The reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution; but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself. Like the motion of a serpent, which the Egyptians made the emblem of intellectual power; or like the path of sound through the air;—at every step he pauses and half recedes, and from the retrogressive movement collects the force which again carries him onward. *Præcipitandus est liber spiritus,*[1] says Petronius most happily. The epithet, *liber*, here balances the preceding verb; and it is not easy to conceive more meaning condensed in fewer words.

But if this should be admitted as a satisfactory character of a poem, we have still to seek for a definition of poetry. The writings of Plato,[2] and Jeremy Taylor,[3] and Burnet's[4] *Theory of the Earth*, furnish undeniable proofs that poetry of the highest kind may exist without metre, and even without the contradistinguishing objects of a poem. The first chapter of Isaiah—(indeed a very large portion of the whole book)—is poetry in the most emphatic sense; yet it would be not less irrational than strange to assert, that pleasure, and not truth was the immediate object of the prophet. In short, whatever specific import we attach to the word, Poetry, there will be found involved in it, as a necessary consequence, that a poem of any length neither can be, nor ought to be, all poetry. Yet if an harmonious whole is to be produced, the remaining parts must be preserved in keeping with the poetry; and this can be no otherwise effected than by such a studied selection and artificial arrangement, as will partake of one, though not a peculiar property of poetry. And this again can be no other than the property of exciting a more continuous and equal attention than the language of prose aims at, whether colloquial or written.

My own conclusions on the nature of poetry, in the strictest use of the word, have been in part anticipated in some of the remarks on the Fancy and Imagination in the early part of this work. What is poetry?—is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet?—that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other. For it is

[1] A free spirit ought to be thrown forward.
[2] Greek philosopher (427?-347 B.C.).
[3] English bishop and author (1613-1667)
[4] Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715), English bishop and historian.

a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts, and emotions of the poet's own mind.

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) *fuses*, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which I would exclusively appropriate the name of Imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their irremissive, though gentle and unnoticed, control, *laxis effertur habenis*,[5] reveals itself in the balance or reconcilement of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgment ever awake and steady self-possession with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry. Doubtless, as Sir John Davies[6] observes of the soul—(and his words may with slight alteration be applied, and even more appropriately, to the poetic Imagination)—

Doubtless this could not be, but that she turns
  Bodies to *spirit* by sublimation strange,
As fire converts to fire the things it burns,
  As we our food into our nature change.

From their gross matter she abstracts *their* forms,
  And draws a kind of quintessence from things;
Which to her proper nature she transforms
  To bear them light on her celestial wings.

Thus does she, when from *individual states*
  She doth abstract the universal kinds;
Which then re-clothed in divers names and fates
  Steal access through the senses to our minds.

Finally, Good Sense is the Body of poetic genius, Fancy its Drapery, Motion its Life, and Imagination the Soul that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.

[5] is driven with loose reins.
[6] English poet (1569-1626).

Chapter XVIII

Language of metrical composition, why and wherein essentially different from that of prose—Origin and elements of metre—Its necessary consequences, and the conditions thereby imposed on the metrical writer in the choice of his diction.

I conclude, therefore, that the attempt[7] is impracticable; and that, were it not impracticable, it would still be useless. For the very power of making the selection implies the previous possession of the language selected. Or where can the poet have lived? And by what rules could he direct his choice, which would not have enabled him to select and arrange his words by the light of his own judgment? We do not adopt the language of a class by the mere adoption of such words exclusively, as that class would use, or at least understand; but likewise by following the order, in which the words of such men are wont to succeed each other. Now this order, in the intercourse of uneducated men, is distinguished from the diction of their superiors in knowledge and power, by the greater disjunction and separation in the component parts of that, whatever it be, which they wish to communicate. There is a want of that prospectiveness of mind, that surview, which enables a man to foresee the whole of what he is to convey, appertaining to any one point; and by this means so to subordinate and arrange the different parts according to their relative importance, as to convey it at once, and as an organized whole.

Now I will take the first stanza, on which I have chanced to open, in the *Lyrical Ballads*. It is one the most simple and the least peculiar in its language.

In distant countries have I been,
And yet I have not often seen
A healthy man, a man full grown,
Weep in the public roads, alone.
But such a one, on English ground,
And in the broad highway, I met;
Along the broad highway he came,
His cheeks with tears were wet:
Sturdy he seemed, though he was sad;
And in his arms a lamb he had.

The words here are doubtless such as are cur-

[7] to use for poetry a selection of the speech of common man as Wordsworth had proposed; cf. Vol. II, p. 141.

rent in all ranks of life; and of course not less so in the hamlet and cottage than in the shop, manufactory, college, or palace. But is this the *order*, in which the rustic would have placed the words? I am grievously deceived, if the following less compact mode of commencing the same tale be not a far more faithful copy. "I have been in a many parts, far and near, and I don't know that I ever saw before a man crying by himself in the public road; a grown man I mean, that was neither sick nor hurt," etc., etc. But when I turn to the following stanza in *The Thorn*:

> At all times of the day and night
> This wretched woman thither goes;
> And she is known to every star,
> And every wind that blows:
> And there, beside the Thorn, she sits,
> When the blue day-light's in the skies,
> And when the whirlwind's on the hill,
> Or frosty air is keen and still,
> And to herself she cries,
>
> Oh misery! Oh misery!
> Oh woe is me! Oh misery!

and compare this with the language of ordinary men; or with that which I can conceive at all likely to proceed, in real life, from such a narrator, as is supposed in the note to the poem; compare it either in the succession of the images or of the sentences; I am reminded of the sublime prayer and hymn of praise, which Milton, in opposition to an established liturgy, presents as a fair specimen of common extemporary devotion, and such as we might expect to hear from every self-inspired minister of a conventicle! And I reflect with delight, how little a mere theory, though of his own workmanship, interferes with the processes of genuine imagination in a man of true poetic genius, who possesses, as Mr. Wordsworth, if ever man did, most assuredly does possess,

> The Vision and the Faculty divine.

(1817)

Sir Walter Scott

(1771-1832)

Scott enjoyed great esteem as a teller of tales in verse until he decided to yield place to Byron as his superior in that art. His poetry now is largely neglected. But since no one any longer reads those tales of Byron to which he gracefully yielded the palm, we need not be surprised that Scott's verse is unread. What is a matter for greater wonder is that his novels, once thought beyond compare, are also gradually losing their public, and are being slowly relegated to the realm of "juvenile fiction."

This loss of prestige is as explicable as his success, and stems from its very cause. Of all aspects of romanticism it was the one most easily realized that he expressed: the love of the glamorous past. With the passing of time, as the true values of the Romantic Movement came to be perceived in just perspective, it was inevitable that what had seemed radiant in Scott's work should appear rather like superficial glitter when compared with the deeper romanticism of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats, or with the profounder contributions of novelists like Dickens, Thackeray, and Meredith. It would be, none the less, a pity if, because the nineteenth century had many poets greater than he, Scott's excellent verse should be forgotten. For the volume of his poetry contains much that is stimulating in its manly, free, and vigorous lines.

Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh on August 15, 1771, the son of an attorney of old Scottish lineage. Destined to follow in his father's profession, he was admitted to the bar in 1792 and later held several legal offices. But law was never his prime interest. Almost from the cradle his love of romance was nurtured, and his "lullabies were Jacobite songs." At twelve he began a manuscript collection of old ballads. He became familiar at school with Spenser and Ossian, committing to memory "whole duans of the one and cantos of

the other." Spenser, in particular, enthralled him, and he professed a willingness to read him "forever." "I considered all the knights and ladies and dragons and giants in their outward and exoteric sense, and God only knows how delighted I was to find myself in such company." As a young man, despite a lameness contracted through a childhood disease, he made many expeditions in the Cheviots and Highlands of Scotland. These rambles brought him close to Scotland's romantic past, and his own grandfather was able to make more real for him the gallant struggles of the preceding century to restore the house of Stuart to the English throne.

In 1797 Scott married a daughter of a French émigré. In 1804 he moved from his cottage at Lasswade, near Edinburgh, to Ashestiel, in the county of Selkirkshire, where he had been made sheriff. The success of his poetry enabled him to purchase the estate of Abbotsford, where he built a quasi-medieval castle and surrounded himself with the appurtenances of a feudal baron. It is with Abbotsford that Scott's name is most associated, for it was here that he attempted to arrange his life according to the feudal felicities he loved. As Henry A. Beers well observes: "The key to Scott's romanticism is his intense local feeling. . . . Scott had struck his roots deep into his native soil. His absorption in the past and reverence for everything that was old, his conservative prejudices and aristocratic ambitions, all had their source in this feeling." He was a Tory in politics not because, like Wordsworth and Coleridge, he was a disillusioned radical, but because of his love of Scotland's heroic and imaginative past. Fundamentally a kind, modest man, he was proud of his heritage, his line, and his country.

He served a literary apprenticeship by translating German ballads and Goethe's romantic play, *Götz von Berlichingen* (cf. *below*). His collection of ballads was published in three volumes under the title of *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-03). He was thirty-four, however, before he appeared before the public as an original poet with *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), which achieved instant popularity, and which shows clearly an indebtedness to Coleridge's *Christabel*. *Marmion* (1808) and *The Lady of the Lake* (1810) followed, and established him as the leading narrative poet of his time. The swing of these poems was strongly marked, the diction fresh, the descriptions were bright and the characterizations picturesque. To a public jaded with Pope's imitators but not yet ready to appreciate the splendors of Wordsworth and Coleridge, Scott's poetry seemed invigorating and brilliant. Its success was responsible for the victory of the Romantic Movement over the layman. The public was now ready for the tales of a greater poet, Byron, who between 1812 and 1814 poured out a series of stories that took it by storm. Scott saw at once that he was destined to be superseded, and wisely withdrew from the field.

In the meantime Scott had become a secret partner in the publishing firm of the Brothers Ballantyne. His elaborate mode of life at Abbotsford made his additional income from this financial venture highly necessary. He turned from poetry, therefore, and finished a novel he had begun some years earlier, issuing it anonymously under the title of *Waverley* (1814). This, the first of a long series of his novels which were read all over the world, opened for him a career in which his fame became even wider. Their author was soon recognized and his anonymity abandoned. Despite his international success, the Ballantynes failed, and Scott, who need have shouldered none of the responsibility, undertook the colossal burden of paying off with his future works the entire debt of £117,000. The rest of his life is a story of endless labor to make good this obligation. In addition to writing his many novels, he wrote a history of Scotland and a nine-volume life of Napoleon, and edited the works of Dryden and Swift. Even in failing health and the decline of his mental powers, he dictated his works from a bed of pain in the hope of diminishing the debt. There can be no doubt that this constant pressure broke his health and brought on his death. In the end he had discharged half of the sum, and the sale of his copyrights liquidated the rest. This devotion to a matter of honor was typical of the man, and has caused his memory to be revered by his compatriots.

The novels written immediately after *Waverley* dealt with materials drawn from Scottish life of the eighteenth century: *Guy Mannering* (1815) and *The Antiquary* (1816). *Old Mortality* (1816) is placed in the reign of Charles II; *The Abbot* (1820) and *The Monastery* (1820) treat of Mary Queen of Scots. His later historical novels, with the exception of *Redgauntlet* (1824), go out of Scotland for their background: *Ivanhoe* (1820) is the story of Richard I and his return to England; *Kenilworth* (1821) is concerned with Queen Elizabeth's court; *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822) is laid in the time of James I; *Quentin Durward* (1823) takes place in the France of Louis XI; and *The Talisman* (1825) tells of the struggle between Richard I and Saladin. Besides these, Scott's novels include a group in which the chief interest attaches to portraiture of local Scottish types of character: *Rob Roy* (1817), *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), and *A Legend of Montrose* (1819). Even this list, however, is far from a complete indication of the number of novels which he wrote in rapid succession.

The speed with which he composed naturally resulted in considerable unevenness in these books. Passages of eloquence are varied with dull or falsely elegant pages. Scott, moreover, was particularly deficient in a quality most essential to a great novelist: the power to portray human beings. In all these many novels there are few real people among the crowd of beautiful ladies and aristocratic men; such success as he had with his characters is to be found among the few humble Scottish rustics whom he drew. Yet in his own day—so necessary is the objectivity of distance!—he was often compared, most ineptly, with Shakespeare! The illusion of grandeur in his work was probably the result of his crowded canvases and of the pomp of history which forms the background to most of his novels. But he painted with a bold brush, careless of subtlety or any inner magnificence. In the field of the historical novel many of Scott's successors have done so much better that his works seem more like a colorful pageant than a representation of real life. It should be remembered, however, that he showed the way to Dickens, Thackeray, Kingsley, George Eliot, Bulwer Lytton, and Charles Reade. And it is likely that his novels will continue to stir the imagination of adolescent minds, just as they stirred the imagination of adults when Romanticism was young.

It may be, after all, that final judgment will send readers back to Scott's spirited poetry. Even in the novels some of the happiest pages are those interspersed with his characteristically fine lyrics.

Scott was the subject of a great biography, that by his son-in-law, J. G. Lockhart. Among other important biographies are those by R. H. Hutton (1878), A. Lang (1906), J. Buchan (1932), and H. Grierson's *Sir Walter Scott* (1928). Oliver Elton's *Sir Walter Scott* (1912) is a significant examination of his work. D. Carswell's *Scott and His Circle* (1930) is a noteworthy study.

Harold's Song to Rosabelle

From *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*

CANTO VI

XXIII

O listen, listen, ladies gay!
No haughty feat of arms I tell;
Soft is the note, and sad the lay,
That mourns the lovely Rosabelle.

"Moor, moor the barge, ye gallant crew!
And, gentle ladye, deign to stay!
Rest thee in Castle Ravensheuch,
Nor tempt the stormy firth to-day.

"The blackening wave is edged with white;
To inch[1] and rock the sea-mews fly;
The fishers have heard the Water-Sprite,
Whose screams forebode that wreck is nigh.

"Last night the gifted Seer did view
A wet shroud swathed round ladye gay;
Then stay thee, Fair, in Ravensheuch:
Why cross the gloomy firth to-day?"—

[1] island.

" 'Tis not because Lord Lindesay's heir
To-night at Roslin[2] leads the ball,
But that my ladye-mother there
Sits lonely in her castle-hall.

" 'Tis not because the ring they ride,
And Lindesay at the ring rides well,
But that my sire the wine will chide,
If 'tis not fill'd by Rosabelle.—"

O'er Roslin all that dreary night,
A wondrous blaze was seen to gleam;
'Twas broader than the watch-fire's light,
And redder than the bright moonbeam.

It glared on Roslin's castled rock,
It ruddied all the copse-wood glen;
'Twas seen from Dryden's groves of oak,
And seen from cavern'd Hawthornden.

Seem'd all on fire that chapel proud,
Where Roslin's chiefs uncoffin'd lie,
Each Baron, for a sable shroud,
Sheathed in his iron panoply.

Seem'd all on fire within, around,
Deep sacristy and altar's pale;
Shone every pillar foliage-bound,
And glimmer'd all the dead men's mail.

Blazed battlement and pinnet high,
Blazed every rose-carved buttress fair—
So still they blaze, when fate is nigh
The lordly line of high St. Clair.

There are twenty of Roslin's barons bold
Lie buried within that proud chapelle;
Each one the holy vault doth hold—
But the sea holds lovely Rosabelle!

And each St. Clair was buried there,
With candle, with book, and with knell;
But the sea-caves rung, and the wild winds sung,
The dirge of lovely Rosabelle.

(1805)

Hunting Song

Waken, lords and ladies gay,
On the mountain dawns the day;
All the jolly chase is here
With hawk, and horse, and hunting-spear;
Hounds are in their couples yelling,
Hawks are whistling, horns are knelling,
Merrily, merrily, mingle they,
"Waken, lords and ladies gay."

Waken, lords and ladies gay,
The mist has left the mountain gray,
Springlets in the dawn are steaming,
Diamonds on the brake are gleaming;
And foresters have busy been
To track the buck in thicket green;
Now we come to chant our lay,
"Waken, lords and ladies gay."

Waken, lords and ladies gay,
To the green-wood haste away;
We can show you where he lies,
Fleet of foot, and tall of size;
We can show the marks he made,
When 'gainst the oak his antlers frayed;
You shall see him brought to bay,
"Waken, lords and ladies gay."

Louder, louder chant the lay,
Waken, lords and ladies gay!
Tell them youth, and mirth, and glee,
Run a course as well as we;
Time, stern huntsman! who can baulk,
Stanch as hound, and fleet as hawk;
Think of this, and rise with day,
Gentle lords and ladies gay.

(1808)

Soldier, Rest! Thy Warfare O'er

From *The Lady of the Lake*

Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking:
Dream of battled fields no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking.
In our isle's enchanted hall,
Hands unseen thy couch are strewing,
Fairy strains of music fall,
Every sense in slumber dewing.
Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er,
Dream of fighting fields no more:
Sleep the sleep that knows not breaking,
Morn of toil, nor night of waking.

No rude sound shall reach thine ear,
Armor's clang, or war-steed champing,

[2] a village about seven miles south of Edinburgh, where the castle and chapel of Roslin are located.

Trump nor pibroch[1] summon here
  Mustering clan, or squadron tramping.
Yet the lark's shrill fife may come
  At the daybreak from the fallow,
And the bittern sound his drum,
  Booming from the sedgy shallow.
Ruder sounds shall none be near,
Guards nor warders challenge here;
Here's no war-steed's neigh and champing,
Shouting clans, or squadrons stamping.

Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done,
  While our slumbrous spells assail ye,
Dream not, with the rising sun,
  Bugles here shall sound reveille.
Sleep! the deer is in his den;
  Sleep! thy hounds are by thee lying;
Sleep! nor dream in yonder glen
  How thy gallant steed lay dying.
Huntsman, rest! thy chase is done;
Think not of the rising sun,
For at dawning to assail ye,
Here no bugles sound reveille.

(1810)

Edmund's Song

From *Rokeby*

CANTO III

XVI

O, Brignall banks are wild and fair,
  And Greta woods are green,
And you may gather garlands there,
  Would grace a summer queen.
And as I rode by Dalton-hall,
  Beneath the turrets high,
A Maiden on the castle wall
  Was singing merrily,—

Chorus

"O, Brignall banks are fresh and fair,
  And Greta woods are green;
I'd rather rove with Edmund there,
  Than reign our English queen."—

"If, maiden, thou wouldst wend with me,
  To leave both tower and town,
Thou first must guess what life lead we,
  That dwell by dale and down?
And if thou canst that riddle read,
  As read full well you may,
Then to the greenwood shalt thou speed,
  As blithe as Queen of May."—

Chorus

Yet sung she, "Brignall banks are fair,
  And Greta woods are green;
I'd rather rove with Edmund there,
  Than reign our English queen.

"I read[1] you, by your bugle-horn,
  And by your palfrey good,
I read you for a Ranger sworn,
  To keep the king's greenwood."—
"A Ranger, lady, winds his horn,
  And 'tis at peep of light;
His blast is heard at merry morn,
  And mine at dead of night."—

Chorus

Yet sung she, "Brignall banks are fair,
  And Greta woods are gay;
I would I were with Edmund there,
  To reign his Queen of May!

With burnish'd brand and musketoon,[2]
  So gallantly you come,
I read you for a bold dragoon,
  That lists the tuck of drum."—
"I list no more the tuck of drum,
  No more the trumpet hear;
But when the beetle sounds his hum,
  My comrades take the spear.

Chorus

"And, O! though Brignall banks be fair,
  And Greta woods be gay,
Yet mickle must the maiden dare,
  Would reign my Queen of May!

"Maiden! a nameless life I lead,
  A nameless death I'll die;
The fiend, whose lantern lights the mead,
  Were better mate than I!
And when I'm with my comrades met,
  Beneath the greenwood bough,
What once we were we all forget,
  Nor think what we are now.

[1] bagpipe.

[1] guess. [2] short musket.

Chorus

"Yet Brignall banks are fresh and fair,
And Greta woods are green,
And you may gather garlands there
Would grace a summer queen."—

(1812)

Pibroch of Donald Dhu

Pibroch of Donuil Dhu,[1]
Pibroch of Donuil,
Wake thy wild voice anew,
Summon Clan Conuil.
Come away, come away,
Hark to the summons!
Come in your war array,
Gentles and commons.

Come from deep glen, and
From mountain so rocky,
The war-pipe and pennon
Are at Inverlochy.
Come every hill-plaid and
True heart that wears one,
Come every steel blade and
Strong hand that bears one.

Leave untended the herd,
The flock without shelter;
Leave the corpse uninterred,
The bride at the altar;
Leave the deer, leave the steer,
Leave nets and barges:
Come with your fighting gear,
Broadswords and targes.

Come as the winds come, when
Forests are rended;
Come as the waves come, when
Navies are stranded:
Faster come, faster come,
Faster and faster,
Chief, vassal, page and groom,
Tenant and master.

Fast they come, fast they come;
See how they gather!
Wide waves the eagle plume,
Blended with heather.
Cast your plaids, draw your blades,
Forward each man set!
Pibroch of Donuil Dhu,
Knell for the onset!

(1816)

[1] Donald the Black.

Jock of Hazeldean

"Why weep ye by the tide, ladie?
Why weep ye by the tide?
I'll wed ye to my youngest son,
And ye sall be his bride;
And ye sall be his bride, ladie,
Sae comely to be seen"—
But aye she loot[1] the tears down fa'
For Jock of Hazeldean.

"Now let this wilfu' grief be done,
And dry that cheek so pale;
Young Frank is chief of Errington,
And lord of Langley-dale;
His step is first in peaceful ha',
His sword in battle keen"—
But aye she loot the tears down fa'
For Jock of Hazeldean.

"A chain of gold ye sall not lack,
Nor braid to bind your hair;
Nor mettled hound, nor managed hawk,
Nor palfrey fresh and fair;
And you, the foremost o' them a',
Shall ride our forest queen."—
But aye she loot the tears down fa'
For Jock of Hazeldean.

The kirk[2] was decked at morning-tide,
The tapers glimmered fair;
The priest and bridegroom wait the bride,
And dame and knight are there.
They sought her baith by bower and ha';
The lady was not seen!
She's o'er the Border, and awa'
Wi' Jock of Hazeldean.

(1816)

[1] let. [2] church.

Harlaw

From *The Antiquary*

Now haud your tongue, baith wife and carle,[1]
And listen, great and sma',
And I will sing of Glenallan's Earl
That fought on the red Harlaw.

"The cronach's[2] cried on Bennachie,
And doun the Don and a',
And hieland and lawland may mournfu' be
For the sair field of Harlaw.—

"They saddled a hundred milk-white steeds,
They hae bridled a hundred black,
With a chafron[3] of steel on each horse's head,
And a good knight upon his back."—

"They hadna ridden a mile, a mile,
A mile, but rarely ten,
When Donald came branking[4] down the brae
Wi' twenty thousand men.

"Their tartans they were waving wide,
Their glaives[5] were glancing clear,
Their pibrochs[6] rung frae side to side
Would deafen ye to hear.

"The great Earl in his stirrups stood
That Highland host to see:
Now here a knight that's stout and good
May prove a jeopardie:

"'What wouldst thou do, my squire so gay,
That rides beside my reyne,
Were ye Glenallan's Earl the day,
And I were Roland Cheyne?

"'To turn the rein were sin and shame,
To fight were wondrous peril,
What would ye do now, Roland Cheyne,
Were ye Glenallan's Earl?'

"'Were I Glenallan's Earl this tide,
And ye were Roland Cheyne,
The spur should be in my horse's side,
And the bridle upon his mane.

"'If they hae twenty thousand blades,
And we twice ten times ten,
Yet they hae but their tartan plaids,
And we are mail-clad men.

"'My horse shall ride through ranks sae rude,
As through the moorland fern,
Then ne'er let the gentle Norman blude
Grow cauld for Highland kerne.'"[7]

(1816)

[1] man. [2] funeral dirge. [3] chevron. [4] prancing. [5] swords. [6] bagpipes.

Proud Maisie

From *The Heart of Midlothian*

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

"Tell me, thou bonny bird,
When shall I marry me?"—
"When six braw[1] gentlemen
Kirkward shall carry ye."

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

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

(1818)

[7] foot soldier.
[1] fine

JOHANN WOLFGANG von GOETHE (1749-1832)

Into a Germany composed of many disunited and tyrannical petty states its greatest writer was born, the son of an imperial counselor of Frankfort-on-Main. He was equipped with a well-rounded education. A voracious reader, he could hardly have found adequate nourishment in a German literature that was just awaking to greatness after centuries of slumber. He therefore turned to the deeper sources of other literatures, and mastered English and Italian as well as Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. He applied himself to law and the fine arts, too, and was a devoted lover of music. But, like his contemporaries, he found much of his inspiration in the English poets and in the writings of Rousseau.

The renascence in German literature of the eighteenth century was bound up with the struggle of high-spirited men to throw off the shackles of political oppression. Goethe's first important play, in consequence, *Götz von Berlichingen,* appearing in its earliest form in 1773 (and later translated by Sir Walter Scott), was a kind of hymn to freedom. Like many works of the period, it shows the strong impress of Shakespeare.

His love-affair with Charlotte Buff provided him with the materials for his first international success, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (cf. *below*), published in 1774, and written in emulation of Rousseau's *The New Eloisa* (cf. *above*). Few books have made in their time a greater sensation than this silly romance of the blighted love of its hero for the married heroine. Later in life Goethe experienced much chagrin when he remembered this work, its vogue, and the damage it had done.

Soon after, the poet was writing a series of exquisite lyrics which established him as one of Germany's finest lyric poets. When he was twenty-six he was summoned to Weimar by the young duke, Karl August. In 1776 he was made the duke's privy-councilor, an office that was followed by many others during the next thirty years. In 1782 he was granted a patent of nobility. His prolific pen was ever busy, and he turned out innumerable poems, dramas, and the great novel *Wilhelm Meister* (later translated by Carlyle).

His visit to Italy in 1786 served to modify his exuberant and weighty romanticism through his contact with the great contributions of classical art. Among the results was his completion of two of his best plays, *Torquato Tasso* and *Iphigenia in Tauris.* But his major literary work is *Faust,* to the composition of which he devoted sixty years of his life. In his twentieth he had already begun to plan it. Part of it was published in 1790, but he continued to work on it, as his mind deepened and widened, until the year before his death. *Faust* resolves the problem to the solution of which a lifetime of experience and study were devoted: Where can knowledge and contentment be found? Goethe's answer is all-important: in furthering the good of humanity. *Faust* takes its place with the few highest achievements in world literature.

To deal justly with a man of Goethe's universal scope would require far more space than our study will permit. We shall do better therefore to admit that here we have said nothing, and can say nothing, fitting concerning his vast importance to European thought. We must be content to remark that even if we were to give an exhaustive account of him as a literary figure, we should leave unindicated the many-sidedness of this great modern man. He was a critic of literature and the fine arts. His interest in science grew with the years: he made investigations in anatomy and botany, and actually foreshadowed the Darwinian theory in his works on the metamorphosis of plants and animal morphology. When Goethe was an old man, his sympathy with scientific invention and its donations toward democratic society was equally far in advance of his contemporaries. The world had changed mightily since his youth but he was always at home in it. No wonder Napoleon could exclaim of him: "There indeed is a man!" The modern world has afforded no other example of such universal genius, and it has been well said of him that his greatest work was his life.

But the fact that is important for us is that Goethe's most imposing works were slow to find their way to the English reading public. *Werther* was known a few years after its composition, and immediately adored. It was translated many times, adapted, and dramatized (1785). Unfortunately its very success seems to have interfered with an acquaintance with any of its author's major writings for many years. So far as the English romanticists were concerned, Goethe was the author of *Werther.* Its hero's waistcoat and gloves became the fashion, and the more pathetic incidents of the story were portrayed in pottery.

The vogue of *Werther* was far from beneficial. A wave of suicides followed its popularity. It became something of a poetic consummation of one's misunderstood life to be found dead with a bullet through one's brain, a Werther waistcoast on one's corpse, and a volume of *Werther* in one's hand. Its literary effects were hardly less striking, for *Werther* came to be the personification *par excellence* of a certain

tendency in the Romantic Movement. The disappointment of the hopes of radicals in the French Revolution resulted in a great wave of despair over the human lot among the poets of the generation of Byron, Shelley, and Keats. The individual seemed thrown back upon himself, convinced that a cruel world had no place for the sensitive. Werther thus became the type of frustrated idealist, too weak and delicate to combat the overwhelmingly prosaic forces of life. The note of disillusionment and despair which he sounded is to be heard in echo in countless pages of Byron, Shelley, and Keats. There are other insistent romantic strains in the novel, too: Werther's love of simplicity —as in the meeting with Charlotte (cf. *below*), his impotent resentment at the artificial distinctions of rank (cf. *below*), his worship of the apparently wild, untamed pages of Ossian (cf. *below*), and his many rhapsodic, grief-ridden apostrophes of a pseudo-philosophic nature.

If so absurd a work had such popularity, it was only because it fell upon times that were emotionally prepared for it. The traditions of sentimentalism made the public ripe, and as the Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic era seemed to have throttled all humanitarian ideals, the book only grew in favor. In consequence, *Werther* is an important index to popular literary taste in the days of the younger romantic poets.

Later in the century when Goethe's masterpieces were better known, *Werther's* true qualities were more justly evaluated. Thackeray's ridicule of the meeting with Charlotte (cf. *below*), once thought the height of the beautiful, has been a refreshing antidote to all the extravagant admiration that sentimental episode once evoked:

THE SORROWS OF WERTHER

Werther had a love for Charlotte
Such as words could never utter;
Would you know how first he met her?
She was cutting bread and butter.

Charlotte was a married lady,
And a moral man was Werther,
And for all the wealth of Indies,
Would do nothing for to hurt her.

So he sigh'd and pined and ogled,
And his passion boil'd and bubbled,
Till he blew his silly brains out,
And no more by it was troubled.

Charlotte, having seen his body
Borne before her on a shutter,
Like a well-conducted person,
Went on cutting bread and butter.

Goethe's *Conversations* as recorded by J. P. Eckermann (1836) are a treasure-house of his opinions on every kind of subject. J. M. Carré made an important study of Goethe's vogue in England (Paris, 1920). There are many biographies of the great poet.

From THE SORROWS OF YOUNG WERTHER

I alighted; and a maid came to the door, and requested us to wait a moment for her mistress. I walked across the court to a well-built house, and ascending the flight of steps in front, opened the door, and saw before me the most charming spectacle I had ever witnessed. Six children, from eleven to two years old, were running around about the hall, and surrounding a lady of noble height, with a lovely figure, dressed in a robe of simple white, trimmed with pink ribbons. She was holding a rye loaf in her hand, and was cutting slices for the little ones all around, in proportion to their age and appetite. She performed her task in a graceful and affectionate manner; each claimant awaiting his turn with outstretched hands, and boisterously shouting his thanks. Some of them ran away at once to enjoy their evening meal; whilst others of a gentler disposition, retired to the courtyard to see the strangers, and to survey the carriage in which their Charlotte was to drive away. "Pray forgive me for giving you the trouble to come for me, and for keeping the ladies waiting: but dressing and arranging some household duties before I leave had made me forget my children's supper; and they do not like to take it from anyone but me." I uttered some indifferent compliment: but my whole soul was absorbed by her air, her voice, her manner; and I had scarcely recovered my self when she ran into her room to fetch her gloves and fan. The young ones threw inquiring glances at me from a distance; whilst I approached the youngest, a most delicious little creature. He drew back; and Charlotte, entering at the very moment said, "Louis, shake hands with your cousin." The little fellow obeyed willingly; and I could not resist giving him a hearty kiss, notwithstanding his rather dirty face. "Cousin," said I to Charlotte, as I handed her down, "do you think I deserve the happiness of being related to you?" She replied, with a ready smile, "Oh! I have such a number of cousins, that I should be sorry if you were the most undeserving of them." In taking leave, she desired her next sister, Sophy, a girl about eleven years old, to take great care of the children, and to say good-by to papa for her when he came home from his ride. She enjoined to the little ones to obey their sister Sophy as they would herself, upon which some

promised that they would; but a little fair-haired girl, about six years old, looked discontented, and said, "But Sophy is not you, Charlotte; and we like you best." The two eldest boys had clambered up the carriage; and at my request, she permitted them to accompany us a little way through the forest, upon their promising to sit very still, and hold fast.

We were hardly seated, and the ladies had scarcely exchanged compliments, making the usual remarks upon each other's dresses, and upon the company they expected to meet, when Charlotte stopped the carriage and made her brothers get down. They insisted upon kissing her hands once more; which the eldest did with all the tenderness of a youth of fifteen, but the other in a lighter and more careless manner. She desired them again to give her love to the children and we drove off.

The aunt inquired of Charlotte whether she had finished the book she had last sent her. "No," said Charlotte; "I did not like it: you can have it again. And the one before was not much better." I was surprised, upon asking the title, to hear that it was ————. I found penetration and character in everything she said: every expression seemed to brighten her features with new charms,—with new rays of genius,—which unfolded by degrees as she felt herself understood.

"When I was younger," she observed, "I loved nothing so much as romances. Nothing could equal my delight when, on some holiday, I could settle down quietly in a corner, and enter with my whole heart and soul into the joys or sorrows of some fictitious Leonora. I do not deny that they even possess some charms for me yet. But I read so seldom, that I prefer books suited exactly to my taste. And I like those authors best whose scenes describe my own situation in life,—and the friends who are about me, whose stories touch me with interest, from resembling my homely existence,—which, without being absolutely paradise, is, on the whole, a source of indescribable happiness."

I endeavored to conceal the emotion which these words occasioned, but it was of slight avail; for, when she had expressed so truly her opinion of "The Vicar of Wakefield," and of other works, the names of which I omit, I could no longer contain myself, but gave full utterance to what I thought of it: and it was not until Charlotte addressed herself to the two other ladies, that I remembered their presence, and observed them sitting mute with astonishment. The aunt looked at me several times with an air of raillery, which, however, I did not at all mind.

We talked of the pleasures of dancing. "If it is a fault to love it," said Charlotte, "I am ready to confess that I prize it above all other amusements. If anything disturbs me, I go to the piano, play an air to which I have danced, and all goes right again directly."

You, who know me, can fancy how steadfastly I gazed upon her rich dark eyes during these remarks, how my very soul gloated over her warm lips and fresh glowing cheeks, how I became quite lost in the delightful meaning of her words, so much so that I scarcely heard the actual expressions. In short, I alighted from the carriage like a person in a dream, and was so lost to the dim world around me, that I scarcely heard the music which resounded from the illuminated ballroom. . . .

How my heart beats when by accident I touch her finger, or my feet meet hers under the table! I draw back as from a furnace; but a secret force impels me forward again, and my senses become disordered. Her innocent, unconscious heart knows what agonies these little familiarities inflict upon me. Sometimes when we are talking she lays her hand upon mine, and in the eagerness of conversation comes closer to me, and her balmy breath reaches my lips,—when I feel as if lightning had struck me, and that I could sink into the earth. And yet, Wilhelm, with all this heavenly confidence,—if I know myself, and should ever dare—you understand me. No, no! my heart is not so corrupt,—it is weak, weak enough—but is not that a degree of corruption?

She is to me a sacred being. All passion is still in her presence: I cannot express my sensations when I am near her. I feel as if my soul beat in every nerve of my body. There is a melody which she plays on the piano with angelic skill,—so simple is it, and yet so spiritual! It is her favorite air; and, when she plays the first note, all pain, care, and sorrow disappear from me in a moment.

I believe every word that is said of the magic of ancient music. How her simple song enchants me! Sometimes, when I am ready to commit suicide, she sings that air, and instantly the gloom and madness which hung over me are dispersed, and I breathe freely again. . . .

I have just had a sad adventure, which will drive me away from here. I lose all patience!—Death!—It is not to be remedied; and you alone are to blame, for you urged and impelled me to fill a post for which I was by no means suited. I have now reason to be satisfied, and so have you! But, that you may not again attribute this fatality to my impetuous temper,

I send you, my dear sir, a plain and simple narration of the affair, as a mere chronicler of facts would describe it.

The Count of O—— likes and distinguishes me. It is well known, and I have mentioned this to you a hundred times. Yesterday I dined with him. It is the day on which the nobility are accustomed to assemble at his house in the evening. I never once thought of the assembly, nor that we subalterns did not belong to such society. Well, I dined with the count; and, after dinner, we adjourned to the large hall. We walked up and down together: and I conversed with him, and with Colonel B——, who joined us; and in this manner the hour for the assembly approached. God knows, I was thinking of nothing, when who should enter but the honorable Lady S——, accompanied by her noble husband and their silly, scheming daughter, with her small waist and flat neck; and, with disdainful looks and haughty air, they passed me by. As I heartily detest the whole race, I determined upon going away; and only waited till the count had disengaged himself from their impertinent prattle, to take leave, when the agreeable Miss B—— came in. As I never meet her without experiencing a heartfelt pleasure, I stayed and talked to her, leaning over the back of her chair, and did not perceive, till after some time, that she seemed a little confused, and ceased to answer me with her usual ease of manner. I was struck with it. "Heavens!" I said to myself, "can she, too, be like the rest?" I felt annoyed, and was about to withdraw; but I remained notwithstanding, forming excuses for her conduct, fancying she did not mean it, and still hoping to receive some friendly recognition. The rest of the company now arrived. There was the Baron F——, in an entire suit that dated from the coronation of Francis I.; the Chancellor N——, with his deaf wife; the shabbily-dressed I——, whose old-fashioned coat bore evidence of modern repairs: this crowned the whole. I conversed with some of my acquaintances but they answered me laconically. I was engaged in observing Miss B——, and did not notice that the women were whispering at the end of the room, that the murmur extended by degrees to the men, that Madame S—— addressed the count with much warmth (this was all related to me subsequently by Miss B——); till at length the count came up to me, and took me to the window. "You know our ridiculous customs," he said. "I perceive the company is rather displeased at your being here. I would not on any account—" "I beg your excellency's pardon!" I exclaimed. "I ought to have thought of this before, but I know you will forgive this little inattention. I was going," I added, "some time ago, but my evil genius detained me." And I smiled and bowed to take my leave. He shook me by the hand in a manner which expressed everything. I hastened at once from the illustrious assembly, sprang into a carriage and drove to M——. I contemplated the setting sun from the top of the hill, and read the beautiful passage in Homer, where Ulysses is entertained by the hospitable herdsmen. This was indeed delightful.

I returned home to supper in the evening. But few persons were assembled in the room. They had turned up a corner of the table-cloth, and were playing at dice. The good-natured A—— came in. He laid down his hat when he saw me, approached me, and said in a low tone, "You have met with a disagreeable adventure." "I!" I exclaimed. "The count obliged you to withdraw from the assembly!" "Deuce take the assembly!" said I. "I was very glad to be gone." "I am delighted," he added, "that you take it so lightly. I am only sorry that it is already so much spoken of." The circumstances then began to pain me. I fancied that every one who sat down, and even looked at me, was thinking of this incident; and my heart became embittered.

And now I could plunge a dagger into my bosom, when I hear myself everywhere pitied, and observe the triumph of my enemies, who say that this is always the case with vain persons, whose heads are turned with conceit, who affect to despise forms and such petty, idle nonsense.

Say what you will of fortitude, but show me the man who can patiently endure the laughter of fools, when they have obtained an advantage over him. 'Tis only when their nonsense is without foundation that one can suffer it without complaint. . . .

Ossian[1] has superseded Homer in my heart. To what a world does the illustrious bard carry me! To wander over pathless wilds, surrounded by impetuous whirlwinds, where, by the feeble light of the moon, we see the spirits of our ancestors; to hear from the mountain-tops, mid the roar of torrents, their plaintive sounds issuing from deep caverns, and the sorrowful lamentations of a maiden who sighs and expires on the mossy tomb of the warrior by whom she was adored. I meet this bard with silver hair; he wanders in the valley; he seeks the footsteps of his fathers, and, alas! he finds only their tombs. Then, contemplating the pale moon, as she sinks beneath, the waves of the rolling sea, the memory of bygone days strikes the

[1] Cf. Vol. II, p. 38.

mind of the hero,—days when approaching danger invigorated the brave, and the moon shone upon his bark laden with spoils, and returning in triumph. When I read in his countenance deep sorrow, when I see his dying glory sink exhausted into the grave, as he inhales new and heart-thrilling delight from his approaching union with his beloved, and he casts a look on the cold earth and the tall grass which is so soon to cover him, and then exclaims, "The traveller will come—he will come who has seen my beauty, and he will ask, 'Where is the bard,—where is the illustrious son of Fingal?' He will walk over my tomb, and will seek me in vain!" Then, O my friend, I could instantly, like a true and noble knight, draw my sword, and deliver my prince from the long and painful languor of a living death, and dismiss my own soul to follow the demigod whom my hand had set free! . . .

JOHANN CHRISTOPH FRIEDRICH von SCHILLER (1759-1805)

Schiller was born at Marbach, the son of an army surgeon who frequently changed his place of residence during the boy's childhood. In 1773 young Schiller was required to attend the military school of the Duke of Würtemburg, where he studied medicine. The severe military discipline of the institution made it a prison for the lad, and he found relief only by secretly nurturing himself on Shakespeare and Rousseau. Surreptitiously, before he was twenty, he composed his first drama, *The Robbers* (cf. *below*), which he privately read to admiring friends. In 1780 he left the school, and was appointed by the duke to the post of surgeon to a regiment stationed at Stuttgart. His discontent unabated, he poured forth his misery in a series of passionate lyrics. In 1781 he published his play at his own expense. Despite its exaggerated tone and slavish imitation of Shakespeare, the drama possessed noble qualities and became well known. After its performance at Mannheim in 1782, Schiller was arrested for two weeks by the duke, and forbidden to write on any other subject than medicine thereafter. Impatient with this tyranny, he fled to Bauerbach in Thuringia. In 1783 he was given the appointment of "theatre-poet" in Mannheim. Later he moved to Leipzig, and thence to Weimar, where he met Goethe, with whom he became very intimate. In 1789 he was made professor of history at Jena. His final years, however, were spent at Weimar.

Schiller is one of Germany's greatest poets, and is famous both for his lyrics and his dramas. In addition to his shorter poems, critical essays, and *History of the Thirty Years' War*, his most important works are his plays: *Wallenstein, The Maid of Orleans, Mary Stuart,* and *William Tell.* His was the great voice of his contemporaries' struggle for liberty during a time of insufferable repression in Germany. His optimism, his faith in freedom, and his clarity of vision have made him a source of endless consolation to the German people.

Like Goethe, Schiller was for many years known to the English reader only as the author of his early, immature work. It was Henry Mackenzie, the author of *The Man of Feeling* (cf. Vol. I, p. 629), who first introduced him into England. *The Robbers* was translated in 1792, and hailed as a masterpiece. In the glory accorded that work, his other creations remained long unknown to most Englishmen. Byron and Shelley were acquainted chiefly with that drama, and it would seem that Coleridge alone among the early romantics of the century came to know Schiller's mature work.

The popularity in England of *The Robbers* was a result of its being, as was *Werther*, an exemplification of an important aspect of the Romantic Movement. In fact, *Werther* and *The Robbers* are like two sides of the same medal. The hero of *Werther* personified for the romantics the sensitive soul who was crushed by society and its forces; the hero of *The Robbers* personified the sensitive soul who, disillusioned by society and its forces, turned to wage unyielding war against it. Both characters came to be identified with the despair consequent upon the collapse of ideals with the failure of the French Revolution; the difference between them is the difference between the man who is frustrated and the man who refuses to surrender. The anti-social hero, glorified in *The Robbers*, who, because of wrongs done him, becomes the personal avenger of the world's ills, is to be met often in English romantic literature, notably in all of Byron's heroes. Schiller's Charles von Moor, betrayed by a perfidious brother, outlaws himself from respectability, and sets himself up as a kind of Robin Hood, who robs the rich to help the poor. At the end, he finds his battle to have been fruitless, and gives himself up to the law so that a laborer with eleven children may collect the reward set on his head.

The Robbers is here excerpted not to demonstrate Schiller's great genius, which it does very inadequately, but to indicate a leading pattern of romantic hero. The inflated style and highly emotional speeches are in the oratorical manner much affected by the romantics, particularly Byron among the great poets. To us today the play seems like a rigmarole of several of Shake-

speare's plots (e.g. *King Lear*), and reads like a series of misquotations from that poet.

Thomas Carlyle's biography of Schiller (1824) was the first important study in English. An interesting modern one is J. G. Robertson's *Schiller after a Century* (1905).

From THE ROBBERS

ACT I; SCENE 2

Enter CHARLES VON MOOR *in violent agitation, stalking backwards and forwards, and speaking to himself.*

CHARLES VON M. Man—man! false, perfidious crocodile-brood! Your eyes are all tears, but your hearts steel! Kisses on your lips, but daggers couched in your bosoms! Even lions and tigers nourish their young. Ravens feast their brood on carrion, and he—he!—Malice I have learned to bear; and I can smile when my fellest enemy drinks to me in my own heart's blood—but when kindred turn traitors, when a father's love becomes a fury's hate;—oh, then, let manly resignation give place to raging fire!—the gentle lamb become a tiger!—and every nerve strain itself to vengeance and destruction!

ROLLER. Hark ye, Moor! What think you of it? A robber's life is pleasanter, after all, than to lie rotting on bread and water in the lowest dungeon of the castle?

CHARLES VON M. Why was not this spirit implanted in a tiger, which gluts its raging jaws with human flesh? Is this a father's tenderness? Is this love for love? Would I were a bear, to rouse all the bears of the north against this murderous race!—Repentance, and no pardon! Oh, that I could poison the ocean, that men might drink death from every spring! Contrition, implicit reliance, and no pardon!

ROLLER. But listen, Moor,—listen, to what I am telling you!

CHARLES VON M. 'Tis incredible! 'tis a dream—a delusion! Such earnest entreaty, such a vivid picture of misery and tearful penitence—a savage beast would have been melted to compassion! stones would have wept, and yet he—it would be thought a malicious libel upon human nature, were I to proclaim it—and yet, yet—oh, that I could sound the trumpet of rebellion through all creation, and lead air, and earth, and sea, into battle array against this generation of hyenas!

GRIMM. Hear me, only hear me! You are deaf with raving.

CHARLES VON M. Avaunt, avaunt! Is not thy name man? Art thou not born of woman? Out of my sight, thou thing of human visage! I loved him so unutterably!—never son so loved a father; I would have sacrificed a thousand lives for him—[*foaming and stamping the ground*]. Ha! where is he that will put a sword into my hand, that I may strike this generation of vipers to the quick! Who will teach me how to reach their heart's core, to crush, to annihilate the whole race?—Such a man shall be my friend, my angel, my god—him will I worship!

ROLLER. Such friends behold in us; be but advised!

SCHW. Come with us into the Bohemian forest! We will form a band of robbers there, and you—[MOOR *stares at him*].

SCHWEIT. You shall be our captain! you must be our captain!

SPIEGEL. [*throws himself into a chair in a rage*]. Slaves and cowards!

CHARLES VON M. Who inspired thee with that thought? Hark, fellow! [*grasping* ROLLER *tightly*] that human soul of thine did not produce it; who suggested it to thee? Yes, by the thousand arms of death! that's what we will, and what we must do! the thought's divine. He who conceived it deserves to be canonized. Robbers and murderers! As my soul lives, I am your captain!

ALL [*with tumultuous shouts*]. Hurrah! long live our captain!

SPIEGEL. [*starting up, aside*]. Till I give him his *coup de grace*![1]

CHARLES VON M. See, it falls like a film from my eyes! What a fool was I to think of returning to be caged! My soul's athirst for deeds, my spirit pants for freedom. Murderers, robbers! with these words I trample the law under foot—mankind threw off humanity, when I appealed to it—Away, then, with human sympathies and mercy! I no longer have a father, no longer affections; blood and death shall teach me to forget that anything was ever dear to me! Come! come! Oh, I will recreate myself with some most fearful vengeance;—'tis resolved, I am your captain! and success to him who shall spread fire and slaughter the widest and most savagely—I pledge myself he shall be right royally rewarded. Stand around me, all of you, and swear to me fealty and obedience unto death! Swear by this trusty right hand.

ALL [*place their hands in his*]. We swear to thee fealty and obedience unto death!

CHARLES VON M. And, by this same trusty right hand, I here swear to you to remain your captain, true and faithful unto death! This arm shall make an

[1] death blow.

instant corpse of him who doubts, or fears, or retreats. And may the same befall me from your hands, if I betray my oath! Are you content?

[*Spiegelberg runs up and down in a furious rage.*]

ALL [*throwing up their hats*]. We are content!

CHARLES VON M. Well, then, let us be gone! Fear neither death nor danger, for an unalterable destiny rules over us. Every man has his doom, be it to die on the soft pillow of down, or in the field of blood, or on the scaffold, or the wheel! One or the other of these must be our lot! [*Exeunt.*

SPIEGEL. [*looking after them, after a pause*]. Your catalogue has a hole in it. You have omitted poison. [*Exit.*

ACT II; SCENE 3

Enter CHARLES VON MOOR (*on horseback*), SCHWEITZER, ROLLER, GRIMM, SCHUFTERLE, *and a troop of* ROBBERS (*covered with dust and mud*).

CHARLES [*leaping from his horse*]. Liberty! Liberty!—Thou art on terra firma, Roller!—Take my horse, Schweitzer, and wash him with wine. [*Throws himself on the ground.*] That was hot work!

RAZ. [*to* ROLLER]. Well, by the fires of Pluto! Art thou risen from the wheel?

SCHWARZ. Art thou his ghost? or am I a fool? or art thou really the man?

ROLLER. [*still breathless*]. The identical—alive—whole.—Where do you think I come from?

SCHWARZ. It would puzzle a witch to tell! The staff was already broken over you.

ROLLER. Ay, that it was, and more than that! I come straightway from the gallows. Only let me get my breath. Schweitzer will tell you all. Give me a glass of brandy!—You there too, Spiegelberg? I thought we should have met again in another place.—But give me a glass of brandy! my bones are tumbling to pieces.—Oh, my captain! Where is my captain?

SCHWARZ. Have patience, man, have patience. Just tell me—say—come, let's hear—how did you escape? In the name of wonder how came we to get you back again? My brain is bewildered.—From the gallows, you say?

ROLLER [*swallows a flask of brandy*]. Ah, that is capital! that warms the inside!—Straight from the gallows, I tell you. You stand there and stare as if that was impossible.—I can assure you, I was not more than three paces from that blessed ladder, on which I was to mount to Abraham's bosom—so near, so very near, that I was sold, skin and all, to the dissecting room!—The fee-simple of my life was not worth a pinch of snuff.—To the captain I am indebted for breath, and liberty, and life.

SCHWEITZER. It was a trick worth the telling. We had heard the day before, through our spies, that Roller was in the devil's own pickle; and unless the vault of heaven fell in suddenly, he would, on the morrow—that is, today—go the way of all flesh.—Up! says the captain, and follow me—what is not a friend worth? Whether we save him or not, we will at least light him up a funeral pile such as never yet honoured royalty; one which shall burn them black and blue.—The whole troop was summoned. We sent Roller a trusty messenger, who conveyed the notice to him in a little billet, which he slipped into his porridge—

ROLLER. I had but small hope of success.

SCHWEITZER. We waited till the thoroughfares were clear.—The whole town was out after the sight; equestrians, pedestrians, carriages, all pell-mell; the noise and the gibbet-psalm sounded far and wide. Now, says the captain, light up, light up!—We all flew like darts; they set fire to the city in three-and-thirty places at once; threw burning firebrands on the powder magazines, and into the churches and granaries.—*Morbleu!* in less than a quarter of an hour a north-easter, which, like us, must have owed a grudge to the city, came seasonably to our aid, and helped to lift the flames up to the highest gables. Meanwhile we ran up and down the streets like furies, crying, fire! ho! fire! ho! in every direction.—There was such howling—screaming—tumult—fire-bells tolling.—And presently the powder-magazine blew up into the air with a crash as if the earth were rent in twain, heaven burst to shivers, and hell sunk ten thousand fathoms deeper.

ROLLER. Now my guards looked behind them—there lay the city, like Sodom and Gomorrah—the whole horizon was one mass of fire, brimstone, and smoke; and forty hills echoed and reflected the infernal prank far and wide—A panic seized them all—I take advantage of the moment, and, quick as lightning—my fetters had been taken off, so nearly was my time come—while my guards were looking away petrified, like Lot's wife—I shot off—tore through the crowd—and away!—After running some sixty paces I throw off my clothes, plunge into the river, and swim along under water till I think they have lost sight of me.—My captain stood ready, with horses and clothes—and here I am.—Moor! Moor! I only wish that you may soon get into just such another scrape, that I may requite you in like manner.

RAZ. A brutal wish, for which you deserve to be hanged.—It was a glorious prank though.

ROLLER. It was help in need; you cannot judge of it.—You should have marched, like me, with a rope around your neck, travelling to your grave in the living body, and seen their horrid sacramental forms and hangman's ceremonies—and then, at every reluctant step, as the struggling feet were thrust forward, to see the infernal machine, on which I was to be elevated, glaring more and more hideously in the blaze of the noon-day sun—and the hangman's rascallions watching for their prey—and the horrible psalm singing—the cursed twang still rings in my ears—and the screeching hungry ravens, a whole flight of them, who were hovering over the half-rotten carcase of my predecessor.—To see all this—ay, more, to have a foretaste of the blessedness which was in store for me!—Brother, brother!—And then, all of a sudden, the signal of deliverance.—It was an explosion as if the vault of heaven were rent in twain.—Hark ye, fellows! I tell you, if a man were to leap out of a fiery furnace into a freezing lake, he could not feel the contrast half so strongly as I did when I gained the opposite shore.

SPIEGEL [*laughs*]. Poor wretch! Well, you have got over it. [*Pledges him.*] Here's to a happy regeneration!

ROLLER [*flings away his glass*]. No, by all the treasures of Mammon, I should not like to go through it a second time. Death is something more than a harlequin's leap, and its terrors are even worse than death itself.

SPIEGEL. And the powder magazine leaping into the air!—Don't you see it now, Razman?—That was the reason the air stunk so, for miles round, of brimstone, as if the whole wardrobe of Moloch, was being aired under the open firmament.—It was a master-stroke, captain! I envy you for it.

SCHWEITZER. If the town makes it a holiday treat to see our comrade killed like a baited hog, why the devil should we scruple to sacrifice the city for the rescue of our comrade? And, by the way, our fellows had the extra treat of being able to plunder worse than the old emperor.—Tell me, what have you sacked?

ONE OF THE TROOP. I crept into St. Stephen's church during the hubbub and tore the gold lace from the altar cloth. The patron saint, thought I to myself, can make gold lace out of packthread.

SCHWEITZER. 'Twas well done.—What is the use of such rubbish in a church? They offer it to the Creator, who despises such trumpery, while they leave his creatures to die of hunger.—And you, Sprazeler—where did you throw your net?

A SECOND. I and Brizal broke into a merchant's store, and have brought stuffs enough with us to serve fifty men.

A THIRD. I have filched two gold watches and a dozen silver spoons.

SCHWEITZER. Well done, well done! And we have lighted them a bonfire that will take a fortnight to put out again. And, to get rid of the fire, they must ruin the city with water.—Do you know, Schufterle, how many lives have been lost?

SCHUF. Eighty-three, they say. The powder-magazine alone blew three-score to atoms.

CHARLES [*very seriously*]. Roller, thou art dearly bought.

SCHUF. Bah! bah! What of that?—If they had but been men, it would have been another matter—but they were babes in swaddling clothes, and shriveled old nurses that kept the flies from them, and dried-up stove-squatters who could not crawl to the door—patients whining for the doctor, who, with his stately gravity, was marching to the sport.—All that had the use of their legs had gone forth to the sight, and nothing remained at home but the dregs of the city.

CHARLES. Alas, for the poor creatures! Sick people, sayest thou? old men and infants?

SCHUF. Ay, the devil go with them! And lying-in women into the bargain; and women far gone with child, who were afraid of miscarrying under the gibbet; and young mothers, who thought the sight might do them a mischief, and mark the gallows upon the foreheads of their unborn babes—poor poets, without a shoe, because their only pair had been sent to the cobbler to mend—and other such vermin, not worth the trouble of mentioning.—As I chanced to pass by a cottage, I heard a great squalling inside. I looked in; and, when I came to examine, what do you think it was? Why, an infant—a plump and ruddy urchin—lying on the floor under a table which was just beginning to burn.—Poor little wretch! said I, you will be cold there, and with that I threw it into the flames—

CHARLES. Indeed, Schufterle?—Then may those flames burn in thy bosom to all eternity!—Avaunt, monster! Never let me see thee again in my troop! What! Do you murmur?—Do you hesitate?—Who dares hesitate when I command?—Away with him, I say!—And there are others among you ripe for my vengeance.—I know thee, Spiegelberg.—But I will step in among you ere long, and hold a fearful muster-roll. [*Exeunt, trembling.*

CHARLES [*alone, walking up and down in great agitation*]. Hear them not, thou avenger in heaven!—How can I avert it? Art thou to blame, great God,

if thy engines, pestilence, and famine, and floods, overwhelm the just with the unjust? Who can stay the flame, which is kindled to destroy the hornet's nest, from extending to the blessed harvest?—Oh! fie on the slaughter of women, and children, and the sick!—How this deed weighs me down! It has poisoned my fairest achievements!—There he stands, poor fool, abashed and disgraced in the sight of heaven; the boy that presumed to wield Jove's thunder, and overthrew pigmies when he should have crushed Titans.—Go, go! 'tis not for thee, puny son of clay, to wield the avenging sword of sovereign justice! Thou didst fail at thy first essay.—Here, then, I renounce the audacious scheme.—I go to hide myself in some deep cleft of the earth, where no daylight will be witness of my shame.

ACT III; SCENE 2

Country near the Danube.

THE ROBBERS (*encamped on a rising ground, under trees; their horses are grazing below*).

CHARLES. Here must I lie [*throwing himself on the ground*]. I feel as if my limbs were all shattered. My tongue is as dry as a potsherd. [SCHWEITZER *disappears unperceived.*] I would ask one of you to bring me a handful of water from that stream, but you are all tired to death.

SCHWARZ. Our wine-flasks too are all empty.

CHARLES. See how beautiful the harvest looks!—The trees are breaking with the weight of their fruit.—The vines are full of promise.

GRIMM. It is a fruitful year.

CHARLES. Do you think so?—Then, at least, *one* toil in the world will be repaid. One?—Yet in the night a hail-storm may come and destroy it all.

SCHWARZ. That is very possible. It may all be destroyed an hour before the reaping.

CHARLES. Just what I say.—All will be destroyed. Why should man prosper in that which he has in common with the ant, while he fails in that which places him on a level with the gods?—Or is this the aim and limit of his destiny?

SCHWARZ. I know not.

CHARLES. Thou hast said well; and wilt have done better, if thou never seekest to know!—Brother, I have looked on men, their insect cares and their giant projects,—their god-like plans and mouse-like occupations, their intensely eager race after happiness—one trusting to the fleetness of his horse,—another to the nose of his ass,—a third to his own legs; this chequered lottery of life, in which so many stake their innocence and their Heaven to snatch a prize, and—blanks are all they draw—for they find, too late, that there was no prize in the wheel. It is a drama, brother, enough to bring tears into your eyes, while it shakes your sides with laughter.

SCHWARZ. How gloriously the sun is setting yonder!

CHARLES. [*absorbed in the scene*]. So dies a hero!—Worthy of adoration.

SCHWARZ. You seem deeply moved.

CHARLES. When I was but a boy—it was my darling thought to live like him, like him to die—[*with suppressed grief*].—It was a boyish thought!

GRIMM. It was indeed.

CHARLES. There was a time—[*pressing his hat down upon his face*]—I would be alone, comrades.

SCHWARZ. Moor! Moor! Why what the deuce! How his colour changes.

GRIMM. By all the devils! What ails him? Is he ill?

CHARLES. There was a time when I could not have slept, had I forgotten my evening prayers—

GRIMM. Are you beside yourself? Would you let the remembrance of your boyish years school you now?

CHARLES [*lays his head upon the breast of Grimm*]. Brother! Brother!

GRIMM. Come! Don't play the child—I pray you—

CHARLES. Oh that I were—that I were again a child!

GRIMM. Fie! fie!

SCHWARZ. Cheer up! Behold this smiling landscape—this delicious evening!

CHARLES. Yes, friends, this world is very lovely—

SCHWARZ. Come, now, that was well said.

CHARLES. This earth so glorious!—

GRIMM. Right—right—I love to hear you talk thus.

CHARLES [*sinking back*]. And I so hideous in this lovely world—a monster on this glorious earth!

GRIMM. Oh dear! oh dear!

CHARLES. My innocence! give me back my innocence! Behold, every living thing is gone forth to bask in the cheering rays of the vernal sun—why must I alone inhale the torments of hell out of the joys of heaven?—All are so happy, all so united in brotherly love, by the Spirit of peace!—The whole world *one* family, and one Father above—but He not *my* father!—I alone the outcast, I alone rejected from the ranks of the blessed—the sweet name of child is not for me—never for me the soul-thrilling glance of her I love—never, never the bosom friend's embrace—[*starting back wildly*]—surrounded by murderers—hemmed in by hissing vipers—riveted to vice with iron fetters—whirling headlong on the frail

reed of sin to the gulf of perdition—amid the blooming flowers of a glad world, a howling Abaddon![2]

SCHWARZ [*to the others*]. How strange! I never saw him thus before.

CHARLES [*with melancholy*]. Oh, that I might return again to my mother's womb! That I might be born a beggar!—I should desire no more,—no more, oh heaven!—but that I might be like as one of those poor labourers!—Oh, I would toil till the blood streamed down my temples,—to buy myself the luxury of one guiltless slumber—the blessedness of a single tear.

GRIMM [*to the others*]. A little patience—the paroxysm is nearly over.

CHARLES. There was a time when my tears flowed so freely—Oh, those days of peace!—Dear home of my fathers—ye verdant halcyon vales!—O all ye Elysian scenes of my childhood!—Will you never return?—will your delicious breezes never cool my burning bosom?—Mourn with me, Nature, mourn!—They will never return! never will their delicious breezes cool my burning bosom!—They are gone! gone! irrevocably gone!—

ACT V; LAST SCENE

CHARLES. Oh! fool that I was, to fancy that I could amend the world by misdeeds, and maintain law by lawlessness!—I called it vengeance and equity.—I presumed, O Providence! upon whetting out the notches of thy sword, and repairing thy partialities.—But—O vain trifling!—here I stand on the brink of a fearful life, and learn, with wailing and gnashing of teeth, that *two men like myself could ruin the whole edifice of the moral world.* Pardon—pardon the boy who thought to forestall Thee— To *Thee Alone* belongeth vengeance— Thou needest not the hand of man!—But it is not in my power to recall the past—That which is ruined remains ruined—What I have thrown down will never more rise up again.—Yet one thing is left me, whereby I may atone to the offended majesty of the law, and restore the order which I have violated. A victim is required—a victim to declare before all mankind how inviolable that majesty is—that victim shall be myself.—I will be the death offering!

ROBBERS. Take his sword from him—he will kill himself.

CHARLES. Fools that ye are! doomed to eternal blindness! Think ye that one mortal sin will expiate other mortal sins? Do you suppose that the harmony of the world would be promoted by such an impious discord? [*Throwing his arms at their feet.*] He shall have me alive.—I go, to deliver myself into the hands of justice.

ROBBERS. Put him in chains! he has lost his senses!

CHARLES. Not that I have any doubt but that justice would find me speedily enough, if the powers above so ordained it. But she might surprise me in sleep, or overtake me in flight, or seize me with violence and the sword, and then I should have lost the only merit left me, that of making my death a freewill atonement. Why should I, like a thief, any longer conceal a life, which in the counsels of the heavenly ministry has long been forfeited?

ROBBERS. Let him go. He is infected with the great-man-mania; he means to offer up his life for empty admiration.

CHARLES. I might, 'tis true, be admired for it. [*After a moment's reflection.*] I remember, on my way hither, talking to a poor creature, a day-labourer, with eleven living children.—A reward has been offered of a thousand Louis-d'ors to any one who shall deliver up the great robber alive.—That man shall be served. [*Exit.*

END

CONSTANTIN FRANÇOIS CHASSE-BOEUF, COUNT VOLNEY (1757-1820)

Volney was born February 3, 1757, at Craon, France, and spent four years early in life in Egypt and Syria. He published an account of his travels in 1787. Later he was a member both of the States-General and of the Constituent Assembly. His most important book, *The Ruins of Empires,* appeared in 1791; an essay on the philosophy of history, it predicted the unification of all religious faiths through an understanding that they all contain common truth. In 1792 he bought an estate in Corsica, and attempted to put his political theories into practice. He was imprisoned during the Terror, but escaped execution. In 1795 he came to the United States, where he remained until 1798. Though he was not of Napoleon's party, the Emperor rewarded his studies by making him a count and giving him a place in the Senate. He died in Paris on April 25, 1820.

Luxuriating in the melancholy popularized by

[2] the bottomless pit; cf. *Revelation,* 9:11.

Rousseau and the English graveyard poets, Volney finds himself, in *The Ruins of Empires* (cf. *below*), among the remains of Palmyra, where he is moved to meditate on the rise and decay of great nations, and concludes that tyranny and oppression were responsible for their downfall. He envisions a society in the future in which men will wisely possess peace and kindliness.

The book, although no longer read by his compatriots, was very popular with the younger romantics, and Shelley in particular owed much to it. Echoes of it will be found in *Ozymandias* (cf. *below*) and *Queen Mab*.

From THE RUINS OF EMPIRES

THE REVERIE

Here, said I, once flourished an opulent city; here was the seat of a powerful empire. Yes! these places now so wild and desolate, were once animated by a living multitude; a busy crowd thronged in these streets, now so solitary. Within these walls, where now reigns the silence of death, the noise of the arts, and the shouts of joy and festivity incessantly resounded; these piles of marble were regular palaces; these fallen columns adorned the majesty of temples; these ruined galleries surrounded public places. Here assembled a numerous people for the sacred duties of their religion, and the anxious cares of their subsistence; here industry, parent of enjoyments, collected the riches of all climes, and the purple of Tyre[1] was exchanged for the precious thread of Serica[2]; the soft tissues of Cassimere[3] for the sumptuous tapestry of Lydia[4]; the amber of the Baltic for the pearls and perfumes of Arabia; the gold of Ophir[5] for the tin of Thule.[6]

And now behold what remains of this powerful city: a miserable skeleton! What of its vast domination: a doubtful and obscure remembrance! To the noisy concourse which thronged under these porticoes, succeeds the solitude of death. The silence of the grave is substituted for the busy hum of public places; the affluence of a commercial city is changed into wretched poverty; the palaces of kings have become a den of wild beasts; flocks repose in the area of temples, and savage reptiles inhabit the sanctuary of the gods. Ah! how has so much glory been eclipsed? how have so many labors been annihilated? Do thus perish then the works of men—thus vanish empires and nations?

And the history of former times revived in my mind; I remembered those ancient ages when many illustrious nations inhabited these countries; I figured to myself the Assyrian on the banks of the Tigris, the Chaldean on the banks of the Euphrates, the Persian reigning from the Indus to the Mediterranean. I enumerated the kingdoms of Damascus and Idumea,[7] of Jerusalem and Samaria, the war-like states of the Philistines, and the commercial republics of Phœnicia. This Syria, said I, now so depopulated, then contained a hundred flourishing cities, and abounded with towns, villages, and hamlets. In all parts were seen cultivated fields, frequented roads, and crowded habitations. Ah! whither have flown those ages of life and abundance? —whither vanished those brilliant creations of human industry? Where are those ramparts of Nineveh, those walls of Babylon, those palaces of Persepolis,[8] those temples of Balbec[9] and of Jerusalem? Where are those fleets of Tyre, those dock-yards of Arad,[10] those work-shops of Sidon,[11] and that multitude of sailors, of pilots, of merchants, and of soldiers? Where those husbandmen, harvests, flocks, and all the creation of living beings in which the face of the earth rejoiced? Alas! I have passed over this desolate land! I have visited the palaces, once the scene of so much splendor, and I beheld nothing but solitude and desolation. I sought the ancient inhabitants and their works, and found nothing but a trace, like the foot-prints of a traveler over the sand. The temples are fallen, the palaces overthrown, the ports filled up, the cities destroyed; and the earth, stripped of inhabitants, has become a place of sepulchres. Great God! whence proceed such fatal revolutions? What causes have so changed the fortunes of these countries? Wherefore are so many cities destroyed? Why has not this ancient population been reproduced and perpetuated?

[1] famous city of ancient Phoenicia, celebrated for its purple dyes.

[2] probably identical with northern China.

[3] a country lying between India, Turkestan, and Tibet, usually spelled Cashmere.

[4] an ancient kingdom on the western coast of Asia Minor.

[5] a country mentioned in the Old Testament as famous for its gold and other treasures. It has been variously identified.

[6] a name given by ancient geographers to certain countries of northern Europe, including Great Britain. The reference here is probably to the tin mines of Cornwall.

[7] the ancient kingdom of Edom, lying to the south of the Dead Sea.

[8] the ancient capital of Persia.

[9] a city to the northwest of Damascus, formerly the center of worship of the sun-god Baal.

[10] Canaanitish city. See *Joshua*, 12:14.

[11] an ancient Phoenician city at the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

Thus absorbed in meditation, a crowd of new reflections continually poured in upon my mind. Everything, continued I, bewilders my judgment, and fills my heart with trouble and uncertainty. When these countries enjoyed what constitutes the glory and happiness of man, they were inhabited by infidel nations: It was the Phœnician, offering human sacrifices to Moloch,[12] who gathered into his stores the riches of all climates; it was the Chaldean, prostrate before his serpent-god, who subjugated opulent cities, laid waste the palaces of kings, and despoiled the temples of the gods; it was the Persian, worshiper of fire, who received the tribute of a hundred nations; they were the inhabitants of this very city, adorers of the sun and stars, who erected so many monuments of prosperity and luxury. Numerous herds, fertile fields, abundant harvests—what-soever should be the reward of piety—was in the hands of these idolaters. And now, when a people of saints and believers occupy these fields, all is become sterility and solitude. The earth, under these holy hands, produces only thorns and briers. Man soweth in anguish, and reapeth tears and cares. War, famine, pestilence, assail him by turns. And yet, are not these the children of the prophets? The Mussulman, Christian, Jew, are they not the elect children of God, loaded with favors and miracles? Why, then, do these privileged races no longer enjoy the same advantages? Why are these fields, sanctified by the blood of martyrs, deprived of their ancient fertility? Why have those blessings been banished hence, and transferred for so many ages to other nations and different climes?

At these words, revolving in my mind the vicissitudes which have transmitted the sceptre of the world to people so different in religion and manners from those in ancient Asia to the most recent of Europe, this name of a natal land revived in me the sentiment of my country; and turning my eyes toward France, I began to reflect on the situation in which I had left her in 1782.

I recalled her fields so richly cultivated, her roads so admirably constructed, her cities inhabited by a countless people, her fleets spread over every sea, her ports filled with the produce of both the Indies: and then comparing the activity of her commerce, the extent of her navigation, the magnificence of her buildings, the arts and industry of her inhabitants, with what Egypt and Syria had once possessed, I was gratified to find in modern Europe the departed splendor of Asia; but the charm of my reverie was soon dissolved by a last term of comparison. Reflecting that such had once been the activity of the places I was then contemplating, who knows, said I, but such may one day be the abandonment of our countries? Who knows if on the banks of the Seine, the Thames, the Zuyder-Zee,[13] where now, in the tumult of so many enjoyments, the heart and the eye suffice not for the multitude of sensations,—who knows if some traveler, like myself, shall not one day sit on their silent ruins, and weep in solitude over the ashes of their inhabitants, and the memory of their former greatness?

At these words, my eyes filled with tears: and covering my head with the fold of my mantle, I sank into gloomy meditations on all human affairs. Ah! hapless man, said I in my grief, a blind fatality sports with thy destiny! A fatal necessity rules with the hand of chance the lot of mortals! But no: it is the justice of heaven fulfilling its decrees!—a God of mystery exercising his incomprehensible judgments! Doubtless he has pronounced a secret anathema against this land: blasting with maledictions the present, for the sins of past generations. Oh! who shall dare to fathom the depths of the Omnipotent?

And sunk in profound melancholy, I remained motionless.

SOURCES OF THE EVILS OF SOCIETY

In truth, scarcely were the faculties of men developed, when, inveigled by objects which gratify the senses, they gave themselves up to unbridled desires. The sweet sensations which nature had attached to their real wants, to endear to them their existence, no longer satisfied them. Not content with the abundance offered by the earth or produced by industry, they wished to accumulate enjoyments, and coveted those possessed by their fellow men. The strong man rose up against the feeble to take from him the fruit of his labor; the feeble invoked another feeble one to repel the violence. Two strong ones then said:—

"Why fatigue ourselves to produce enjoyments which we may find in the hands of the weak? Let us join and despoil them; they shall labor for us, and we will enjoy without labor."

And the strong associating for oppression, and the weak for resistance, men mutually afflicted each other; and a general and fatal discord spread over the earth, in which the passions, assuming a thousand new forms, have generated a continued chain of misfortunes.

Thus the same self-love which, moderate and prudent, was a principle of happiness and perfection, becoming blind and disordered, was transformed into

[12] Cf. Vol. I, p. 447.

[13] an arm of the sea on which Amsterdam is located.

a corrupting poison; and cupidity, offspring and companion of ignorance, became the cause of all the evils that have desolated the earth.

Yes, ignorance and cupidity! These are the twin sources of all the torments of man! Biased by these into false ideas of happiness, he has mistaken or broken the laws of nature in his own relation with external objects; and injuring his own existence, has violated individual morality; shutting through these his heart to compassion, and his mind to justice, he has injured and afflicted his equal, and violated social morality. From ignorance and cupidity, man has armed against man, family against family, tribe against tribe; and the earth is become a theatre of blood, of discord, and of rapine. By ignorance and cupidity, a secret war, fermenting in the bosom of every state, has separated citizen from citizen; and the same society has divided itself into oppressors and oppressed, into masters and slaves; by these, the heads of a nation, sometimes insolent and audacious, have forged its chains within its own bowels; and mercenary avarice has founded political despotism. Sometimes, hypocritical and cunning, they have called from heaven a lying power, and a sacrilegious yoke; and credulous cupidity has founded religious despotism. By these have been perverted the ideas of good and evil, just and unjust, vice and virtue; and nations have wandered in a labyrinth of errors and calamities.

The cupidity of man and his ignorance,—these are the evil genii which have wasted the earth! These are the decrees of fate which have overthrown empires! These are the celestial anathemas which have smitten these walls once so glorious, and converted the splendor of a populous city into a solitude of mourning and of ruins! But as in the bosom of man has sprung all the evils which have afflicted his life, there he also is to seek and to find their remedies.

(1791)

George Gordon, Lord Byron

(1788-1824)

Even among the romantics, who generally make literary capital of their own experiences and personalities, the biography of few poets is more intimately interwoven with his work than is Byron's. The interest attaching to his life has rarely, if ever, been dissociated from that pertaining to his writings. Already in his own day, Byron's life and writings stood in unity as the very incarnation of the Romantic Revolt. He was the hero of Goethe's *Werther* (cf. *above*) and Schiller's *The Robbers* (cf. *above*); he was the Rousseauistic worshiper of nature and lover of liberty—all combined in one. Although few Englishmen would now deny a higher place to Shelley and Keats, his reputation was universal while theirs was still unmade, and for half a century he continued to overshadow them. Today many Europeans think of him as the superior not only of these poets but of Wordsworth and Coleridge as well. Indeed, it may yet be some time before German, French, Russian, and Italian readers come to understand him in correct perspective; he has been too great a source of inspiration to their own literatures for them to see him quite clearly. Moreover, greater justice has been done Byron in translation than Shelley or Keats, for his poetic quintessence, being thinner, is more translatable. Finally, the difficulty of divorcing his brilliant career from what he wrote has impeded judgment on his actual literary accomplishment.

His heritage was not one to presage a tranquil life. He described his father's family as "a line of cut-throat ancestors." His grand-uncle, "the wicked Lord Byron" of Newstead, was a man of evil repute who had killed his neighbor in a trivial quarrel. The poet's father, nicknamed "Mad Jack Byron," was an adventurer who had eloped with the Marchioness of Carmarthen, wife of the Lord Chamberlain, had quickly spent her fortune, and had lost her shortly after she gave birth to a daughter, Augusta. Penniless, he returned to Scotland to woo the heiress of Gight, whom he married when Augusta was fifteen months old. His second wife bore him a son, George, on January 22, 1788, in London.

"Mad Jack Byron" ran through a second fortune and died, three years after the birth of his son, in France, whither he had fled to escape his creditors.

Byron was thus left to the care of his mother, a woman but ill fitted for the task. The lameness with which he had been born was in itself likely to distort the character of one so fiercely proud as he. But his mother's incapacity only deepened his sensitiveness concerning his infirmity. On some days she would fondle him with lavish demonstrations of affection; on others, when her ungovernable fits of temper robbed her of reason, she would hurl things at him, call him a "lame brat," and revile his father's family. The boy, in turn, would mock her foolish speech and clumsy gait, and laugh at her inability to aim her missiles correctly. Ugly as these scenes must have been, they were hardly less detestable to him than her moods of sentimental effusion. He grew up contemptuous of her, and by the time he was sent to Harrow (1801) he was well enough furnished with a sense of personal injury to be prepared to take his vengeance on the world. Three years earlier, when he was about ten years old, he had inherited the title through the death of his grand-uncle.

At Harrow, among his aristocratic schoolfellows, he worked furiously at all kinds of physical exercises, especially boxing and cricket, to assert his equality with others despite his lameness. But he was also an omnivorous reader. In 1805 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where he became notorious for his reckless, extravagant mode of life, his lessons in boxing taken from a professional boxer, and his sharp wit. With the aid of his good friend Hobhouse, he issued his first volume, *Fugitive Pieces* (1806). In 1807 it was revised and republished under the title *Hours of Idleness.*

The poems contained in it were highly imitative of the pre-romantic poets, and deserved little attention. But the preface which Byron wrote for it, intended to assuage harsh judgment, was pretty intolerable. "These productions," he said, "are the fruit of the lighter hours of a young man who has lately completed his nineteenth year. . . . To a few of my own age the contents may afford amusement; I trust they will, at least, be found harmless. It is highly improbable, from my situation [i.e. his being Lord Byron] and pursuits hereafter, that I should ever obtrude myself a second time upon the public. . . . The opinion of Dr. Johnson on the poems of a noble relative of mine, 'That when a man of rank appeared in the character of an author, he deserved to have his merit handsomely allowed,' can have little weight with verbal, and still less with periodical censors." Any lover of literature would have been vexed to find a nobleman thus condescending to poetry. But it is worthy of remark that, although Byron never presumed to take advantage of others because of his rank, it was one of the favorite poses of his life to insist that he was a poet only because his physical disability prevented his taking a more active part in human affairs.

However rhetorically meant, Byron's quotation of Johnson's stricture certainly had little weight with periodical censors. The critic of the *Edinburgh Review* counseled him "that he do forthwith abandon poetry"; and, after dissecting some of the verses, concluded: "But whatever judgment may be passed on the poems of this noble minor, it seems we must take them as we find them, and be content; for they are the last we shall ever have from him. He is, at best, he says, but an intruder into the groves of Parnassus; he never lived in a garret, like thorough-bred poets. . . . What right have we poor devils to be nice? We are well off to have got so much from a man of this Lord's station, who does not live in a garret, but 'has the sway' of Newstead Abbey. Again we say, let us be thankful; and with honest Sancho, bid God bless the giver, nor look the gift horse in the mouth."

Enraged, Byron answered with a cutting satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1808). It is not without point that Pope was one of his favorite poets, for Byron possessed an incomparable gift of malicious wit and adroit repartee. Perfect as his talents were to prove for the era in which he lived, it is also true that had he been an Augustan, Addison and Pope might have had to look to their laurels. The Romantic Movement put little premium upon wit, but in this satire and in *Don Juan* Byron was able to exercise a side of

his genius more usually to find expression in his conversation and correspondence. In *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* he seized the occasion to thrust out not only at his critic but also at all poets and writers against whom he had harbored objections. Thereafter the reviewers, with excellent reason, were afraid of his scorn and so preferred to look on his work with favor.

In the same year (1808), Byron took his M.A. and assumed his seat in the House of Lords. For a number of years he had spent much time on his ancestral estate at Newstead, in whose ruined Gothic building he had indulged in hours of morbid cogitation. Jilted in a love affair, he decided that all women were fickle. He sought relief, too, in building up for himself the legend of the bad blood he had inherited. At twenty-one he felt already old, like Werther, and decided that he would have to escape from the gloom of his heritage. "I am like Adam," he said, "the first convict sentenced to transportation, but I have no Eve, and have eaten no apple, but what was a sour crab;—and thus ends my first chapter." With Hobhouse, he set forth on his travels in the summer of 1809. His itinerary proved him the romantic. Shunning the well-known resorts of the Continent, he traveled through Portugal, Spain, the Mediterranean, Constantinople, Albania, Asia Minor, the Troad, and Greece. He thus visited peoples largely unknown to Englishmen, and had plenty of exciting experiences. Two years later he returned, his body hardened, his mind refreshed with all the wonder of Greece and the East. In 1812 he published two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (cf. *below*), the record of his travels.

The poem created a furor, and he became famous overnight. It was the first significant expression of that romantic egoism which had given Germany *Werther* and *The Robbers* and France Chateaubriand's *René*. The descriptions of nature, the melancholy, and the ecstatic tone were already familiar ingredients in romantic literature. But the hero was the chief focus of interest. Childe Harold was the first of many "Byronic heroes," all plainly meant as idealized self-portraits. These men are all disillusioned with human society, sated with pleasure, and living only to war against organized humanity. Creatures of intense pride, they scorn to express their innate tenderness and kindliness. Wrapped in a cloak of disdain, they nurse some deep-seated grief which they are too proud to disclose; but within their hearts is reverence for a gentle, loving woman. Such are the heroes of *The Giaour* (1813), *The Bride of Abydos* (1813), *The Corsair* (1814), *Lara* (1814), and *The Siege of Corinth* (1814), which Byron wrote in rapid succession. These Eastern tales were read avidly and lavishly praised by a public whose interest in the Oriental had already been whetted (cf. Vol. I, p. 728). Sir Walter Scott, deeply impressed, gracefully resigned to a greater poet the field of narrative verse in which he had himself formerly been pre-eminent.

In 1812, almost simultaneously with the appearance of *Childe Harold*, Byron made his first speech in the House of Lords, in defense of workingmen. The weavers, thrown out of employment by the invention of power looms, had revolted, destroying all machines they could lay hands upon. A bill was before the House to make this a capital offense. Byron, who could not have taken a more unpopular side in the Lords, opposed it in a stirring address. He was at once recognized as a dangerous radical. And, indeed, he remained throughout his life a friend of revolutionary causes. In Italy he is thought to have become a member of the Carbonari, and is known to have helped supply ammunition for a revolt against Austrian tyranny. And later he gave his life for the cause of Greek independence. But he was not, like Shelley, a man with a revolutionary faith. His radicalism, chiefly negative, is summed up in his creed: "I have simplified my politics with utter detestation of all existing governments."

The success of *Childe Harold* and of his maiden speech caused him to be caught up in the whirl of London society. His classic face and handsome form, rendered more appealing by his slight limp, his biting wit, his scornful pride, and his new acclaim made him irresistible, and women threw themselves at him. The truth about Byron's reputation as a

philanderer is that in most of his many amours the woman was the aggressor. In the midst of a dizzying whirl of parties and love affairs, Byron continued to write, having to do much of his composing, as he ironically remarked, while dressing and undressing. But this kind of life brought him no happiness, and he began to think that only marriage could save him.

The one girl he had met whose character he could admire was Miss Annabella Milbanke. Admirable though she was, he could not have chosen a wife more unsuitable to him than this pretty moralist and lover of mathematics. From the moment when they left the wedding ceremony together in a carriage, on January 2, 1815, he managed to make her existence a kind of nightmare. He knew that he had been a fool to marry, and all the complicated sources of saturninity within him he loosed on her. By the end of the year she had borne him a daughter, and then, in a few weeks, had left him forever. At once all the latent enmity which his wit had accumulated for him, broke loose, and Byron's name was everywhere execrated. In April Byron and his wife were legally separated, and on the twenty-fifth of the month he sailed from England to remain in exile for the rest of his days. He never forgave his wife for leaving him.

He spent the summer in Switzerland with Shelley, Mary Shelley, and her stepsister, Jane Clairmont, with whom he had an affair. Here he wrote the third canto of *Childe Harold* (cf. *below*), *The Prisoner of Chillon* (cf. *below*), and part of his greatest poetic drama, *Manfred* (cf. *below*). Later in the year he went to Venice, where Jane bore him a daughter, Allegra. The friendship with high-minded Shelley was fruitful for Byron. Listening to the other's talk, eloquent with selfless devotion to humanity, Byron recovered from some of his bitterness and learned to look outside himself in the interest of a struggling world. In 1819 he contracted a *liaison* with the Countess Guiccioli, apparently with the full consent and knowledge of her husband, and though she was a source of vexation and boredom to him, he did not break with her for the rest of his life. Living intermittently at Venice, Pisa, and Genoa, he was visited by Thomas Moore (cf. *below*), Shelley, Leigh Hunt (cf. *below*), and other English friends. These years witnessed the composition of most of his large bulk of poetry: many lyrics, *The Lament of Tasso* (1817), *Beppo* (1818), the final canto of *Childe Harold* (1818), *Manfred* (1819), *Marino Faliero* (1819), and *Sardanapalus* (1819). *Cain* (1819), a poetic drama like the last three named, is centered about the first murderer, a true Byronic hero who refuses to worship a God that permitted evil and allotted death to mankind. Much indebted to Milton's Satan, the study is one of Byron's finest, as well as highly characteristic of that dark heroism most associated with the poet. In 1819 he began to write *Don Juan* (cf. *below*), on which he worked till the time of his death. All the qualities of his genius were brought together in his last major work; it is his most representative poem.

From the time when he had first seen Athens, Greece had been dear to him. The growing movement there for independence from Turkish oppression seized upon his imagination, and he determined to participate in it. Converting all his possessions into currency with which to purchase mercenaries and military equipment, Byron set out for Greece on July 14, 1823. Now, at last, that coveted life of action seemed to be within his grasp. He took pleasure in subsisting on the rations of a mere soldier. Even the grumbling of the troops, who were more interested in pay than in saving Greece, did not dishearten him. But the great battle he anticipated with enthusiasm was not to be. He was taken with a fever in the malarial swamps about Missolonghi, and on April 19, 1824, he died in true Byronic fashion, in a night of torrential rains and earthshaking thunderclaps.

It may very well be that, in the end, Byron will be longest admired for his lovely lyrics, among the most fluent ever written. His longer works are too often marred by an oratorical rather than a true poetical style. The distinction between the two was imperfectly recognized in a period that still worshiped the oratorical apostrophes of Rousseau. Moreover, Byron wrote hastily, was impatient of revision. His greatest weakness was his amazing facility. It was so effortless a matter for him to pour out verse that the poetic content of

much of what he wrote is diluted. But his dashing style of living and writing still captures the imagination of men, and there is no difficulty today in understanding why he streamed like the brightest of meteors on the horizon of his day. There is something perennially youthful about him, and his dazzling career, even when it seems somewhat amusing to a soberer age, will always partake of the heroic.

The standard edition of his poetry is that edited by E. H. Coleridge in seven volumes (1898-1904). His *Letters and Journals* were edited by R. E. Prothero in six volumes (1898-1904). P. E. More's one-volume edition of the poems is excellent. There are many biographical studies of Byron. Among the most interesting are: E. C. Mayne's *Byron* (two volumes, 1912), J. Drinkwater's *The Pilgrim of Eternity* (1925), A. Maurois's *Byron* (tr. 1930), and F. Winwar's *The Romantic Rebels: Byron, Shelley, and Keats* (1935).

When We Two Parted

When we two parted
  In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
  To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
  Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
  Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning
  Sunk chill on my brow—
It felt like the warning
  Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
  And light is thy fame;
I hear thy name spoken,
  And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,
  A knell to mine ear;
A shudder comes o'er me—
  Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I knew thee,
  Who knew thee too well:—
Long, long shall I rue thee,
  Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met—
  In silence I grieve
That thy heart could forget,
  Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
  After long years,
How should I greet thee?—
  With silence and tears.

(1814-16)

She Walks in Beauty

She walks in beauty, like the night
  Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
  Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellowed to that tender light
  Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
  Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
  Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
  How pure, how dear, their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
  So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
  But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
  A heart whose love is innocent!

(1814)

The Destruction of Sennacherib[1]

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:

[1] King of Assyria (705-681 B.C.). For an account of this battle, cf. *II Kings*, chaps. 18 and 19.

Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay wither'd and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he pass'd;
And the eyes of the sleepers wax'd deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there roll'd not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail:
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur[2] are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;[3]
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

(1815)

Stanzas for Music

There's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away,
When the glow of early thought declines in feeling's dull decay;
'Tis not on youth's smooth cheek the blush alone, which fades so fast,
But the tender bloom of heart is gone ere youth itself be past.

Then the few whose spirits float above the wreck of happiness
Are driven o'er the shoals of guilt or ocean of excess:
The magnet of their course is gone, or only points in vain
The shore to which their shivered sail shall never stretch again.

Then the mortal coldness of the soul like death itself comes down;
It cannot feel for others' woes, it dare not dream its own;
That heavy chill has frozen o'er the fountain of our tears,
And though the eye may sparkle still, 'tis where the ice appears.

Though wit may flash from fluent lips, and mirth distract the breast,
Through midnight hours that yield no more their former hope of rest;
'Tis but as ivy-leaves around the ruined turret wreath,
All green and wildly fresh without, but worn and gray beneath.

Oh, could I feel as I have felt,—or be what I have been,
Or weep as I could once have wept, o'er many a vanished scene;
As springs in deserts found seem sweet, all brackish though they be,
So, midst the wither'd waste of life, those tears would flow to me.

(1815)

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage

Byron had kept a record of his travels through the novel device of a series of sketches in Spenserian stanzas strung together on a loose thread of narrative. The hero, of course, was an idealization of the darker side of his own character. On the insistence of his friends he published, in 1812, the first two cantos of this poem, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. It caused a sensation rarely paralleled in literary history. "I awoke one morning," he tells us, "and found myself famous." Thereafter Byron became a figure of national importance, a man whose deeds and observations were a matter of concern to everyone.

[2] Assyria.
[3] a god worshipped in Assyria and surrounding countries. He is usually identified with the sun.

By the time the third canto was ready for publication, Byron's ill-advised marriage had taken place, had failed, and had sent him into exile. It was Shelley who took back to England the manuscript of the new section, which was published in 1816. On its appearance Francis Jeffrey, in the *Edinburgh Review*, said: "If the finest poetry be that which leaves the deepest impression on the minds of its readers . . . Lord Byron, we think, must be allowed to take precedence of all his distinguished contemporaries." Sir Walter Scott, in the *Quarterly Review*, was equally enthusiastic. But, with his characteristic kindliness, he was considerably perturbed by Byron's unhappiness, as revealed in the mental anguish of the hero. "Future ages," he said, "while our language is remembered, will demand . . . why Lord Byron was unhappy? . . . He does injustice to the world, if he imagines he has left it exclusively filled with those who rejoice in his sufferings. . . . Lord Byron may not have loved the world, but the world has loved him."

The third canto of *Childe Harold* is so completely superior to the earlier portions as to make them seem weak by comparison.

Canto the Third

Afin que cette application vous forçat à penser à autre chose. Il n'y a en vérité de remède que celui-là et le temps. [1]

1

Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child!
Ada![2] sole daughter of my house and heart?
When last I saw thy young blue eyes they smiled,
And then we parted,—not as now we part,
But with a hope.—
Awaking with a start,
The waters heave around me; and on high
The winds lift up their voices: I depart,
Whither I know not, but the hour's gone by,
When Albion's[3] lessening shores could grieve or glad mine eye.

2

Once more upon the waters! yet once more!
And the waves bound beneath me as a steed
That knows his rider. Welcome to their roar!
Swift be their guidance, wheresoe'er it lead!
Though the strained mast should quiver as a reed,
And the rent canvass fluttering strew the gale,
Still must I on; for I am as a weed,
Flung from the rock, on Ocean's foam to sail
Where'er the surge may sweep, the tempest's breath prevail.

[1] So that this application may force you to think of something else: there is indeed no remedy except that and time.—Lettre du Roi de Prusse à D'Alembert, Sept. 7, 1776.

[2] Lady Byron left her husband when Ada was only five weeks old. He never saw them again.

[3] England's.

3

In my youth's summer I did sing of One,[4]
The wandering outlaw of his own dark mind;
Again I seize the theme, then but begun,
And bear it with me, as the rushing wind
Bears the cloud onwards: in that Tale I find
The furrows of long thought, and dried-up tears,
Which, ebbing, leave a sterile track behind,
O'er which all heavily the journeying years
Plod the last sands of life,—where not a flower appears.

4

Since my young days of passion—joy or pain,
Perchance my heart and harp have lost a string—
And both may jar: it may be, that in vain
I would essay, as I have sung, to sing.
Yet, though a dreary strain, to this I cling;
So that it wean me from the weary dream
Of selfish grief or gladness—so it fling
Forgetfulness around me—it shall seem
To me, though to none else, a not ungrateful theme.

5

He, who grown agèd in this world of woe,
In deeds, not years, piercing the depths of life,
So that no wonder waits Him—nor below
Can Love or Sorrow, Fame, Ambition, Strife,
Cut to his heart again with the keen knife
Of silent, sharp endurance—he can tell
Why Thought seeks refuge in lone caves, yet rife

[4] Byron himself in the first two cantos of this poem which had appeared when he was twenty-one.

With airy images, and shapes which dwell
Still unimpaired, though old, in the Soul's haunted cell.

6

'Tis to create, and in creating live
A being more intense, that we endow
With form our fancy, gaining as we give
The life we image, even as I do now—
What am I? Nothing: but not so art thou,
Soul of my thought! with whom I traverse earth,
Invisible but gazing, as I glow
Mixed with thy spirit, blended with thy birth,
And feeling still with thee in my crushed feelings' dearth.

7

Yet must I think less wildly:—I *have* thought
Too long and darkly, till my brain became,
In its own eddy boiling and o'erwrought,
A whirling gulf of phantasy and flame:
And thus, untaught in youth my heart to tame,
My springs of life were poisoned. 'Tis too late!
Yet am I changed; though still enough the same
In strength to bear what Time cannot abate,
And feed on bitter fruits without accusing Fate.

8

Something too much of this:—but now 'tis past,
And the spell closes with its silent seal:
Long absent HAROLD re-appears at last—
He of the breast which fain no more would feel,
Wrung with the wounds which kill not, but ne'er heal;
Yet Time, who changes all, had altered him
In soul and aspect as in age: years steal
Fire from the mind as vigor from the limb;
And Life's enchanted cup but sparkles near the brim.

9

His had been quaffed too quickly, and he found
The dregs were wormwood; but he filled again,
And from a purer fount, on holier ground,
And deemed its spring perpetual—but in vain!
Still round him clung invisibly a chain
Which galled for ever, fettering though unseen,
And heavy though it clanked not; worn with pain,
Which pined although it spoke not, and grew keen,
Entering with every step he took through many a scene.

10

Secure in guarded coldness, he had mixed
Again in fancied safety with his kind,
And deemed his spirit now so firmly fixed
And sheathed with an invulnerable mind,
That, if no joy, no sorrow lurked behind;
And he, as one, might 'midst the many stand
Unheeded, searching through the crowd to find
Fit speculation; such as in strange land
He found in wonder-works of God and Nature's hand.

11

But who can view the ripened rose, nor seek
To wear it? who can curiously behold
The smoothness and the sheen of Beauty's cheek,
Nor feel the heart can never all grow old?
Who can contemplate Fame through clouds unfold
The star which rises o'er her steep, nor climb?
Harold, once more within the vortex, rolled
On with the giddy circle, chasing Time,
Yet with a nobler aim than in his youth's fond prime.

12

But soon he knew himself the most unfit
Of men to herd with Man, with whom he held
Little in common; untaught to submit
His thoughts to others, though his soul was quelled
In youth by his own thoughts; still uncompelled,
He would not yield dominion of his mind
To Spirits against whom his own rebelled,
Proud though in desolation—which could find
A life within itself, to breathe without mankind.

13

Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends;
Where rolled the ocean, thereon was his home;
Where a blue sky, and glowing clime, extends,
He had the passion and the power to roam;

The desert, forest, cavern, breaker's foam,
Were unto him companionship; they spake
A mutual language, clearer than the tome
Of his land's tongue, which he would oft forsake
For Nature's pages glassed by sunbeams on the lake.

14

Like the Chaldean,[5] he could watch the stars,
Till he had peopled them with beings bright
As their own beams; and earth, and earthborn jars,
And human frailties, were forgotten quite:
Could he have kept his spirit to that flight
He had been happy; but this clay will sink
Its spark immortal, envying it the light
To which it mounts, as if to break the link
That keeps us from yon heaven which woos us to its brink.

15

But in Man's dwellings he became a thing
Restless and worn, and stern and wearisome,
Drooped as a wild-born falcon with clipped wing,
To whom the boundless air alone were home:
Then came his fit again, which to o'ercome,
As eagerly the barred-up bird will beat
His breast and beak against his wiry dome
Till the blood tinge his plumage—so the heat
Of his impeded Soul would through his bosom eat.

16

Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again,
With nought of Hope left, but with less of gloom;
The very knowledge that he lived in vain,
That all was over on this side the tomb,
Had made Despair a smilingness assume,
Which, though 'twere wild,—as on the plundered wreck
When mariners would madly meet their doom
With draughts intemperate on the sinking deck,—
Did yet inspire a cheer, which he forbore to check.

[5] The Chaldeans were noted for their knowledge of the stars.

17

Stop!—for thy tread is on an Empire's dust!
An Earthquake's spoil is sepulchered below!
Is the spot marked with no colossal bust?
Nor column trophied for triumphal show?
None; but *the moral's truth* tells simpler so.
As the ground was before, thus let it be;—
How that red rain hath made the harvest grow!
And is this all the world has gained by thee,
Thou first and last of Fields! king-making Victory?

18

And Harold stands upon this place of skulls,
The grave of France, the deadly Waterloo![6]
How in an hour the Power which gave annuls
Its gifts, transferring fame as fleeting too!
In "pride of place"[7] here last the eagle[8] flew,
Then tore with bloody talon the rent plain,
Pierced by the shaft of banded nations through;
Ambition's life and labors all were vain;
He wears the shattered links of the world's broken chain.

19

Fit retribution! Gaul[9] may champ the bit
And foam in fetters;—but is Earth more free?[10]
Did nations combat to make *One* submit?
Or league to teach all Kings true Sovereignty?
What! shall reviving Thraldom again be
The patched-up Idol of enlightened days?
Shall we, who struck the Lion down, shall we
Pay the Wolf homage? proffering lowly gaze
And servile knees to Thrones? No; *prove* before ye praise!

20

If not, o'er one fallen Despot boast no more!
In vain fair cheeks were furrowed with hot tears
For Europe's flowers long rooted up before
The trampler of her vineyards; in vain, years

[6] The Battle of Waterloo, which closed the wars with Napoleon, was fought a few miles from Brussels in June, 1815.
[7] a term in falconry meaning the highest point of flight.
[8] Napoleon.
[9] France.
[10] The Battle of Waterloo was a victory for the enemies of liberalism.

Of death, depopulation, bondage, fears,
Have all been borne, and broken by the accord
Of roused-up millions; all that most endears
Glory, is when the myrtle wreathes a sword
Such as Harmodius[11] drew on Athens' tyrant lord.

21

There was a sound of revelry by night,
And Belgium's capital had gathered then
Her Beauty and her Chivalry, and bright
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men;
A thousand hearts beat happily; and when
Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again,
And all went merry as a marriage bell;
But hush! hark! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell!

22

Did ye not hear it?—No; 'twas but the Wind,
Or the car rattling o'er the stony street;
On with the dance! let joy be unconfined;
No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet
To chase the glowing Hours with flying feet—
But hark—that heavy sound breaks in once more,
As if the clouds its echo would repeat;
And nearer—clearer—deadlier than before!
Arm! Arm! it is—it is—the cannon's opening roar!

23

Within a windowed niche of that high hall
Sat Brunswick's fated chieftain;[12] he did hear
That sound the first amidst the festival,
And caught its tone with Death's prophetic ear;
And when they smiled because he deemed it near,
His heart more truly knew that peal too well
Which stretched his father[13] on a bloody bier,
And roused the vengeance blood alone could quell;
He rushed into the field, and, foremost fighting, fell.

[11] One of the conspirators who hid his sword under a myrtle branch before attacking the Athenian tyrant Hipparchus (514 B.C.).

[12] Frederick William, Duke of Brunswick.

[13] In the battle of Auerstädt in 1806.

24

Ah! then and there was hurrying to and fro,
And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress,
And cheeks all pale, which but an hour ago
Blushed at the praise of their own loveliness;
And there were sudden partings, such as press
The life from out young hearts, and choking sighs
Which ne'er might be repeated; who could guess
If ever more should meet those mutual eyes,
Since upon night so sweet such awful morn could rise!

25

And there was mounting in hot haste—the steed,
The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,
Went pouring forward with impetuous speed,
And swiftly forming in the ranks of war—
And the deep thunder peal on peal afar;
And near, the beat of the alarming drum
Roused up the soldier ere the Morning Star;
While thronged the citizens with terror dumb,
Or whispering, with white lips—"The foe! they come! they come!"

26

And wild and high the "Cameron's gathering"[14] rose!
The war-note of Lochiel, which Albyn's[15] hills
Have heard, and heard, too, have her Saxon foes:—
How in the noon of night that pibroch[16] thrills,
Savage and shrill! But with the breath which fills
Their mountain-pipe, so fill the mountaineers
With the fierce native daring which instils
The stirring memory of a thousand years,
And Evan's—Donald's[17]—fame rings in each clansman's ears!

27

And Ardennes[18] waves above them her green leaves,

[14] the war song of the Cameron clan who come from Lochiel in northern Scotland.

[15] Scotland's.

[16] a kind of bagpipe.

[17] referring to Sir Evan Cameron (1629-1719) and Donald Cameron (1695?-1748), famous members of the clan.

[18] a large forest in France.

Dewy with Nature's tear-drops as they pass,
Grieving, if aught inanimate e'er grieves,
Over the unreturning brave,—alas!
Ere evening to be trodden like the grass
Which now beneath them, but *above* shall grow
In its next verdure, when this fiery mass
Of living Valor, rolling on the foe
And burning with high Hope shall molder cold and low.

28

Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty's circle proudly gay,
The Midnight brought the signal-sound of strife,
The Morn the marshaling in arms,—the Day
Battle's magnificently-stern array!
The thunder-clouds close o'er it, which when rent
The earth is covered thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
Rider and horse,—friend,—foe,—in one red burial blent!

29

Their praise is hymned by loftier harps than mine;
Yet one I would select from that proud throng,
Partly because they blend me with his line,
And partly that I did his Sire some wrong,
And partly that bright names will hallow song;
And his was of the bravest, and when showered
The death-bolts deadliest the thinned files along,
Even where the thickest of War's tempest lowered,
They reached no nobler breast than thine, young gallant Howard![19]

30

There have been tears and breaking hearts for thee,
And mine were nothing had I such to give;
But when I stood beneath the fresh green tree,
Which living waves where thou didst cease to live,
And saw around me the wide field revive
With fruits and fertile promise, and the Spring
Came forth her work of gladness to contrive,
With all her reckless birds upon the wing,
I turned from all she brought to those she could not bring.

31

I turned to thee, to thousands, of whom each
And one as all a ghastly gap did make
In his own kind and kindred, whom to teach
Forgetfulness were mercy for their sake;
The Archangel's trump, not Glory's, must awake
Those whom they thirst for; though the sound of Fame
May for a moment soothe, it cannot slake
The fever of vain longing, and the name
So honored but assumes a stronger, bitterer claim.

32

They mourn, but smile at length—and, smiling, mourn:
The tree will wither long before it fall;
The hull drives on, though mast and sail be torn;
The roof-tree sinks, but molders on the hall
In massy hoariness; the ruined wall
Stands when its wind-worn battlements are gone;
The bars survive the captive they enthrall;
The day drags through, though storms keep out the sun;
And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on:

33

Even as a broken mirror, which the glass
In every fragment multiplies—and makes
A thousand images of one that was
The same—and still the more, the more it breaks;
And thus the heart will do which not forsakes,
Living in shattered guise; and still, and cold,
And bloodless, with its sleepless sorrow aches,
Yet withers on till all without is old,
Showing no visible sign, for such things are untold.

34

There is a very life in our despair,
Vitality of poison,—a quick root
Which feels these deadly branches; for it were
As nothing did we die; but Life will suit

[19] Byron had written an attack upon his father, the Earl of Carlisle, in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.*

Itself to Sorrow's most detested fruit,
Like to the apples on the Dead Sea's[20] shore,
All ashes to the taste: Did man compute
Existence by enjoyment, and count o'er
Such hours 'gainst years of life,—say, would he name threescore?

35

The Psalmist numbered out the years[21] of man:
They are enough; and if thy tale be *true*,
Thou, who didst grudge him even that fleeting span,
More than enough, thou fatal Waterloo!
Millions of tongues record thee, and anew
Their children's lips shall echo them, and say—
"Here, where the sword united nations drew,
Our countrymen were warring on that day!"
And this is much—and all—which will not pass away.

36

There sunk the greatest,[22] nor the worst of men,
Whose Spirit, antithetically mixed,
One moment of the mightiest, and again
On little objects with like firmness fixed;
Extreme in all things! hadst thou been betwixt,
Thy throne had still been thine, or never been;
For daring made thy rise as fall: thou seek'st
Even now to re-assume the imperial mien,
And shake again the world, the Thunderer of the scene!

37

Conqueror and Captive of the Earth art thou!
She trembles at thee still, and thy wild name
Was ne'er more bruited in men's minds than now
That thou art nothing, save the jest of Fame,
Who wooed thee once, thy Vassal, and became
The flatterer of thy fierceness, till thou wert
A god unto thyself; nor less the same
To the astounded kingdoms all inert,
Who deemed thee for a time whate'er thou didst assert.

38

Oh, more or less than man—in high or low—
Battling with nations, flying from the field;
Now making monarchs' necks thy footstool, now
More than thy meanest soldier taught to yield;
An Empire thou couldst crush, command, rebuild,
But govern not thy pettiest passion, nor,
However deeply in men's spirits skilled,
Look through thine own, nor curb the lust of War,
Nor learn that tempted Fate will leave the loftiest Star.

39

Yet well thy soul hath brooked the turning tide
With that untaught innate philosophy,
Which, be it Wisdom, Coldness, or deep Pride,
Is gall and wormwood to an enemy.
When the whole host of hatred stood hard by,
To watch and mock thee shrinking, thou hast smiled
With a sedate and all-enduring eye;—
When Fortune fled her spoiled and favorite child,
He stood unbowed beneath the ills upon him piled.

40

Sager than in thy fortunes; for in them
Ambition steeled thee on too far to show
That just habitual scorn, which could contemn
Men and their thoughts; 'twas wise to feel, not so
To wear it ever on thy lip and brow,
And spurn the instruments thou wert to use
Till they were turned unto thine overthrow:
'Tis but a worthless world to win or lose;
So hath it proved to thee, and all such lot who choose.

41

If, like a tower upon a headland rock,
Thou hadst been made to stand or fall alone,
Such scorn of man had helped to brave the shock;
But men's thoughts were the steps which paved thy throne,
Their admiration thy best weapon shone;

[20] an attractive but inedible fruit, said to taste like ashes.
[21] three score years and ten.
[22] Napoleon.

The part of Philip's son[23] was thine, not then
(Unless aside thy Purple had been thrown)
Like stern Diogenes[24] to mock at men;
For sceptered Cynics Earth were far too wide a den.

42

But Quiet to quick bosoms is a Hell,
And *there* hath been thy bane; there is a fire
And motion of the Soul which will not dwell
In its own narrow being, but aspire
Beyond the fitting medium of desire;
And, but once kindled, quenchless evermore,
Preys upon high adventure, nor can tire
Of aught but rest; a fever at the core,
Fatal to him who bears, to all who ever bore.

43

This makes the madmen who have made men mad
By their contagion; Conquerors and Kings,
Founders of sects and systems, to whom add
Sophists, Bards, Statesmen, all unquiet things
Which stir too strongly the soul's secret springs,
And are themselves the fools to those they fool;
Envied, yet how unenviable! what stings
Are theirs! One breast laid open were a school
Which would unteach Mankind the lust to shine or rule:

44

Their breath is agitation, and their life
A storm whereon they ride, to sink at last,
And yet so nursed and bigoted to strife,
That should their days, surviving perils past,
Melt to calm twilight, they feel overcast
With sorrow and supineness, and so die;
Even as a flame unfed, which runs to waste
With its own flickering, or a sword laid by,
Which eats into itself, and rusts ingloriously.

45

He who ascends to mountain tops, shall find
The loftiest peaks most wrapped in clouds and snow;
He who surpasses or subdues mankind,
Must look down on the hate of those below.
Though high *above* the Sun of Glory glow,
And far *beneath* the Earth and Ocean spread,
Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
Contending tempests on his naked head,
And thus reward the toils which to those summits led.

46

Away with these! true Wisdom's world will be
Within its own creation, or in thine,
Maternal Nature! for who teems like thee,
Thus on the banks of thy majestic Rhine?
There Harold gazes on a work divine,
A blending of all beauties; streams and dells,
Fruit, foliage, crag, wood, cornfield, mountain, vine,
And chiefless castles breathing stern farewells
From gray but leafy walls, where Ruin greenly dwells.

47

And there they stand, as stands a lofty mind,
Worn, but unstooping to the baser crowd,
All tenantless, save to the crannying Wind,
Or holding dark communion with the Cloud.
There was a day when they were young and proud;
Banners on high, and battles passed below;
But they who fought are in a bloody shroud,
And those which waved are shredless dust ere now,
And the bleak battlements shall bear no future blow.

48

Beneath those battlements, within those walls,
Power dwelt amidst her passions; in proud state
Each robber chief upheld his armèd halls,
Doing his evil will, nor less elate
Than mightier heroes of a longer date.
What want these outlaws conquerors should have,
But History's purchased page to call them great?
A wider space—an ornamental grave?
Their hopes were not less warm, their souls were full as brave.

[23] Alexander the Great (356-323), conqueror of the ancient world.
[24] ancient Cynic philosopher (412-323 B.C.).

49

In their baronial feuds and single fields,
What deeds of prowess unrecorded died!
And Love, which lent a blazon to their shields,
With emblems well devised by amorous pride,
Through all the mail of iron hearts would glide;
But still their flame was fierceness, and drew on
Keen contest and destruction near allied,
And many a tower for some fair mischief won,
Saw the discolored Rhine beneath its ruin run.

50

But Thou, exulting and abounding river!
Making thy waves a blessing as they flow
Through banks whose beauty would endure for ever
Could man but leave thy bright creation so,
Nor its fair promise from the surface mow
With the sharp scythe of conflict,—then to see
Thy valley of sweet waters, were to know
Earth paved like Heaven—and to seem such to me,
Even now what wants thy stream?—that it should
Lethe[25] be.

51

A thousand battles have assailed thy banks,
But these and half their fame have passed away,
And Slaughter heaped on high his weltering ranks:
Their very graves are gone, and what are they?
Thy tide washed down the blood of yesterday,
And all was stainless, and on thy clear stream
Glassed, with its dancing light, the sunny ray;
But o'er the blackened Memory's blighting dream
Thy waves would vainly roll, all sweeping as they seem.

52

Thus Harold inly said, and passed along,
Yet not insensible to all which here
Awoke the jocund birds to early song
In glens which might have made even exile dear:
Though on his brow were graven lines austere,
And tranquil sternness, which had ta'en the place
Of feelings fierier far but less severe—
Joy was not always absent from his face,
But o'er it in such scenes would steal with transient trace.

53

Nor was all Love shut from him, though his days
Of Passion had consumed themselves to dust.
It is in vain that we would coldly gaze
On such as smile upon us; the heart must
Leap kindly back to kindness, though Disgust
Hath weaned it from all worldings: thus he felt,
For there was soft Remembrance, and sweet Trust
In one fond breast,[26] to which his own would melt,
And in its tenderer hour on that his bosom dwelt.

54

And he had learned to love,—I know not why,
For this in such as him seems strange of mood,—
The helpless looks of blooming Infancy,
Even in its earliest nurture; what subdued,
To change like this, a mind so far imbued
With scorn of man, it little boots to know;
But thus it was; and though in solitude
Small power the nipped affections have to grow,
In him this glowed when all beside had ceased to glow.

55

And there was one soft breast, as hath been said,
Which unto his was bound by stronger ties
Than the church links withal; and, though unwed,
That love was pure—and, far above disguise,
Had stood the test of mortal enmities,
Still undivided, and cemented more
By peril, dreaded most in female eyes;
But this was firm, and from a foreign shore
Well to that heart might his these absent greetings pour!

I

The castled crag of Drachenfels
Frowns o'er the wide and winding Rhine,
Whose breast of waters broadly swells
Between the banks which bear the vine;

[25] the river of forgetfulness in the lower world.

[26] Byron's half-sister, Augusta, by his father's first marriage.

And hills all rich with blossomed trees,
And fields which promise corn and wine,
And scattered cities crowning these,
Whose far white walls along them shine,
Have strewed a scene, which I should see
With double joy wert *thou* with me.

II

And peasant girls, with deep blue eyes,
And hands which offer early flowers,
Walk smiling o'er this Paradise;
Above, the frequent feudal towers
Through green leaves lift their walls of gray;
And many a rock which steeply lowers,
And noble arch in proud decay,
Look o'er this vale of vintage-bowers;
But one thing want these banks of Rhine,—
Thy gentle hand to clasp in mine!

III

I send the lilies given to me—
Though long before thy hand they touch,
I know that they must withered be,
But yet reject them not as such;
For I have cherished them as dear,
Because they yet may meet thine eye,
And guide thy soul to mine even here—
When thou behold'st them drooping nigh,
And know'st them gathered by the Rhine,
And offered from my heart to thine!

IV

The river nobly foams and flows—
The charm of this enchanted ground,
And all its thousand turns disclose
Some fresher beauty varying round:
The haughtiest breast its wish might bound
Through life to dwell delighted here;
Nor could on earth a spot be found
To Nature and to me so dear—
Could thy dear eyes in following mine
Still sweeten more these banks of Rhine!

56

By Coblentz, on a rise of gentle ground
There is a small and simple Pyramid,
Crowning the summit of the verdant mound;
Beneath its base are Heroes' ashes hid—
Our enemy's—but let not that forbid
Honor to Marceau![27] o'er whose early tomb
Tears, big tears, gushed from the rough soldier's lid,
Lamenting and yet envying such a doom,
Falling for France, whose rights he battled to resume.

57

Brief, brave, and glorious was his young career,—
His mourners were two hosts, his friends and foes;
And fitly may the stranger lingering here
Pray for his gallant Spirit's bright repose;
For he was Freedom's Champion, one of those
The few in number, who had not o'erstepped
The charter to chastise which she bestows
On such as wield her weapons; he had kept
The whiteness of his soul—and thus men o'er him wept.

58

Here Ehrenbreitstein,[28] with her shattered wall
Black with the miner's blast, upon her height
Yet shows of what she was, when shell and ball
Rebounding idly on her strength did light:
A Tower of Victory! from whence the flight
Of baffled foes was watched along the plain:
But Peace destroyed what War could never blight,
And laid those proud roofs bare to Summer's rain—
On which the iron shower for years had poured in vain.

59

Adieu to thee, fair Rhine! How long delighted
The stranger fain would linger on his way!
Thine is a scene alike where souls united,
Or lonely Contemplation thus might stray;
And could the ceaseless vultures cease to prey
On self-condemning bosoms, it were here,
Where Nature, nor too somber nor too gay,
Wild but not rude, awful yet not austere,
Is to the mellow Earth as Autumn to the year.

60

Adieu to thee again! a vain adieu!

[27] a general of the French Revolutionary Armies.
[28] a fortress across the Rhine from Coblenz.

There can be no farewell to scene like thine;
The mind is colored by thy every hue;
And if reluctantly the eyes resign
Their cherished gaze upon thee, lovely Rhine!
'Tis with the thankful heart of parting praise;
More mighty spots may rise—more glaring shine,
But none unite in one attaching maze,
The brilliant, fair, and soft,—the glories of old days.

61

The negligently grand, the fruitful bloom
Of coming ripeness, the white city's sheen,
The rolling stream, the precipice's gloom,
The forest's growth, and Gothic walls between,—
The wild rocks shaped, as they had turrets been,
In mockery of man's art; and these withal
A race of faces happy as the scene,
Whose fertile bounties here extend to all,
Still springing o'er thy banks, though Empires near them fall.

62

But these recede. Above me are the Alps,
The palaces of Nature, whose vast walls
Have pinnacled in clouds their snowy scalps,
And throned Eternity in icy halls
Of cold Sublimity, where forms and falls
The Avalanche—the thunderbolt of snow!
All that expands the spirit, yet appalls,
Gather around these summits, as to show
How Earth may pierce to Heaven, yet leave vain man below.

63

But ere these matchless heights I dare to scan,
There is a spot should not be passed in vain,—
Morat![29] the proud, the patriot field! where man
May gaze on ghastly trophies of the slain,
Nor blush for those who conquered on that plain;
Here Burgundy bequeathed his tombless host,
A bony heap, through ages to remain,
Themselves their monument;—the Stygian coast
Unsepulchered they roamed, and shrieked each wandering ghost.

[29] where the Swiss defeated Charles the Bold of Burgundy in 1476.

64

While Waterloo with Cannæ's[30] carnage vies,
Morat and Marathon[31] twin names shall stand;
They were true Glory's stainless victories,
Won by the unambitious heart and hand
Of a proud, brotherly, and civic band,
All unbought champions in no princely cause
Of vice-entailed Corruption; they no land
Doomed to bewail the blasphemy of laws
Making Kings' rights divine, by some Draconic[32] clause.

65

By a lone wall a lonelier column rears
A gray and grief-worn aspect of old days;
'Tis the last remnant of the wreck of years,
And looks as with the wild-bewildered gaze
Of one to stone converted by amaze,
Yet still with consciousness; and there it stands
Making a marvel that it not decays,
When the coeval pride of human hands,
Leveled Aventicum,[33] hath strewed her subject lands.

66

And there—oh! sweet and sacred be the name!
Julia[34]—the daughter—the devoted—gave
Her youth to Heaven; her heart, beneath a claim
Nearest to Heaven's, broke o'er a father's grave.
Justice is sworn 'gainst tears, and hers would crave
The life she lived in—but the judge was just—
And then she died on him she could not save.
Their tomb was simple, and without a bust,
And held within their urn one mind—one heart—one dust.

67

But these are deeds which should not pass away,

[30] the battle in which Hannibal defeated the Romans, 216 B.C.

[31] the famous victory of the Greeks over the Persians in 490 B.C.

[32] This refers to the rigid and severe code of Draco, the first Athenian lawmaker.

[33] capital of Roman Switzerland.

[34] a young priestess of Aventicum who died in the attempt to save her father, who had been sentenced to death for treachery.

And names that must not wither, though the Earth
Forgets her empires with a just decay,
The enslavers and the enslaved—their death and birth;
The high, the mountain-majesty of Worth
Should be—and shall, survivor of its woe,
And from its immortality, look forth
In the Sun's face, like yonder Alpine snow,[85]
Imperishably pure beyond all things below.

68

Lake Leman[86] woos me with its crystal face,
The mirror where the stars and mountains view
The stillness of their aspect in each trace
Its clear depth yields of their far height and hue:
There is too much of Man here, to look through
With a fit mind the might which I behold;
But soon in me shall Loneliness renew
Thoughts hid, but not less cherished than of old,
Ere mingling with the herd had penned me in their fold.

69

To fly from, need not be to hate, mankind:
All are not fit with them to stir and toil,
Nor is it discontent to keep the mind
Deep in its fountain, lest it overboil
In the hot throng, where we become the spoil
Of our infection, till too late and long,
We may deplore and struggle with the coil,
In wretched interchange of wrong for wrong
Midst a contentious world, striving where none are strong.

70

There, in a moment, we may plunge our years
In fatal penitence, and in the blight
Of our own Soul turn all our blood to tears,
And color things to come with hues of Night;
The race of life becomes a hopeless flight
To those that walk in darkness: on the sea
The boldest steer but where their ports invite—
But there are wanderers o'er Eternity,
Whose bark drives on and on, and anchored ne'er shall be.

71

Is it not better, then, to be alone,
And love Earth only for its earthly sake?
By the blue rushing of the arrowy Rhone,
Or the pure bosom of its nursing Lake,
Which feeds it as a mother who doth make
A fair but froward infant her own care,
Kissing its cries away as these awake;—
Is it not better thus our lives to wear,
Than join the crushing crowd, doomed to inflict or bear?

72

I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me; and to me
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture: I can see
Nothing to loathe in Nature, save to be
A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
Classed among creatures, when the soul can flee,
And with the sky—the peak—the heaving plain
Of ocean, or the stars, mingle—and not in vain.

73

And thus I am absorbed, and this is life:
I look upon the peopled desert past,
As on a place of agony and strife,
Where, for some sin, to Sorrow I was cast,
To act and suffer, but remount at last
With a fresh pinion; which I feel to spring,
Though young, yet waxing vigorous as the Blast
Which it would cope with, on delighted wing,
Spurning the clay-cold bonds which round our being cling.

74

And when, at length, the mind shall be all free
From what it hates in this degraded form,
Reft of its carnal life, save what shall be
Existent happier in the fly and worm,—
When Elements to Elements conform,
And dust is as it should be, shall I not
Feel all I see, less dazzling, but more warm?
The bodiless thought? the Spirit of each spot?
Of which, even now, I share at times the immortal lot?

[85] Mont Blanc.
[86] Lake Geneva, Switzerland.

75

Are not the mountains, waves, and skies, a part
Of me and of my Soul, as I of them?
Is not the love of these deep in my heart
With a pure passion? should I not contemn
All objects, if compared with these? and stem
A tide of suffering, rather than forgo
Such feelings for the hard and worldly phlegm
Of those whose eyes are only turned below,
Gazing upon the ground, with thoughts which dare not glow?

76

But this is not my theme; and I return
To that which is immediate, and require
Those who find contemplation in the urn,
To look on One,[87] whose dust was once all fire,
A native of the land where I respire
The clear air for a while—a passing guest,
Where he became a being,—whose desire
Was to be glorious; 'twas a foolish quest,
The which to gain and keep, he sacrificed all rest.

77

Here the self-torturing sophist, wild Rousseau,
The apostle of Affliction, he who threw
Enchantment over Passion, and from Woe
Wrung overwhelming eloquence, first drew
The breath which made him wretched; yet he knew
How to make Madness beautiful, and cast
O'er erring deeds and thoughts a heavenly hue
Of words, like sunbeams, dazzling as they passed
The eyes, which o'er them shed tears feelingly and fast.

78

His love was Passion's essence—as a tree
On fire by lightning; with ethereal flame
Kindled he was, and blasted; for to be
Thus, and enamored, were in him the same.
But his was not the love of living dame,
Nor of the dead who rise upon our dreams,
But of ideal Beauty, which became
In him existence, and o'erflowing teems
Along his burning page, distempered though it seems.

79

This breathed itself to life in Julie, *this*
Invested her with all that's wild and sweet;
This hallowed, too, the memorable kiss
Which every morn his fevered lip would greet,
From hers, who but with friendship his would meet;
But to that gentle touch through brain and breast
Flashed the thrilled Spirit's love-devouring heat;
In that absorbing sigh perchance more blessed
Than vulgar minds may be with all they seek possessed.

80

His life was one long war with self-sought foes,
Or friends by him self-banished; for his mind
Had grown Suspicion's sanctuary, and chose,
For its own cruel sacrifice, the kind,
'Gainst whom he raged with fury strange and blind.
But he was frenzied,—wherefore, who may know?
Since cause might be which Skill could never find;
But he was frenzied by disease or woe,
To that worst pitch of all, which wears a reasoning show.

81

For then he was inspired, and from him came,
As from the Pythian's[88] mystic cave of yore,
Those oracles which set the world in flame,
Nor ceased to burn till kingdoms were no more:
Did he not this for France? which lay, before,
Bowed to the inborn tyranny of years?
Broken and trembling to the yoke she bore,
Till by the voice of him and his compeers
Roused up to too much wrath, which follows o'ergrown fears?

82

They made themselves a fearful monument!
The wreck of old opinions—things which grew,
Breathed from the birth of Time: the veil they rent,
And what behind it lay, all earth shall view;
But good with ill they also overthrew,

[87] Rousseau; cf. Vol. II, p. 42.

[88] the priestess in charge of the Delphic oracle of Apollo.

Leaving but ruins, wherewith to rebuild
Upon the same foundation, and renew
Dungeons and thrones, which the same hour refilled,
As heretofore, because Ambition was self-willed.

83

But this will not endure, nor be endured!
Mankind have felt their strength, and made it felt.
They might have used it better, but, allured
By their new vigor, sternly have they dealt
On one another; Pity ceased to melt
With her once natural charities. But they,
Who in Oppression's darkness caved had dwelt.
They were not eagles, nourished with the day;
What marvel then, at times, if they mistook their prey?

84

What deep wounds ever closed without a scar?
The heart's bleed longest, and but heal to wear
That which disfigures it; and they who war
With their own hopes, and have been vanquished, bear
Silence, but not submission: in his lair
Fixed Passion holds his breath, until the hour
Which shall atone for years; none need despair:
It came—it cometh—and will come,—the power
To punish or forgive—in *one* we shall be slower.

85

Clear, placid Leman! thy contrasted lake,
With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing
Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake
Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.
This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing
To waft me from distraction; once I loved
Torn Ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring
Sounds sweet as if a Sister's voice reproved,
That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved.

86

It is the hush of night, and all between
Thy margin and the mountains, dusk, yet clear,
Mellowed and mingling, yet distinctly seen,
Save darkened Jura, whose capped heights appear
Precipitously steep; and drawing near,
There breathes a living fragrance from the shore,
Of flowers yet fresh with childhood; on the ear
Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,
Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more.

87

He is an evening reveler, who makes
His life an infancy, and sings his fill;
At intervals, some bird from out the brakes
Starts into voice a moment, then is still.
There seems a floating whisper on the hill,
But that is fancy, for the Starlight dews
All silently their tears of Love instill,
Weeping themselves away, till they infuse
Deep into Nature's breast the spirit of her hues.

88

Ye Stars! which are the poetry of Heaven!
If in your bright leaves we would read the fate
Of men and empires,—'tis to be forgiven,
That in our aspirations to be great,
Our destinies o'erleap their mortal state,
And claim a kindred with you; for ye are
A Beauty and a Mystery, and create
In us such love and reverence from afar,
That Fortune, Fame, Power, Life, have named themselves a star.

89

All Heaven and Earth are still—though not in sleep,
But breathless, as we grow when feeling most;
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep:—
All Heaven and Earth are still: From the high host
Of stars, to the lulled lake and mountain-coast,
All is concentered in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of Being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and Defense.

90

Then stirs the feeling infinite, so felt
In solitude, where we are *least* alone;
A truth, which through our being then doth melt,
And purifies from self: it is a tone,

The soul and source of Music, which makes
known
Eternal harmony, and sheds a charm
Like to the fabled Cytherea's zone,[89]
Binding all things with beauty;—'twould disarm
The specter Death, had he substantial power to
harm.

91

Not vainly did the early Persian make
His altar the high places, and the peak
Of earth-o'ergazing mountains, and thus take
A fit and unwalled temple, there to seek
The Spirit, in whose honor shrines are weak,
Upreared of human hands. Come, and compare
Columns and idol-dwellings—Goth or Greek—
With Nature's realms of worship, earth and air—
Nor fix on fond abodes to circumscribe thy prayer!

92

The sky is changed!—and such a change! Oh,
Night,
And Storm, and Darkness, ye are wondrous
strong,
Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
Of a dark eye in Woman! Far along,
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud!

93

And this is in the Night:—Most glorious Night!
Thou wert not sent for slumber! let me be
A sharer in thy fierce and far delight,—
A portion of the tempest and of thee!
How the lit lake shines, a phosphoric sea,
And the big rain comes dancing to the earth!
And now again 'tis black,—and now, the glee
Of the loud hills shakes with its mountain-
mirth,
As if they did rejoice o'er a young Earthquake's
birth.

94

Now, where the swift Rhone cleaves his way be-
tween

[89] the love-producing girdle of Venus.

Heights which appear as lovers who have parted
In hate, whose mining depths so intervene,
That they can meet no more, though broken-
hearted:
Though in their souls, which thus each other
thwarted,
Love was the very root of the fond rage
Which blighted their life's bloom, and then de-
parted:—
Itself expired, but leaving them an age
Of years all winters,—war within themselves to
wage:

95

Now, where the quick Rhone thus hath cleft his
way,
The mightiest of the storms hath ta'en his stand:
For here, not one, but many, make their play,
And fling their thunder-bolts from hand to
hand,
Flashing and cast around: of all the band,
The brightest through these parted hills hath
forked
His lightnings,—as if he did understand,
That in such gaps as Desolation worked,
There the hot shaft should blast whatever therein
lurked.

96

Sky, Mountains, River, Winds, Lake, Light-
nings! ye!
With night, and clouds, and thunder, and a
Soul
To make these felt and feeling, well may be
Things that have made me watchful; the far roll
Of your departing voices, is the knoll
Of what in me is sleepless,—if I rest.
But where of ye, O tempests! is the goal?
Are ye like those within the human breast?
Or do ye find, at length, like eagles, some high
nest?

97

Could I embody and unbosom now
That which is most within me,—could I wreak
My thoughts upon expression, and thus throw
Soul, heart, mind, passions, feelings, strong or
weak,
All that I would have sought, and all I seek,

Bear, know, feel—and yet breathe—into *one* word,
And that one word were Lightning, I would speak;
But as it is, I live and die unheard,
With a most voiceless thought, sheathing it as a sword.

98

The Morn is up again, the dewy Morn,
With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom—
Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,
And living as if earth contained no tomb,—
And glowing into day: we may resume
The march of our existence: and thus I,
Still on thy shores, fair Leman! may find room
And food for meditation, nor pass by
Much, that may give us pause, if pondered fittingly.

99

Clarens![40] sweet Clarens, birthplace of deep Love!
Thine air is the young breath of passionate Thought;
Thy trees take root in Love; the snows above,
The very Glaciers have his colors caught,
And Sun-set into rose-hues sees them wrought
By rays which sleep there lovingly: the rocks,
The permanent crags, tell here of Love, who sought
In them a refuge from the worldly shocks,
Which stir and sting the Soul with Hope that woos, then mocks.

100

Clarens! by heavenly feet thy paths are trod,—
Undying Love's, who here ascends a throne
To which the steps are mountains; where the God
Is a pervading Life and Light,—so shown
Not on those summits solely, nor alone
In the still cave and forest; o'er the flower
His eye is sparkling, and his breath hath blown,
His soft and summer breath, whose tender power
Passes the strength of storms in their most desolate hour.

[40] a town on Lake Geneva frequently mentioned by Rousseau.

101

All things are here of *him*; from the black pines,
Which are his shade on high, and the loud roar
Of torrents, where he listeneth, to the vines
Which slope his green path downward to the shore,
Where the bowed waters meet him, and adore,
Kissing his feet with murmurs; and the wood,
The covert of old trees, with trunks all hoar,
But light leaves, young as joy, stands where it stood,
Offering to him, and his, a populous solitude.

102

A populous solitude of bees and birds
And fairy-formed and many-colored things,
Who worship him with notes more sweet than words,
And innocently open their glad wings,
Fearless and full of life: the gush of springs,
And fall of lofty fountains, and the bend
Of stirring branches, and the bud which brings
The swiftest thought of Beauty, here extend
Mingling, and made by Love, unto one mighty end.

103

He who hath loved not, here would learn that lore,
And make his heart a spirit; he who knows
That tender mystery, will love the more;
For this is Love's recess, where vain men's woes,
And the world's waste, have driven him far from those,
For 'tis his nature to advance or die;
He stands not still, but or decays, or grows
Into a boundless blessing, which may vie
With the immortal lights, in its eternity!

104

'Twas not for fiction chose Rousseau[41] this spot,
Peopling it with affections; but he found
It was the scene which Passion must allot
To the Mind's purified beings; 'twas the ground
Where early Love his Psyche's zone unbound,
And hallowed it with loveliness: 'tis lone,

[41] in his *The New Eloisa*.

And wonderful, and deep, and hath a sound,
And sense, and sight of sweetness; here the Rhone
Hath spread himself a couch, the Alps have reared a throne.

105

Lausanne! and Ferney! ye have been the abodes
Of Names[42] which unto you bequeathed a name;
Mortals, who sought and found, by dangerous roads,
A path to perpetuity of Fame:
They were gigantic minds, and their steep aim
Was, Titan-like, on daring doubts to pile
Thoughts which should call down thunder and the flame
Of Heaven again assailed—if Heaven the while
On man and man's research could deign do more than smile.

106

The one[43] was fire and fickleness, a child
Most mutable in wishes, but in mind
A wit as various,—gay, grave, sage, or wild,—
Historian, bard, philosopher, combined;
He multiplied himself among mankind,
The Proteus[44] of their talents: But his own
Breathed most in ridicule,—which, as the wind,
Blew where it listed, laying all things prone,—
Now to o'erthrow a fool, and now to shake a throne.

107

The other, deep and slow, exhausting thought,
And hiving wisdom with each studious year,
In meditation dwelt, with learning wrought,
And shaped his weapon with an edge severe,
Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer;
The lord of irony,—that master spell,
Which stung his foes to wrath, which grew from fear,
And doomed him to the zealot's ready Hell,
Which answers to all doubts so eloquently well.

108

Yet, peace be with their ashes,—for by them,
If merited, the penalty is paid;
It is not ours to judge,—far less condemn;
The hour must come when such things shall be made
Known unto all,—or hope and dread allayed
By slumber, on one pillow, in the dust,
Which, thus much we are sure, must lie decayed;
And when it shall revive, as is our trust,
'Twill be to be forgiven—or suffer what is just.

109

But let me quit Man's works, again to read
His Maker's, spread around me, and suspend
This page, which from my reveries I feed,
Until it seems prolonging without end.
The clouds above me to the white Alps tend,
And I must pierce them, and survey whate'er
May be permitted, as my steps I bend
To their most great and growing region, where
The earth to her embrace compels the powers of air.

110

Italia! too, Italia! looking on thee,
Full flashes on the Soul the light of ages,
Since the fierce Carthaginian[45] almost won thee,
To the last halo of the Chiefs and Sages
Who glorify thy consecrated pages;
Thou wert the throne and grave of empires—still,
The fount at which the panting Mind assuages
Her thirst of knowledge, quaffing there her fill,
Flows from the eternal source of Rome's imperial hill.

111

Thus far have I proceeded in a theme
Renewed with no kind auspices:—to feel
We are not what we have been, and to deem
We are not what we should be,—and to steel
The heart against itself; and to conceal,
With a proud caution, love, or hate, or aught,—
Passion or feeling, purpose, grief, or zeal,
Which is the tyrant Spirit of our thought,
Is a stern task of soul:—No matter,—it is taught.

[42] Gibbon finished the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* at Lausanne. Voltaire lived at Ferney.
[43] Voltaire; cf. Vol. I, pp. 755 ff.
[44] the sea god who could change himself into many forms.
[45] Hannibal.

112

And for these words, thus woven into song,
It may be that they are a harmless wile,—
The coloring of the scenes which fleet along,
Which I would seize, in passing, to beguile
My breast, or that of others, for a while.
Fame is the thirst of youth,—but I am not
So young as to regard men's frown or smile,
As loss or guerdon of a glorious lot;—
I stood and stand alone,—remembered or forgot.

113

I have not loved the World, nor the World me;
I have not flattered its rank breath, nor bowed
To its idolatries a patient knee,
Nor coined my cheek to smiles,—nor cried aloud
In worship of an echo: in the crowd
They could not deem me one of such—I stood
Among them, but not of them—in a shroud
Of thoughts which were not their thoughts, and still could,
Had I not filed[46] my mind, which thus itself subdued.

114

I have not loved the World, nor the World me,—
But let us part fair foes; I do believe,
Though I have found them not, that there may be
Words which are things,—hopes which will not deceive,
And Virtues which are merciful, nor weave
Snares for the failing: I would also deem
O'er others' griefs that some sincerely grieve—
That two, or one, are almost what they seem,—
That Goodness is no name—and Happiness no dream.

115

My daughter! with thy name this song begun!
My daughter! with thy name thus much shall end!—
I see thee not—I hear thee not—but none
Can be so wrapped in thee; thou art the Friend
To whom the shadows of far years extend:
Albeit my brow thou never shouldst behold,
My voice shall with thy future visions blend,
And reach into thy heart,—when mine is cold,—
A token and a tone, even from thy father's mould.

[46] defiled. The phrase is from *Macbeth*, III, i, 64.

116

To aid thy mind's development, to watch
Thy dawn of little joys, to sit and see
Almost thy very growth, to view thee catch
Knowledge of objects,—wonders yet to thee!
To hold thee lightly on a gentle knee,
And print on thy soft cheek a parent's kiss,—
This, it should seem, was not reserved for me—[47]
Yet this was in my nature: as it is,
I know not what is there, yet something like to this.

117

Yet, though dull Hate as duty should be taught,
I know that thou wilt love me—though my name
Should be shut from thee, as a spell still fraught
With desolation, and a broken claim:
Though the grave closed between us,—'twere the same,
I know that thou wilt love me—though to drain
My blood from out thy being were an aim,
And an attainment,—all would be in vain,—
Still thou wouldst love me, still that more than life retain.

118

The child of Love, though born in bitterness,
And nurtured in Convulsion. Of thy sire
These were the elements,—and thine no less.
As yet such are around thee,—but thy fire
Shall be more tempered, and thy hope far higher.
Sweet be thy cradled slumbers! O'er the sea
And from the mountains where I now respire,
Fain would I waft such blessing upon thee,
As, with a sigh, I deem thou might'st have been to me.

(1816)

Sonnet on Chillon[1]

Byron wrote this sonnet on his hero of *The Prisoner of Chillon* (cf. *below*) to pay tribute to "a man worthy of the best age of ancient freedom."

[47] Byron never saw his daughter Ada after her babyhood.

[1] The château of Chillon on the Lake of Geneva; cf. Byron's *The Prisoner of Chillon* which immediately follows.

Eternal Spirit of the chainless Mind!
  Brightest in dungeons, Liberty! thou art:
  For there thy habitation is the heart—
The heart which love of thee alone can bind;
And when thy sons to fetters are consigned—
  To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom,
  Their country conquers with their martyrdom,
And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.
Chillon! thy prison is a holy place,
  And thy sad floor an altar—for 't was trod,
Until his very steps have left a trace
  Worn, as if thy cold pavement were a sod,
By Bonnivard!—May none those marks efface!
  For they appeal from tyranny to God.

(1816)

The Prisoner of Chillon[1]

While inclement weather kept Byron and Shelley at an inn near Lausanne, the poet wrote his first version of this poem in the space of two days.

I

My hair is gray, but not with years,
  Nor grew it white
  In a single night,
As men's have grown from sudden fears.
My limbs are bowed, though not with toil,
  But rusted with a vile repose,
For they have been a dungeon's spoil,
  And mine has been the fate of those
To whom the goodly earth and air
Are banned, and barred—forbidden fare;
But this was for my father's faith
I suffered chains and courted death;
That father perished at the stake
For tenets he would not forsake;
And for the same his lineal race
In darkness found a dwelling-place;
We were seven—who now are one,
  Six in youth, and one in age,
Finished as they had begun,
  Proud of Persecution's rage;
One in fire, and two in field,
Their belief with blood have sealed,
Dying as their father died,
For the God their foes denied;—
Three were in a dungeon cast,
Of whom this wreck is left the last.

2

There are seven pillars of Gothic mould
In Chillon's dungeons deep and old,
There are seven columns, massy and gray,
Dim with a dull imprisoned ray,
A sunbeam which hath lost its way,
And through the crevice and the cleft
Of the thick wall is fallen and left;
Creeping o'er the floor so damp,
Like a marsh's meteor lamp:
And in each pillar there is a ring,
  And in each ring there is a chain;
That iron is a cankering thing,
  For in these limbs its teeth remain,
With marks that will not wear away,
Till I have done with this new day,
Which now is painful to these eyes,
Which have not seen the sun so rise
For years—I cannot count them o'er,
I lost their long and heavy score
When my last brother drooped and died,
And I lay living by his side.

3

They chained us each to a column stone,
And we were three—yet, each alone;
We could not move a single pace,
We could not see each other's face,
But with that pale and livid light
That made us strangers in our sight:
And thus together—yet apart,
Fettered in hand, but joined in heart,
'T was still some solace in the dearth
Of the pure elements of earth,
To hearken to each other's speech,
And each turn comforter to each
With some new hope, or legend old,
Or song heroically bold;
But even these at length grew cold.
Our voices took a dreary tone,
An echo of the dungeon stone,
  A grating sound—not full and free
  As they of yore were wont to be;
  It might be fancy—but to me
They never sounded like our own.

[1] Bonnivard was born in 1496; he was prior of St. Victor, near Geneva. In his support of the cause of the Republic of Geneva against the Duke of Savoy he became a martyr to liberty.

4

I was the eldest of the three,
And to uphold and cheer the rest
I ought to do—and did my best—
And each did well in his degree.
The youngest, whom my father loved,
Because our mother's brow was given
To him—with eyes as blue as heaven—
For him my soul was sorely moved:
And truly might it be distressed
To see such bird in such a nest;
For he was beautiful as day—
(When day was beautiful to me
As to young eagles, being free)—
A polar day, which will not see
A sunset till its summer's gone,
Its sleepless summer of long light,
The snow-clad offspring of the sun:
And thus he was as pure and bright,
And in his natural spirit gay,
With tears for naught but others' ills,
And then they flowed like mountain rills,
Unless he could assuage the woe
Which he abhorred to view below.

5

The other was as pure of mind,
But formed to combat with his kind;
Strong in his frame, and of a mood
Which 'gainst the world in war had stood,
And perished in the foremost rank
With joy:—but not in chains to pine:
His spirit withered with their clank,
I saw it silently decline—
And so perchance in sooth did mine:
But yet I forced it on to cheer
Those relics of a home so dear.
He was a hunter of the hills,
Had followed there the deer and wolf;
To him this dungeon was a gulf,
And fettered feet the worst of ills.

6

Lake Leman lies by Chillon's walls:
A thousand feet in depth below
Its massy waters meet and flow;
Thus much the fathom-line was sent
From Chillon's snow-white battlement,
Which round about the wave inthrals:
A double dungeon wall and wave
Have made—and like a living grave.
Below the surface of the lake
The dark vault lies wherein we lay:
We heard it ripple night and day;
Sounding o'er our heads it knocked;
And I have felt the winter's spray
Wash through the bars when winds were high
And wanton in the happy sky;
And then the very rock hath rocked,
And I have felt it shake, unshocked,
Because I could have smiled to see
The death that would have set me free.

7

I said my nearer brother pined,
I said his mighty heart declined,
He loathed and put away his food;
It was not that 't was coarse and rude,
For we were used to hunter's fare,
And for the like had little care:
The milk drawn from the mountain goat
Was changed for water from the moat,
Our bread was such as captive's tears
Have moistened many a thousand years,
Since man first pent his fellow men
Like brutes within an iron den;
But what were these to us or him?
These wasted not his heart or limb;
My brother's soul was of that mould
Which in a palace had grown cold,
Had his free breathing been denied
The range of the steep mountain's side;
But why delay the truth?—he died.
I saw, and could not hold his head,
Nor reach his dying hand—nor dead,—
Though hard I strove, but strove in vain,
To rend and gnash my bonds in twain.
He died—and they unlocked his chain,
And scooped for him a shallow grave
Even from the cold earth of our cave.
I begged them, as a boon, to lay
His corse in dust whereon the day
Might shine—it was a foolish thought,
But then within my brain it wrought,
That even in death his freeborn breast
In such a dungeon could not rest.
I might have spared my idle prayer—
They coldly laughed—and laid him there:
The flat and turfless earth above
The being we so much did love;
His empty chain above it leant,
Such Murder's fitting monument!

8

But he, the favorite and the flower,
Most cherished since his natal hour,
His mother's image in fair face,
The infant love of all his race,
His martyred father's dearest thought,
My latest care, for whom I sought
To hoard my life, that his might be
Less wretched now, and one day free;
He, too, who yet had held untired
A spirit natural or inspired—
He, too, was struck, and day by day
Was withered on the stalk away.
Oh, God! it is a fearful thing
To see the human soul take wing
In any shape, in any mood:—
I've seen it rushing forth in blood,
I've seen it on the breaking ocean
Strive with a swoln convulsive motion,
I've seen the sick and ghastly bed
Of Sin delirious with its dread:
But these were horrors—this was woe
Unmixed with such—but sure and slow:
He faded, and so calm and meek,
So softly worn, so sweetly weak,
So tearless, yet so tender—kind,
And grieved for those he left behind;
With all the while a cheek whose bloom
Was as a mockery of the tomb,
Whose tints as gently sunk away
As a departing rainbow's ray;
An eye of most transparent light,
That almost made the dungeon bright;
And not a word of murmur—not
A groan o'er his untimely lot,—
A little talk of better days,
A little hope my own to raise,
For I was sunk in silence—lost
In this last loss, of all the most;
And then the sighs he would suppress
Of fainting Nature's feebleness,
More slowly drawn, grew less and less:
I listened, but I could not hear—
I called, for I was wild with fear;
I knew 't was hopeless, but my dread
Would not be thus admonishéd;
I called, and thought I heard a sound—
I burst my chain with one strong bound,
And rushed to him:—I found him not,
I only stirred in this black spot,
I only lived—*I* only drew
The accursed breath of dungeon-dew;
The last—the sole—the dearest link
Between me and the eternal brink,
Which bound me to my failing race,
Was broken in this fatal place.
One on the earth, and one beneath—
My brothers—both had ceased to breathe!
I took that hand which lay so still,
Alas! my own was full as chill;
I had not strength to stir, or strive,
But felt that I was still alive—
A frantic feeling, when we know
That what we love shall ne'er be so.
I know not why
I could not die,
I had no earthly hope—but faith,
And that forbade a selfish death.

9

What next befell me then and there
I know not well—I never knew—
First came the loss of light, and air,
And then of darkness too:
I had no thought, no feeling—none—
Among the stones I stood a stone,
And was, scarce conscious what I wist,
As shrubless crags within the mist;
For all was blank, and bleak, and gray;
It was not night—it was not day,
It was not even the dungeon-light,
So hateful to my heavy sight,
But vacancy absorbing space,
And fixedness—without a place;
There were no stars—no earth—no time—
No check—no change—no good—no crime—
But silence, and a stirless breath
Which neither was of life nor death;
A sea of stagnant idleness,
Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless!

10

A light broke in upon my brain,—
It was the carol of a bird;
It ceased, and then it came again,
The sweetest song ear ever heard,
And mine was thankful till my eyes
Ran over with the glad surprise,
And they that moment could not see
I was the mate of misery;
But then by dull degrees came back
My senses to their wonted track;
I saw the dungeon walls and floor

Close slowly round me as before,
I saw the glimmer of the sun
Creeping as it before had done,
But through the crevice where it came
That bird was perched, as fond and tame,
And tamer than upon the tree;
A lovely bird, with azure wings,
And song that said a thousand things,
And seemed to say them all for me!
I never saw its like before,
I ne'er shall see its likeness more:
It seemed like me to want a mate,
But was not half so desolate,
And it was come to love me when
None lived to love me so again,
And cheering from my dungeon's brink,
Had brought me back to feel and think.
I know not if it late were free,
Or broke its cage to perch on mine,
But knowing well captivity,
Sweet bird! I could not wish for thine!
Or if it were, in wingéd guise,
A visitant from Paradise;
For—Heaven forgive that thought! the while
Which made me both to weep and smile—
I sometimes deemed that it might be
My brother's soul come down to me;
But then at last away it flew,
And then 't was mortal—well I knew,
For he would never thus have flown,
And left me twice so doubly lone,—
Lone—as the corse within its shroud,
Lone—as a solitary cloud,
A single cloud on a sunny day,
While all the rest of heaven is clear,
A frown upon the atmosphere,
That hath no business to appear
When skies are blue, and earth is gay.

11

A kind of change came in my fate,
My keepers grew compassionate;
I know not what had made them so,
They were inured to sights of woe,
But so it was:—my broken chain
With links unfastened did remain,
And it was liberty to stride
Along my cell from side to side,
And up and down, and then athwart,
And tread it over every part;
And round the pillars one by one,
Returning where my walk begun,
Avoiding only, as I trod,
My brothers' graves without a sod;
For if I thought with heedless tread
My step profaned their lowly bed,
My breath came gaspingly and thick,
And my crushed heart fell blind and sick.

12

I made a footing in the wall,
It was not therefrom to escape,
For I had buried one and all,
Who loved me in a human shape;
And the whole earth would henceforth be
A wider prison unto me:
No child—no sire—no kin had I,
No partner in my misery;
I thought of this, and I was glad,
For thought of them had made me mad;
But I was curious to ascend
To my barred windows, and to bend
Once more, upon the mountains high,
The quiet of a loving eye.

13

I saw them—and they were the same,
They were not changed like me in frame;
I saw their thousand years of snow
On high—their wide long lake below,
And the blue Rhone in fullest flow;
I heard the torrents leap and gush
O'er channelled rock and broken bush;
I saw the white-walled distant town,
And whiter sails go skimming down;
And then there was a little isle,[2]
Which in my very face did smile,
The only one in view;
A small green isle it seemed no more,
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor,
But in it there were three tall trees,
And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,
And by it there were waters flowing,
And on it there were young flowers growing,
Of gentle breath and hue.
The fish swam by the castle wall,
And they seemed joyous each and all;
The eagle rode the rising blast,

[2] Between the entrances of the Rhone and Villeneuve, not far from Chillon, is a very small island, the only one I could perceive in my voyage round and over the lake, within its circumference. It contains a few trees (I think not above three), and from its singleness and diminutive size has a peculiar effect upon the view.—Byron.

Methought he never flew so fast
As then to me he seemed to fly;
And then new tears came in my eye,
And I felt troubled—and would fain
I had not left my recent chain;
And when I did descend again,
The darkness of my dim abode
Fell on me as a heavy load;
It was as is a new-dug grave,
Closing o'er one we sought to save,—
And yet my glance, too much oppressed,
Had almost need of such a rest.

14

It might be months, or years, or days—
I kept no count—I took no note,
I had no hope my eyes to raise,
And clear them of their dreary mote;
At last men came to set me free;
I asked not why, and recked not where;
It was at length the same to me,
Fettered or fetterless to be,
I learned to love despair.
And thus when they appeared at last,
And all my bonds aside were cast,
These heavy walls to me had grown
A hermitage—and all my own!
And half I felt as they were come
To tear me from a second home:
With spiders I had friendship made,
And watched them in their sullen trade,
Had seen the mice by moonlight play,
And why should I feel less than they?
We were all inmates of one place,
And I, the monarch of each race,
Had power to kill—yet, strange to tell!
In quiet we had learned to dwell—
My very chains and I grew friends,
So much a long communion tends
To make us what we are:—even I
Regained my freedom with a sigh.

(1816)

Manfred

A DRAMATIC POEM

Manfred, the best of Byron's poetic dramas, was begun in the autumn of 1816 while he was in Switzerland, and published in June, 1817. The reviewer in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* greeted it with enthusiasm: "Lord Byron has been elected by acclamation to the throne of poetical supremacy; nor are we disposed to question his title to the crown. There breathes over all his genius an air of kingly dignity; strength, vigor, energy, are his attributes; and he wields his faculties with a proud consciousness of their power, and a confident anticipation of their effect. Living poets perhaps there are, who have taken a wider range, but none who have achieved such complete, such perfect triumph. In no great attempt has he ever failed. . . . To no poet was there ever given so awful a revelation of the passions of the human soul."

Various critics pointed out resemblances between *Manfred* and the treatment of the *Faust* story by Marlowe and Goethe. But Byron had never read Marlowe's play; and with Goethe's *Faust* (Part I) he was familiar only through hearing Matthew Lewis translate some of its passages aloud. "I was naturally much struck with it," he says, "but it was the *Staubach* and the *Jungfrau*, and something else, much more than Faustus, that made me write *Manfred*." Goethe himself was much impressed by the resemblance, but declared that even if his *Faust* had inspired *Manfred* the latter was certainly highly original.

If Childe Harold is like Werther, a sensitive soul who is crushed by life, Manfred is like the hero of *The Robbers* (cf. *above*), the strong man who fights. Though humanity is too petty for this Byronic hero to tolerate, his will is unbroken, and he chooses to remain in the gloomy solitude of the Alps. In search of self-oblivion, he rejects it from the hands of the Witch since the price is the surrender of his individuality. At his death, he desires no help, maintaining to the end his passionate egoism. Unlike Faust, he is never reconciled to existence. He is, in short, brother to most of the Byronic heroes, and with them holds locked within his bosom the secret of some dreadful earlier crime.

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

MANFRED.
CHAMOIS HUNTER.
ABBOT OF ST. MAURICE.
MANUEL.
HERMAN.
WITCH OF THE ALPS.
ARIMANES.
NEMESIS.
THE DESTINIES.
SPIRITS, &c.

The Scene of the Drama is amongst the Higher Alps—partly in the Castle of Manfred, and partly in the Mountains.

ACT I

SCENE I.—MANFRED *alone.—Scene, a Gothic Gallery. —Time, Midnight.*

MAN. The lamp must be replenish'd, but even then
It will not burn so long as I must watch:
My slumbers—if I slumber—are not sleep,
But a continuance of enduring thought,
Which then I can resist not: in my heart
There is a vigil, and these eyes but close
To look within; and yet I live, and bear
The aspect and the form of breathing men.
But grief should be the instructor of the wise;
Sorrow is knowledge: they who know the most
Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,
The Tree of Knowledge is not that of Life.[1]
Philosophy and science, and the springs
Of wonder, and the wisdom of the world,
I have essay'd, and in my mind there is
A power to make these subject to itself—
But they avail not: I have done men good,
And I have met with good even among men—
But this avail'd not: I have had my foes,
And none have baffled, many fallen before me—
But this avail'd not:—Good, or evil, life,
Powers, passions, all I see in other beings,
Have been to me as rain unto the sands,
Since that all-nameless hour. I have no dread,
And feel the curse to have no natural fear,
Nor fluttering throb, that beats with hopes or wishes,
Or lurking love of something on the earth.
Now to my task.—
Mysterious agency!
Ye spirits of the unbounded Universe!
Whom I have sought in darkness and in light—
Ye, who do compass earth about, and dwell
In subtler essence—ye, to whom the tops
Of mountains inaccessible are haunts,
And earth's and ocean's caves familiar things—
I call upon ye by the written charm
Which gives me power upon you— Rise! Appear!
[*A pause.*]
They come not yet.—Now by the voice of him
Who is the first among you—by this sign,
Which makes you tremble—by the claims of him
Who is undying,—Rise! Appear!—Appear!
[*A pause.*]
If it be so—Spirits of earth and air,
Ye shall not thus elude me: by a power,
Deeper than all yet urged, a tyrant-spell,
Which had its birthplace in a star condemn'd,
The burning wreck of a demolish'd world,
A wandering hell in the eternal space;
By the strong curse which is upon my soul,
The thought which is within me and around me,
I do compel ye to my will— Appear!
[*A star is seen at the darker end of the gallery: it is stationary; and a voice is heard singing.*]

FIRST SPIRIT

Mortal! to thy bidding bow'd,
From my mansion in the cloud,
Which the breath of twilight builds,
And the summer's sunset gilds
With the azure and vermilion,
Which is mix'd for my pavilion;
Though thy quest may be forbidden,
On a star-beam I have ridden:
To thine adjuration bow'd,
Mortal—be thy wish avow'd!

Voice of the SECOND SPIRIT

Mont Blanc is the monarch of mountains;
They crown'd him long ago
On a throne of rocks, in a robe of clouds,
With a diadem of snow.
Around his waist are forests braced,
The Avalanche in his hand;
But ere it fall, that thundering ball
Must pause for my command.
The Glacier's cold and restless mass

[1] The Garden of Eden had both the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life; cf. *Genesis*, II, 9 and 17.

Moves onward day by day;
But I am he who bids it pass,
Or with its ice delay.
I am the spirit of the place,
Could make the mountain bow
And quiver to his cavern'd base—
And what with me wouldst *Thou?*

Voice of the THIRD SPIRIT

In the blue depth of the waters,
Where the wave hath no strife,
Where the wind is a stranger,
And the sea-snake hath life,
Where the Mermaid is decking
Her green hair with shells,
Like the storm on the surface
Came the sound of thy spells;
O'er my calm Hall of Coral
The deep echo roll'd—
To the Spirit of Ocean
Thy wishes unfold!

FOURTH SPIRIT

Where the slumbering earthquake
Lies pillow'd on fire,
And the lakes of bitumen
Rise boilingly higher;
Where the roots of the Andes
Strike deep in the earth,
As their summits to heaven
Shoot soaringly forth;
I have quitted my birthplace,
Thy bidding to bide—
Thy spell hath subdued me,
Thy will be my guide!

FIFTH SPIRIT

I am the Rider of the wind,
The Stirrer of the storm;
The hurricane I left behind
Is yet with lightning warm;
To speed to thee, o'er shore and sea
I swept upon the blast:
The fleet I met sail'd well, and yet
'T will sink ere night be past.

SIXTH SPIRIT

My dwelling is the shadow of the night,
Why doth thy magic torture me with light?

SEVENTH SPIRIT

The star which rules thy destiny
Was ruled, ere earth began, by me:
It was a world as fresh and fair
As e'er revolved round sun in air;
Its course was free and regular,
Space bosom'd not a lovelier star.
The hour arrived—and it became
A wandering mass of shapeless flame,
A pathless comet, and a curse,
The menace of the universe;
Still rolling on with innate force,
Without a sphere, without a course,
A bright deformity on high,
The monster of the upper sky!
And thou! beneath its influence born—
Thou worm! whom I obey and scorn—
Forced by a power (which is not thine,
And lent thee but to make thee mine)
For this brief moment to descend,
Where these weak spirits round thee bend,
And parley with a thing like thee—
What wouldst thou, Child of Clay! with me?

The SEVEN SPIRITS

Earth, ocean, air, night, mountains, winds, thy star,
Are at thy beck and bidding, Child of Clay!
Before thee at thy quest their spirits are—
What wouldst thou with us, son of mortals—
say?

MAN. Forgetfulness——
FIRST SPIRIT. Of what—of whom—and why?
MAN. Of that which is within me; read it there—
Ye know it, and I cannot utter it.
SPIRIT. We can but give thee that which we possess:
Ask of us subjects, sovereignty, the power
O'er earth—the whole, or portion—or a sign
Which shall control the elements, whereof
We are the dominators,—each and all,
These shall be thine.
MAN. Oblivion, self-oblivion!
Can ye not wring from out the hidden realms
Ye offer so profusely what I ask?
SPIRIT. It is not in our essence, in our skill;
But—thou may'st die.
MAN. Will death bestow it on me?
SPIRIT. We are immortal, and do not forget;
We are eternal; and to us the past
Is, as the future, present. Art thou answer'd?

MAN. Ye mock me—but the power which brought ye here
Hath made you mine. Slaves, scoff not at my will!
The mind, the spirit, the Promethean spark,
The lightning of my being, is as bright,
Pervading, and far darting as your own,
And shall not yield to yours, though coop'd in clay!
Answer, or I will teach you what I am.
SPIRIT. We answer as we answer'd; our reply
Is even in thine own words.
MAN. Why say ye so?
SPIRIT. If as thou say'st, thine essence be as ours,
We have replied in telling thee, the thing
Mortals call death hath nought to do with us.
MAN. I then have call'd ye from your realms in vain!
Ye cannot, or ye will not, aid me.
SPIRIT. Say,
What we possess we offer; it is thine:
Bethink ere thou dismiss us; ask again;
Kingdom, and sway, and strength, and length of days——
MAN. Accursed! what have I to do with days?
They are too long already.—Hence—begone!
SPIRIT. Yet pause: being here, our will would do thee service;
Bethink thee, is there no other gift
Which we can make not worthless in thine eyes?
MAN. No, none: yet stay—one moment, ere we part,
I would behold ye face to face. I hear
Your voices, sweet and melancholy sounds,
As music on the waters; and I see
The steady aspect of a clear large star;
But nothing more. Approach me as ye are,
Or one, or all, in your accustom'd forms.
SPIRIT. We have no forms, beyond the elements
Of which we are the mind and principle:
But choose a form—in that we will appear.
MAN. I have no choice; there is no form on earth
Hideous or beautiful to me. Let him,
Who is most powerful of ye, take such aspect
As unto him may seem most fitting—Come!
SEVENTH SPIRIT [*appearing in the shape of a beautiful female figure*]. Behold!
MAN. Oh God! if it be thus, and *thou*
Art not a madness and a mockery,
I yet might be most happy. I will clasp thee,
And we again will be——
[*The figure vanishes.*]
My heart is crush'd!
[MANFRED *falls senseless.*]

(*A voice is heard in the Incantation which follows.*)
When the moon is on the wave,
And the glow-worm in the grass,
And the meteor on the grave,
And the wisp on the morass;
When the falling stars are shooting,
And the answer'd owls are hooting,
And the silent leaves are still
In the shadow of the hill,
Shall my soul be upon thine,
With a power and with a sign.

Though thy slumber may be deep,
Yet thy spirit shall not sleep;
There are shades which will not vanish,
There are thoughts thou canst not banish!
By a power to thee unknown,
Thou canst never be alone;
Thou art wrapt as with a shroud,
Thou art gather'd in a cloud;
And for ever shalt thou dwell
In the spirit of this spell.

Though thou seest me not pass by,
Thou shalt feel me with thine eye
As a thing that, though unseen,
Must be near thee, and hath been;
And when in that secret dread
Thou hast turn'd around thy head,
Thou shalt marvel I am not
As thy shadow on the spot,
And the power which thou dost feel
Shall be what thou must conceal.

And a magic voice and verse
Hath baptized thee with a curse;
And a spirit of the air
Hath begirt thee with a snare;
In the wind there is a voice
Shall forbid thee to rejoice;
And to thee shall night deny
All the quiet of her sky;
And the day shall have a sun,
Which shall make thee wish it done.

From thy false tears I did distil
An essence which hath strength to kill;
From thy own heart I then did wring
The black blood in its blackest spring;
From thy own smile I snatch'd the snake,
For there it coil'd as in a brake;
From thy own lip I drew the charm

Which gave all these their chiefest harm;
In proving every poison known,
I found the strongest was thine own.

By thy cold breast and serpent smile,
By thy unfathom'd gulfs of guile,
By that most seeming virtuous eye,
By thy shut soul's hypocrisy;
By the perfection of thine art
Which pass'd for human thine own heart;
By thy delight in others' pain,
And by thy brotherhood of Cain,[2]
I call upon thee! and compel
Thyself to be thy proper Hell!

And on thy head I pour the vial
Which doth devote thee to this trial;
Nor to slumber, nor to die,
Shall be in thy destiny;
Though thy death shall still seem near
To thy wish, but as a fear;
Lo! the spell now works around thee
And the clankless chain hath bound thee;
O'er thy heart and brain together
Hath the word been pass'd—now wither!

SCENE II.—*The Mountain of the Jungfrau.—Time, Morning.*—MANFRED *alone upon the Cliffs.*

MAN. The spirits I have raised abandon me,
The spells which I have studied baffle me,
The remedy I reck'd of tortured me;
I lean no more on superhuman aid;
It hath no power upon the past, and for
The future, till the past be gulf'd in darkness,
It is not of my search.—My mother Earth!
And thou fresh breaking Day, and you, ye Mountains.
Why are ye beautiful? I cannot love ye.
And thou, the bright eye of the universe,
That openest over all, and unto all
Art a delight—thou shin'st not on my heart.
And you, ye crags, upon whose extreme edge
I stand, and on the torrent's brink beneath
Behold the tall pines dwindled as to shrubs
In dizziness of distance; when a leap,
A stir, a motion, even a breath, would bring
My breast upon its rocky bosom's bed
To rest for ever—wherefore do I pause?
I feel the impulse—yet I do not plunge;
I see the peril—yet do not recede;
And my brain reels—and yet my foot is firm:
There is a power upon me which withholds,
And makes it my fatality to live,—
If it be life to wear within myself
This barrenness of spirit, and to be
My own soul's sepulchre, for I have ceased
To justify my deeds unto myself—
The last infirmity of evil. Ay,
Thou winged and cloud-cleaving minister,
[*An eagle passes.*]
Whose happy flight is highest into heaven,
Well may'st thou swoop so near me—I should be
Thy prey, and gorge thine eaglets; thou art gone
Where the eye cannot follow thee; but thine
Yet pierces downward, onward, or above,
With a pervading vision.—Beautiful!
How beautiful is all this visible world!
How glorious in its action and itself!
But we, who name ourselves its sovereigns, we,
Half dust, half deity, alike unfit
To sink or soar, with our mix'd essence make
A conflict of its elements, and breathe
The breath of degradation and of pride,
Contending with low wants and lofty will,
Till our mortality predominates,
And men are—what they name not to themselves,
And trust not to each other. Hark! the note,
[*The Shepherd's pipe in the distance is heard.*]
The natural music of the mountain reed ——
For here the patriarchal days are not
A pastoral fable—pipes in the liberal air,
Mix'd with the sweet bells of the sauntering herd;
My soul would drink those echoes. Oh, that I were
The viewless spirit of a lovely sound,
A living voice, a breathing harmony,
A bodiless enjoyment—born and dying,
With the blest tone which made me!

Enter from below a CHAMOIS HUNTER.

CHAMOIS HUNTER. Even so
This way the chamois leapt: her nimble feet
Have baffled me; my gains to-day will scarce
Repay my break-neck travail.—What is here?
Who seems not of my trade, and yet hath reach'd
A height which none even of our mountaineers,
Save our best hunters, may attain: his garb
Is goodly, his mien manly, and his air
Proud as a free-born peasant's, at this distance:
I will approach him nearer.

[2] the murderer of his brother, Abel. Since this was the first murder ever committed, Cain is the name used to typify murderers.

MAN. [*not perceiving the other*]. To be thus—
Grey-hair'd with anguish, like these blasted pines,
Wrecks of a single winter, barkless, branchless,
A blighted trunk upon a cursed root,
Which but supplies a feeling to decay—
And to be thus, eternally but thus,
Having been otherwise! Now furrow'd o'er
With wrinkles, plough'd by moments,—not by years,—
And hours, all tortured into ages—hours
Which I outlive!—Ye toppling crags of ice!
Ye avalanches, whom a breath draws down
In mountainous o'erwhelming, come and crush me!
I hear ye momently above, beneath,
Crash with a frequent conflict; but ye pass,
And only fall on things that still would live;
On the young flourishing forest, or the hut
And hamlet of the harmless villager.

C. HUN. The mists begin to rise from up the valley;
I'll warn him to descend, or he may chance
To lose at once his way and life together.

MAN. The mists boil up around the glaciers; clouds
Rise curling fast beneath me, white and sulphury,
Like foam from the roused ocean of deep Hell,
Whose every wave breaks on a living shore,
Heap'd with the damn'd like pebbles.—I am giddy.

C. HUN. I must approach him cautiously; if near,
A sudden step will startle him, and he
Seems tottering already.

MAN. Mountains have fallen,
Leaving a gap in the clouds, and with the shock
Rocking their Alpine brethren; filling up
The ripe green valleys with destruction's splinters;
Damming the rivers with a sudden dash,
Which crush'd the waters into mist and made
Their fountains find another channel—thus,
Thus, in its old age, did Mount Rosenberg—
Why stood I not beneath it?

C. HUN. Friend! have a care,
Your next step may be fatal!—for the love
Of him who made you, stand not on that brink!

MAN. [*not hearing him*]. Such would have been for me a fitting tomb;
My bones had then been quiet in their depth;
They had not then been strewn upon the rocks
For the wind's pastime—as thus—thus they shall be—
In this one plunge.—Farewell, ye opening heavens!
Look not upon me thus reproachfully—
You were not meant for me—Earth! take these atoms!

[*As* MANFRED *is in act to spring from the cliff, the* CHAMOIS HUNTER *seizes and retains him with a sudden grasp.*]

C. HUN. Hold, madman!—though aweary of thy life,
Stain not our pure vales with thy guilty blood:
Away with me——I will not quit my hold

MAN. I am most sick at heart—nay, grasp me not—
I am all feebleness—the mountains whirl
Spinning around me——I grow blind——What art thou?

C. HUN. I'll answer that anon. Away with me—
The clouds grow thicker—there—now lean on me—
Place your foot here—here, take this staff, and cling
A moment to that shrub—now give me your hand,
And hold fast by my girdle—softly—well—
The Chalet will be gain'd within an hour:
Come on, we'll quickly find a surer footing,
And something like a pathway, which the torrent
Hath wash'd since winter.—Come, 't is bravely done—
You should have been a hunter.—Follow me.

[*As they descend the rocks with difficulty, the scene closes.*]

ACT II

SCENE I.—*A Cottage amongst the Bernese Alps.* MANFRED *and the* CHAMOIS HUNTER.

C. HUN. No, no—yet pause—thou must not yet go forth:
Thy mind and body are alike unfit
To trust each other, for some hours, at least;
When thou art better, I will be thy guide—
But whither?

MAN. It imports not: I do know
My route full well, and need no further guidance.

C. HUN. Thy garb and gait bespeak thee of high lineage—
One of the many chiefs, whose castled crags
Look o'er the lower valleys—which of these
May call thee lord? I only know their portals;
My way of life leads me but rarely down
To bask by the huge hearths of those old halls,
Carousing with the vassals; but the paths,

Which step from out our mountains to their doors,
I know from childhood—which of these is thine?
MAN. No matter.
C. HUN. Well, sir, pardon me the question,
And be of better cheer. Come, taste my wine;
'T is of an ancient vintage; many a day
'T has thaw'd my veins among our glaciers, now
Let it do thus for thine— Come, pledge me fairly.
MAN. Away, away! there's blood upon the brim!
Will it then never—never sink in the earth?
C. HUN. What dost thou mean? thy senses wander from thee.
MAN. I say 't is blood—my blood! the pure warm stream
Which ran in the veins of my fathers, and in ours
When we were in our youth, and had one heart,
And loved each other as we should not love,
And this was shed: but still it rises up,
Coloring the clouds, that shut me out from heaven,
Where thou art not—and I shall never be.
C. HUN. Man of strange words, and some half-maddening sin,
Which makes thee people vacancy, whate'er
Thy dread and sufferance be, there's comfort yet—
The aid of holy men, and heavenly patience—
MAN. Patience and patience! Hence—that word was made
For brutes of burthen, not for birds of prey;
Preach it to mortals of a dust like thine,—
I am not of thine order.
C. HUN. Thanks to Heaven!
I would not be of thine for the free fame
Of William Tell;[3] but whatsoe'er thine ill,
It must be borne, and these wild starts are useless.
MAN. Do I not bear it?—Look on me—I live.
C. HUN. This is convulsion, and no healthful life.
MAN. I tell thee, man! I have lived many years,
Many long years, but they are nothing now
To those which I must number: ages—ages—
Space and eternity—and consciousness,
With the fierce thirst of death—and still unslaked!
C. HUN. Why, on thy brow the seal of middle age
Hath scarce been set; I am thine elder far.
MAN. Think'st thou existence doth depend on time?
It doth; but actions are our epochs: mine
Have made my days and nights imperishable,
Endless, and all alike, as sands on the shore,
Innumerable atoms; and one desert,
Barren and cold, on which the wild waves break,
But nothing rests, save carcasses and wrecks,
Rocks, and the salt-surf weeds of bitterness.
C. HUN. Alas! he's mad—but yet I must not leave him.
MAN. I would I were—for then the things I see
Would be but a distemper'd dread.
C. HUN. What is it
That thou dost see, or think thou look'st upon?
MAN. Myself, and thee—a peasant of the Alps—
Thy humble virtues, hospitable home,
And spirit patient, pious, proud, and free;
Thy self-respect, grafted on innocent thoughts;
Thy days of health, and nights of sleep; thy toils,
By danger dignified, yet guiltless; hopes
Of cheerful old age and a quiet grave,
With cross and garland over its green turf,
And thy grandchildren's love for epitaph;
This do I see—and then I look within—
It matters not—my soul was scorch'd already!
C. HUN. And wouldst thou then exchange thy lot for mine?
MAN. No, friend! I would not wrong thee, nor exchange
My lot with living being: I can bear—
However wretchedly, 't is still to bear—
In life what others could not brook to dream,
But perish in their slumber.
C. HUN. And with this—
This cautious feeling for another's pain,
Canst thou be black with evil?—say not so.
Can one of gentle thoughts have wreak'd revenge
Upon his enemies?
MAN. Oh! no, no, no!
My injuries came down on those who loved me—
On those whom I best loved: I never quell'd
An enemy, save in my just defence—
But my embrace was fatal.
C. HUN. Heaven give thee rest!
And penitence restore thee to thyself;
My prayers shall be for thee.
MAN. I need them not—
But can endure thy pity. I depart—
'T is time—farewell!—Here's gold, and thanks for thee—
No words—it is thy due.—Follow me not—
I know my path—the mountain peril's past:
And once again I charge thee, follow not!
[*Exit* MANFRED.

[3] one of the legendary heroes in the struggle for Swiss independence in the thirteenth century.

SCENE II.—*A lower Valley in the Alps.—A Cataract.*

Enter MANFRED.

It is not noon—the sunbow's rays still arch
The torrent with the many hues of heaven,
And roll the sheeted silver's waving column
O'er the crag's headlong perpendicular,
And fling its lines of foaming light along,
And to and fro, like the pale courser's tail,
The Giant steed, to be bestrode by Death,
As told in the Apocalypse. No eyes
But mine now drink this sight of loveliness;
I should be sole in this sweet solitude,
And with the Spirit of the place divide
The homage of these waters.—I will call her.

[MANFRED *takes some of the water into the palm of his hand, and flings it into the air, muttering the adjuration. After a pause, the Witch of the Alps rises beneath the arch of the sunbow of the torrent.*]

Beautiful Spirit! with thy hair of light,
And dazzling eyes of glory, in whose form
The charms of earth's least mortal daughters grow
To an unearthly stature, in an essence
Of purer elements; while the hues of youth,—
Carnation'd like a sleeping infant's cheek,
Rock'd by the beating of her mother's heart,
Or the rose tints, which summer's twilight leaves
Upon the lofty glacier's virgin snow,
The blush of earth embracing with her heaven,—
Tinge thy celestial aspect, and make tame
The beauties of the sunbow which bends o'er thee.
Beautiful Spirit! in thy calm clear brow,
Wherein is glass'd serenity of soul,
Which of itself shows immortality,
I read that thou wilt pardon to a Son
Of Earth, whom the abstruser powers permit
At times to commune with them—if that he
Avail him of his spells—to call thee thus,
And gaze on thee a moment.

WITCH. Son of Earth!
I know thee, and the powers which give thee power;
I know thee for a man of many thoughts,
And deeds of good and ill, extreme in both,
Fatal and fated in thy sufferings.
I have expected this—what wouldst thou with me?

MAN. To look upon thy beauty—nothing further.
The face of the earth hath madden'd me, and I
Take refuge in her mysteries, and pierce
To the abodes of those who govern her—
But they can nothing aid me. I have sought
From them what they could not bestow, and now
I search no further.

WITCH. What could be the quest
Which is not in the power of the most powerful,
The rulers of the invisible?

MAN. A boon;
But why should I repeat it? 't were in vain.

WITCH. I know not that; let thy lips utter it.

MAN. Well, though it torture me, 't is but the same;
My pang shall find a voice. From my youth upwards
My spirit walk'd not with the souls of men,
Nor look'd upon the earth with human eyes;
The thirst of their ambition was not mine,
The aim of their existence was not mine;
My joys, my griefs, my passions, and my powers,
Made me a stranger; though I wore the form,
I had no sympathy with breathing flesh,
Nor midst the creatures of clay that girded me
Was there but one who—but of her anon.
I said with men, and with the thoughts of men,
I held but slight communion; but instead,
My joy was in the wilderness,—to breathe
The difficult air of the iced mountain's top,
Where the birds dare not build, nor insect's wing
Flit o'er the herbless granite; or to plunge
Into the torrent, and to roll along
On the swift whirl of the new breaking wave
Of river-stream, or ocean, in their flow.
In these my early strength exulted; or
To follow through the night the moving moon,
The stars and their development; or catch
The dazzling lightnings till my eyes grew dim;
Or to look, list'ning, on the scatter'd leaves,
While Autumn winds were at their evening song.
These were my pastimes, and to be alone;
For if the beings, of whom I was one,—
Hating to be so,—cross'd me in my path,
I felt myself degraded back to them,
And was all clay again. And then I dived,
In my lone wanderings, to the caves of death,
Searching its cause in its effect; and drew
From wither'd bones, and skulls, and heap'd up dust,
Conclusions most forbidden. Then I pass'd
The nights of years in sciences untaught,
Save in the old time; and with time and toil,
And terrible ordeal, and such penance
As in itself hath power upon the air,
And spirits that do compass air and earth.
Space, and the peopled infinite, I made

Mine eyes familiar with Eternity,
Such as, before me, did the Magi, and
He who from out their fountain dwellings raised
Eros and Anteros, at Gadara,[4]
As I do thee;—and with my knowledge grew
The thirst of knowledge, and the power and joy
Of this most bright intelligence, until—
WITCH. Proceed.
MAN. Oh! I but thus prolong'd my words,
Boasting these idle attributes, because
As I approach the core of my heart's grief—
But to my task. I have not named to thee
Father or mother, mistress, friend, or being,
With whom I wore the chain of human ties;
If I had such, they seem'd not such to me;
Yet there was one—
WITCH. Spare not thyself—proceed.
MAN. She was like me in lineaments; her eyes,
Her hair, her features, all, to the very tone
Even of her voice, they said were like to mine;
But soften'd all, and temper'd into beauty;
She had the same lone thoughts and wanderings,
The quest of hidden knowledge, and a mind
To comprehend the universe: nor these
Alone, but with them gentler powers than mine,
Pity, and smiles, and tears—which I had not;
And tenderness—but that I had for her;
Humility—and that I never had.
Her faults were mine—her virtues were her own—
I loved her, and destroy'd her!
WITCH. With thy hand?
MAN. Not with my hand, but heart, which broke her heart;
It gazed on mine, and wither'd. I have shed
Blood, but not hers—and yet her blood was shed;
I saw—and could not stanch it.
WITCH. And for this—
A being of the race thou dost despise,
The order, which thine own would rise above,
Mingling with us and ours,—thou dost forego
The gifts of our great knowledge, and shrink'st back
To recreant mortality—— Away!
MAN. Daughter of Air! I tell thee, since that hour—
But words are breath—look on me in my sleep,
Or watch my watchings— Come and sit by me!
My solitude is solitude no more,
But peopled with the Furies;—I have gnash'd
My teeth in darkness till returning morn,
Then cursed myself till sunset;—I have pray'd
For madness as a blessing—'tis denied me.
I have affronted death—but in the war
Of elements the waters shrunk from me,
And fatal things pass'd harmless; the cold hand
Of an all-pitiless demon held me back,
Back by a single hair, which would not break
In fantasy, imagination, all
The affluence of my soul—which one day was
A Crœsus[5] in creation—I plunged deep,
But, like an ebbing wave, it dash'd me back
Into the gulf of my unfathom'd thought.
I plunged amidst mankind— Forgetfulness
I sought in all, save where 't is to be found,
And that I have to learn; my sciences,
My long-pursued and superhuman art,
Is mortal here: I dwell in my despair—
And live—and live for ever.
WITCH. It may be
That I can aid thee.
MAN. To do this thy power
Must wake the dead, or lay me low with them.
Do so—in any shape—in any hour—
With any torture—so it be the last.
WITCH. That is not in my province; but if thou
Wilt swear obedience to my will, and do
My bidding, it may help thee to thy wishes.
MAN. I will not swear— Obey! and whom? the spirits
Whose presence I command, and be the slave
Of those who served me— Never!
WITCH. Is this all?
Hast thou no gentler answer?—Yet bethink thee,
And pause ere thou rejectest.
MAN. I have said it.
WITCH. Enough! I may retire then—say!
MAN. Retire!
MAN. [*alone*]. We are the fools of time and terror: Days
Steal on us, and steal from us; yet we live,
Loathing our life, and dreading still to die.
In all the days of this detested yoke—
This vital weight upon the struggling heart,
Which sinks with sorrow, or beats quick with pain,
Or joy that ends in agony or faintness—
In all the days of past and future, for
In life there is no present, we can number
How few—how less than few—wherein the soul
Forbears to pant for death, and yet draws back
As from a stream in winter, though the chill

[4] an ancient city in Syria. This refers to an experience of the Neoplatonic philosopher, Iamblichus (d. 330 A.D.?).

[5] King of Lydia (sixth century B.C.), proverbial for his wealth.

Be but a moment's. I have one resource
Still in my science—I can call the dead,
And ask them what it is we dread to be:
The sternest answer can but be the Grave,
And that is nothing. If they answer not——
The buried Prophet answered to the Hag
Of Endor;[6] and the Spartan Monarch[7] drew
From the Byzantine maid's unsleeping spirit
An answer and his destiny—he slew
That which he loved, unknowing what he slew,
And died unpardon'd—though he call'd in aid
The Phyxian Jove, and in Phigalia roused
The Arcadian Evocators to compel
The indignant shadow to depose her wrath,
Or fix her term of vengeance—she replied
In words of dubious import, but fulfill'd.
If I had never lived, that which I love
Had still been living; had I never loved,
That which I love would still be beautiful,
Happy and giving happiness. What is she?
What is she now?—a sufferer for my sins—
A thing I dare not think upon—or nothing.
Within few hours I shall not call in vain—
Yet in this hour I dread the thing I dare:
Until this hour I never shrunk to gaze
On spirit, good or evil—now I tremble,
And feel a strange cold thaw upon my heart.
But I can act even what I most abhor,
And champion human fears.—The night approaches. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*The Summit of the Jungfrau Mountain.*

Enter FIRST DESTINY.

The moon is rising broad, and round, and bright;
And here on snows, where never human foot
Of common mortal trod, we nightly tread,
And leave no traces: o'er the savage sea,
The glassy ocean of the mountain ice,
We skim its rugged breakers, which put on
The aspect of a tumbling tempest's foam,
Frozen in a moment—a dead whirlpool's image:
And this most steep fantastic pinnacle,
The fretwork of some earthquake—where the clouds
Pause to repose themselves in passing by—
Is sacred to our revels, or our vigils;
Here do I wait my sisters, on our way
To the Hall of Arimanes,[8] for to-night
Is our great festival—'t is strange they come not.

A Voice without, singing.

The Captive Usurper,
Hurl'd down from the throne,
Lay buried in torpor,
Forgotten and lone;
I broke through his slumbers,
I shiv'rd his chain,
I leagued him with numbers—
He's Tyrant again!
With the blood of a million he'll answer my care,
With a nation's destruction—his flight and despair.

Second Voice, without.

The ship sail'd on, the ship sail'd fast,
But I left not a sail, and I left not a mast;
There is not a plank of the hull or the deck,
And there is not a wretch to lament o'er his wreck;
Save one, whom I held, as he swam, by the hair,
And he was a subject well worthy my care;
A traitor on land, and a pirate at sea—
But I saved him to wreak further havoc for me!

FIRST DESTINY, *answering.*

The city lies sleeping;
The morn, to deplore it,
May dawn on it weeping:
Sullenly, slowly,
The black plague flew o'er it—
Thousands lie lowly;
Tens of thousands shall perish;
The living shall fly from
The sick they should cherish;
But nothing can vanquish
The touch that they die from.
Sorrow and anguish,
And evil and dread,
Envelop a nation;
The blest are the dead,
Who see not the sight
Of their own desolation;

[6] whom King Saul consulted just before his last battle with the Philistines.

[7] Pausanias murdered the virgin Cleonice by mistake in the night, thinking she was an enemy. He was haunted by her image until at Heraclea he invoked her spirit and obtained information that he would soon be delivered from all his troubles, after his return to Sparta. The oracle was fulfilled by death.

[8] See Scene IV.

This work of a night—
This wreck of a realm—this deed of my doing—
For ages I've done, and shall still be renewing!

Enter the SECOND *and* THIRD DESTINIES.

THE THREE

Our hands contain the hearts of men,
Our footsteps are their graves;
We only give to take again
The spirits of our slaves!

FIRST DES. Welcome!—Where's Nemesis?

SECOND DES. At some great work;
But what I know not, for my hands were full.

THIRD DES. Behold she cometh.

Enter NEMESIS.

FIRST DES. Say, where hast thou been?
My sisters and thyself are slow to-night.

NEM. I was detain'd repairing shatter'd thrones,
Marrying fools, restoring dynasties,
Avenging men upon their enemies,
And making them repent their own revenge;
Goading the wise to madness; from the dull
Shaping out oracles to rule the world
Afresh, for they were waxing out of date,
And mortals dared to ponder for themselves,
To weigh kings in the balance, and to speak
Of freedom, the forbidden fruit.—Away!
We have outstay'd the hour—mount we our clouds!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*The Hall of Arimanes—Arimanes on his Throne, a Globe of Fire, surrounded by the Spirits.*

Hymn of the SPIRITS.

Hail to our Master! Prince of Earth and Air!
Who walks the clouds and waters—in his hand
The sceptre of the elements, which tear
Themselves to chaos at his high command!
He breatheth—and a tempest shakes the sea;
He speaketh—and the clouds reply in thunder;
He gazeth—from his glance the sunbeams flee;
He moveth—earthquakes rend the world asunder.
Beneath his footsteps the volcanoes rise;
His shadow is the Pestilence; his path
The comets herald through the crackling skies;
And planets turn to ashes at his wrath.
To him War offers daily sacrifice;
To him Death pays his tribute; Life is his,
With all its infinite of agonies—
And his the spirit of whatever is!

Enter the DESTINIES *and* NEMESIS.

FIRST DES. Glory to Arimanes! on the earth
His power increaseth—both my sisters did
His bidding, nor did I neglect my duty!

SECOND DES. Glory to Arimanes! we who bow
The necks of men, bow down before his throne!

THIRD DES. Glory to Arimanes! we await
His nod!

NEM. Sovereign of Sovereigns! we are thine.
And all that liveth, more or less, is ours,
And most things wholly so; still to increase
Our power, increasing thine, demands our care,
And we are vigilant. Thy late commands
Have been fulfill'd to the utmost.

Enter MANFRED.

A SPIRIT. What is here?
A mortal!—Thou most rash and fatal wretch,
Bow down and worship!

SECOND SPIRIT. I do know the man—
A Magician of great power, and fearful skill!

THIRD SPIRIT. Bow down and worship, slave!—
What, know'st thou not
Thine and our Sovereign?—Tremble, and obey!

ALL THE SPIRITS. Prostrate thyself, and thy condemned clay,
Child of the Earth! or dread the worst.

MAN. I know it;
And yet ye see I kneel not.

FOURTH SPIRIT. 'T will be taught thee.

MAN. 'T is taught already;—many a night on the earth,
On the bare ground, have I bow'd down my face,
And strew'd my head with ashes; I have known
The fulness of humiliation, for
I sunk before my vain despair, and knelt
To my own desolation.

FIFTH SPIRIT. Dost thou dare
Refuse to Arimanes on his throne
What the whole earth accords, beholding not
The terror of his glory?—Crouch, I say.

MAN. Bid *him* bow down to that which is above him,
The overruling Infinite—the Maker
Who made him not for worship—let him kneel,
And we will kneel together.

THE SPIRITS. Crush the worm!

Tear him in pieces!—
FIRST DES. Hence! Avaunt!—he's mine.
Prince of the Powers invisible! This man
Is of no common order, as his port
And presence here denote; his sufferings
Have been of an immortal nature, like
Our own; his knowledge, and his powers and will,
As far as is compatible with clay,
Which clogs the ethereal essence, have been such
As clay hath seldom borne; his aspirations
Have been beyond the dwellers of the earth,
And they have only taught him what we know—
That knowledge is not happiness, and science
But an exchange of ignorance for that
Which is another kind of ignorance.
This is not all—the passions, attributes
Of earth and heaven, from which no power, nor being,
Nor breath from the worm upwards is exempt,
Have pierced his heart, and in their consequence
Made him a thing which I, who pity not,
Yet pardon those who pity. He is mine,
And thine, it may be; be it so, or not,
No other Spirit in this region hath
A soul like his—or power upon his soul.
NEM. What doth he here then?
FIRST DES. Let him answer that.
MAN. Ye know what I have known; and without power
I could not be amongst ye: but there are
Powers deeper still beyond—I come in quest
Of such, to answer unto what I seek.
NEM. What wouldst thou?
MAN. Thou canst not reply to me.
Call up the dead—my question is for them.
NEM. Great Arimanes, doth thy will avouch
The wishes of this mortal?
ARI. Yea.
NEM. Whom wouldst thou
Uncharnel?
MAN. One without a tomb—call up
Astarte.

NEMESIS.

Shadow! or Spirit!
Whatever thou art,
Which still doth inherit
The whole or a part
Of the form of thy birth,
Of the mould of thy clay,
Which return'd to the earth,
Re-appear to the day!
Bear what thou borest,
The heart and the form,
And the aspect thou worest
Redeem from the worm.
Appear!—Appear!—Appear!
Who sent thee there requires thee here!

[*The Phantom of* ASTARTE *rises and stands in the midst.*]

MAN. Can this be death? there's bloom upon her cheek;
But now I see it is no living hue,
But a strange hectic—like the unnatural red
Which Autumn plants upon the perish'd leaf.
It is the same! Oh, God! that I should dread
To look upon the same—Astarte!—No,
I cannot speak to her—but bid her speak—
Forgive me or condemn me.

NEMESIS.

By the power which hath broken
The grave which enthrall'd thee,
Speak to him who hath spoken,
Or those who have call'd thee!
MAN. She is silent,
And in that silence I am more than answer'd.
NEM. My power extends no further. Prince of Air!
It rests with thee alone—command her voice.
ARI. Spirit—obey this sceptre!
NEM. Silent still!
She is not of our order, but belongs
To the other powers. Mortal! thy quest is vain,
And we are baffled also.
MAN. Hear me, hear me—
Astarte! my beloved! speak to me:
I have so much endured—so much endure—
Look on me! the grave hath not changed thee more
Than I am changed for thee. Thou lovedst me
Too much, as I loved thee: we were not made
To torture thus each other, though it were
The deadliest sin to love as we have loved.
Say that thou loath'st me not—that I do bear
This punishment for both—that thou wilt be
One of the blessed—and that I shall die;
For hitherto all hateful things conspire
To bind me in existence—in a life
Which makes me shrink from immortality—
A future like the past. I cannot rest.

I know not what I ask, nor what I seek:
I feel but what thou art, and what I am;
And I would hear yet once before I perish
The voice which was my music—Speak to me!
For I have call'd on thee in the still night,
Startled the slumbering birds from the hush'd boughs,
And woke the mountain wolves, and made the caves
Acquainted with thy vainly echoed name,
Which answer'd me—many things answer'd me—
Spirits and men—but thou wert silent all.
Yet speak to me! I have outwatch'd the stars,
And gazed o'er heaven in vain in search of thee.
Speak to me! I have wander'd o'er the earth,
And never found thy likeness—Speak to me!
Look on the fiends around—they feel for me:
I fear them not, and feel for thee alone—
Speak to me! though it be in wrath;—but say—
I reck not what—but let me hear thee once—
This once—once more!

PHANTOM OF ASTARTE. Manfred!

MAN. Say on, say on—
I live but in the sound—it is thy voice!

PHAN. Manfred! To-morrow ends thine earthly ills.
Farewell!

MAN. Yet one word more—am I forgiven?

PHAN. Farewell!

MAN. Say, shall we meet again?

PHAN. Farewell!

MAN. One word for mercy! Say, thou lovest me.

PHAN. Manfred!

[*The Spirit of* ASTARTE *disappears.*]

NEM. She's gone, and will not be recall'd;
Her words will be fulfill'd. Return to the earth.

A SPIRIT. He is convulsed.—This is to be a mortal
And seek the things beyond mortality.

ANOTHER SPIRIT. Yet, see, he mastereth himself, and makes
His torture tributary to his will.
Had he been one of us, he would have made
An awful spirit.

NEM. Hast thou further question
Of our great sovereign, or his worshippers?

MAN. None.

NEM. Then for a time farewell.

MAN. We meet then! Where? On the earth?—
Even as thou wilt: and for the grace accorded
I now depart a debtor. Fare ye well!

[*Exit* MANFRED.

[*Scene closes.*]

ACT III

SCENE I.—*A Hall in the Castle of Manfred.*

MANFRED *and* HERMAN.

MAN. What is the hour?

HER. It wants but one till sunset
And promises a lovely twilight.

MAN. Say,
Are all things so disposed of in the tower
As I directed?

HER. All, my lord, are ready:
Here is the key and casket.

MAN. It is well:
Thou may'st retire.

[*Exit* HERMAN.

MAN. [*alone*]. There is a calm upon me—
Inexplicable stillness! which till now
Did not belong to what I knew of life.
If that I did not know philosophy
To be of all our vanities the motliest,
The merest word that ever fool'd the ear
From out the schoolman's jargon, I should deem
The golden secret, the sought "Kalon,"[9] found,
And seated in my soul. It will not last,
But it is well to have known it, though but once;
It hath enlarged my thoughts with a new sense,
And I within my tablets would note down
That there is such a feeling. Who is there?

Re-enter HERMAN.

HER. My lord, the abbot of St. Maurice craves
To greet your presence.

Enter the ABBOT OF ST. MAURICE.

ABBOT. Peace be with Count Manfred!

MAN. Thanks, holy father! welcome to these walls;
Thy presence honors them, and blesseth those
Who dwell within them.

ABBOT. Would it were so, Count!—
But I would fain confer with thee alone.

MAN. Herman, retire.—What would my reverend guest?

ABBOT. Thus, without prelude:—Age and zeal, my office,
And good intent, must plead my privilege;
Our near, though not acquainted neighborhood,
May also be my herald. Rumors strange,
And of unholy nature, are abroad,

[9] the beautiful, the highest good.

And busy with thy name; a noble name
For centuries: may he who bears it now
Transmit it unimpair'd!
MAN. Proceed,—I listen.
ABBOT. 'T is said thou holdest converse with the things
Which are forbidden to the search of man;
That with the dwellers of the dark abodes,
The many evil and unheavenly spirits
Which walk the valley of the shade of death,
Thou communest. I know that with mankind,
Thy fellows in creation, thou dost rarely
Exchange thy thoughts, and that thy solitude
Is as an anchorite's, were it but holy.
MAN. And what are they who do avouch these things?
ABBOT. My pious brethren—the scared peasantry—
Even thy own vassals—who do look on thee
With most unquiet eyes. Thy life's in peril.
MAN. Take it.
ABBOT. I come to save, and not destroy:
I would not pry into thy secret soul;
But if these things be sooth, there still is time
For penitence and pity: reconcile thee
With the true church, and through the church to heaven.
MAN. I hear thee. This is my reply: whate'er
I may have been, or am, doth rest between
Heaven and myself. I shall not choose a mortal
To be my mediator. Have I sinn'd
Against your ordinances? prove and punish!
ABBOT. My son! I did not speak of punishment,
But penitence and pardon;—with thyself
The choice of such remains—and for the last,
Our institutions and our strong belief
Have given me power to smooth the path from sin
To higher hope and better thoughts; the first
I leave to heaven,—"Vengeance is mine alone!"
So saith the Lord, and with all humbleness
His servant echoes back the awful word.
MAN. Old man! there is no power in holy men,
Nor charm in prayer, nor purifying form
Of penitence, nor outward look, nor fast,
Nor agony—nor, greater than all these,
The innate tortures of that deep despair,
Which is remorse without the fear of hell,
But all in all sufficient to itself
Would make a hell of heaven—can exorcise
From out the unbounded spirit the quick sense
Of its own sins, wrongs, sufferance, and revenge
Upon itself; there is no future pang
Can deal that justice on the self-condemn'd
He deals on his own soul.
ABBOT. All this is well;
For this will pass away, and be succeeded
By an auspicious hope, which shall look up
With calm assurance to that blessed place,
Which all who seek may win, whatever be
Their earthly errors, so they be atoned:
And the commencement of atonement is
The sense of its necessity. Say on—
And all our church can teach thee shall be taught;
And all we can absolve thee shall be pardon'd.
MAN. When Rome's sixth emperor was near his last,
The victim of a self-inflicted wound,
To shun the torments of a public death
From senates once his slaves, a certain soldier,
With show of loyal pity, would have stanch'd
The gushing throat with his officious robe;
The dying Roman thrust him back, and said—
Some empire still in his expiring glance—
"It is too late—is this fidelity?"
ABBOT. And what of this?
MAN. I answer with the Roman—
"It is too late!"
ABBOT. It never can be so,
To reconcile thyself with thy own soul,
And thy own soul with heaven. Hast thou no hope?
'T is strange—even those who do despair above,
Yet shape themselves some fantasy on earth,
To which frail twig they cling, like drowning men.
MAN. Ay—father! I have had those earthly visions,
And noble aspirations in my youth,
To make my own the mind of other men,
The enlightener of nations; and to rise
I knew not whither—it might be to fall;
But fall, even as the mountain-cataract,
Which having leapt from its more dazzling height,
Even in the foaming strength of its abyss,
(Which casts up misty columns that become
Clouds raining from the re-ascended skies,)
Lies low but mighty still.—But this is past,
My thoughts mistook themselves.
ABBOT. And wherefore so?
MAN. I could not tame my nature down; for he
Must serve who fain would sway; and soothe, and sue,
And watch all time, and pry into all place,
And be a living lie, who would become
A mighty thing amongst the mean, and such
The mass are; I disdain'd to mingle with
A herd, though to be leader—and of wolves.
The lion is alone, and so am I.

ABBOT. And why not live and act with other men?
MAN. Because my nature was averse from life;
And yet not cruel; for I would not make,
But find a desolation. Like the wind,
The red-hot breath of the most lone simoom,
Which dwells but in the desert, and sweeps o'er
The barren sands which bear no shrubs to blast,
And revels o'er their wild and arid waves,
And seeketh not, so that it is not sought,
But being met is deadly,—such hath been
The course of my existence; but there came
Things in my path which are no more.
ABBOT. Alas!
I 'gin to fear that thou art past all aid
From me and from my calling; yet so young,
I still would——
MAN. Look on me! there is an order
Of mortals on the earth, who do become
Old in their youth, and die ere middle age,
Without the violence of warlike death;
Some perishing of pleasure, some of study,
Some worn with toil, some of mere weariness,
Some of disease, and some insanity,
And some of wither'd or of broken hearts;
For this last is a malady which slays
More than are number'd in the lists of Fate,
Taking all shapes, and bearing many names.
Look upon me! for even of all these things
Have I partaken; and of all these things,
One were enough; then wonder not that I
Am what I am, but that I ever was,
Or having been, that I am still on earth.
ABBOT. Yet, hear me still——
MAN. Old man! I do respect
Thine order, and revere thine years; I deem
Thy purpose pious, but it is in vain:
Think me not churlish; I would spare thyself,
Far more than me, in shunning at this time
All further colloquy—and so—farewell.
[*Exit* MANFRED.
ABBOT. This should have been a noble creature: he
Hath all the energy which would have made
A goodly frame of glorious elements,
Had they been wisely mingled; as it is,
It is an awful chaos—light and darkness,
And mind and dust, and passions and pure thoughts
Mix'd, and contending without end or order,—
All dormant or destructive: he will perish,
And yet he must not; I will try once more.
For such are worth redemption; and my duty
Is to dare all things for a righteous end.
I 'll follow him—but cautiously, though surely.

SCENE II.—*Another Chamber.*

MANFRED *and* HERMAN.

HER. My lord, you bade me wait on you at sunset:
He sinks behind the mountain.
MAN. Doth he so?
I will look on him. [MANFRED *advances to the Window of the Hall.*]
Glorious Orb! the idol
Of early nature, and the vigorous race
Of undiseased mankind, the giant sons
Of the embrace of angels, with a sex
More beautiful than they, which did draw down
The erring spirits who can ne'er return.—
Most glorious orb! that wert a worship, ere
The mystery of thy making was reveal'd!
Thou earliest minister of the Almighty,
Which gladden'd, on their mountain tops, the hearts
Of the Chaldean shepherds, till they pour'd
Themselves in orisons! Thou material God!
And representative of the Unknown—
Who chose thee for his shadow! Thou chief star!
Centre of many stars! which mak'st our earth
Endurable, and temperest the hues
And hearts of all who walk within thy rays!
Sire of the seasons! Monarch of the climes,
And those who dwell in them! for near or far,
Our inborn spirits have a tint of thee
Even as our outward aspects;—thou dost rise,
And shine, and set in glory. Fare thee well!
I ne'er shall see thee more. As my first glance
Of love and wonder was for thee, then take
My latest look; thou wilt not beam on one
To whom the gifts of life and warmth have been
Of a more fatal nature. He is gone:
I follow.
[*Exit* MANFRED.

SCENE III.—*The Mountains—The Castle of Manfred at some distance.—A Terrace before a Tower—Time, Twilight.*

HERMAN, MANUEL, *and other Dependants of* MANFRED.

HER. 'T is strange enough; night after night, for years,
He hath pursued long vigils in this tower,
Without a witness. I have been within it,—
So have we all been oft-times; but from it,

Or its contents, it were impossible
To draw conclusions absolute, of aught
His studies tend to. To be sure, there is
One chamber where none enter: I would give
The fee of what I have to come these three years,
To pore upon its mysteries.
MANUEL. 'T were dangerous;
Content thyself with what thou know'st already.
HER. Ah. Manuel! thou art elderly and wise,
And couldst say much; thou hast dwelt within the castle—
How many years is 't?
MANUEL. Ere Count Manfred's birth,
I served his father, whom he nought resembles.
HER. There be more sons in like predicament.
But wherein do they differ?
MANUEL. I speak not
Of features or of form, but mind and habits;
Count Sigismund was proud, but gay and free,—
A warrior and a reveller; he dwelt not
With books and solitude, nor made the night
A gloomy vigil, but a festal time,
Merrier than day; he did not walk the rocks
And forests like a wolf, nor turn aside
From men and their delights.
HER. Beshrew the hour,
But those were jocund times! I would that such
Would visit the old walls again; they look
As if they had forgotten them.
MANUEL. These walls
Must change their chieftain first. Oh! I have seen
Some strange things in them, Herman.
HER. Come, be friendly;
Relate me some to while away our watch:
I've heard thee darkly speak of an event
Which happen'd hereabouts, by this same tower.
MANUEL. That was a night indeed! I do remember
'T was twilight, as it may be now, and such
Another evening;—yon red cloud, which rests
On Eigher's pinnacle, so rested then,—
So like that it might be the same; the wind
Was faint and gusty, and the mountain snows
Began to glitter with the climbing moon;
Count Manfred was, as now, within his tower,—
How occupied, we knew not, but with him
The sole companion of his wanderings
And watchings—her, whom of all earthly things
That lived, the only thing he seem'd to love,—
As he, indeed, by blood was bound to do,
The lady, Astarte, his—
Hush! who comes here?

Enter the ABBOT.

ABBOT. Where is your master?
HER. Yonder in the tower
ABBOT. I must speak with him.
MANUEL. 'T is impossible;
He is most private, and must not be thus
Intruded on.
ABBOT. Upon myself I take
The forfeit of my fault, if fault there be—
But I must see him.
HER. Thou hast seen him once
This eve already.
ABBOT. Herman! I command thee,
Knock, and apprize the Count of my approach.
HER. We dare not.
ABBOT. Then it seems I must be herald
Of my own purpose.
MANUEL. Reverend father, stop—
I pray you pause.
ABBOT. Why so?
MANUEL. But step this way,
And I will tell you further.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Interior of the Tower.*

MANFRED *alone.*

The stars are forth, the moon above the tops
Of the snow-shining mountains.—Beautiful!
I linger yet with Nature, for the Night
Hath been to me a more familiar face
Than that of man; and in her starry shade
Of dim and solitary loveliness,
I learn'd the language of another world.
I do remember me, that in my youth,
When I was wandering,—upon such a night
I stood within the Coliseum's wall,
'Midst the chief relics of almighty Rome;
The trees which grew along the broken arches
Waved dark in the blue midnight, and the stars
Shone through the rents of ruin; from afar
The watch-dog bay'd beyond the Tiber; and
More near from out the Cæsars' palace came
The owl's long cry, and, interruptedly,
Of distant sentinels the fitful song
Begun and died upon the gentle wind.
Some cypresses beyond the time-worn breach
Appear'd to skirt the horizon, yet they stood
Within a bowshot. Where the Cæsars dwelt,
And dwell the tuneless birds of night, amidst

A grove which springs through levell'd battlements,
And twines its roots with the imperial hearths,
Ivy usurps the laurel's place of growth;
But the gladiators' bloody Circus stands,
A noble wreck in ruinous perfection,
While Cæsar's chambers, and the Augustan halls,
Grovel on earth in indistinct decay.
And thou didst shine, thou rolling moon, upon
All this, and cast a wide and tender light,
Which soften'd down the hoar austerity
Of rugged desolation, and fill'd up,
As 't were anew, the gaps of centuries;
Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
And making that which was not, till the place
Became religion, and the heart ran o'er
With silent worship of the great of old,—
The dead but sceptred sovereigns, who still rule
Our spirits from their urns.
'T was such a night!
'T is strange that I recall it at this time;
But I have found our thoughts take wildest flight
Even at the moment when they should array
Themselves in pensive order.

Enter the Abbot.

Abbot. My good lord!
I crave a second grace for this approach:
But yet let not my humble zeal offend
By its abruptness—all it hath of ill
Recoils on me; its good in the effect
May light upon your head—could I say *heart*—
Could I touch *that*, with words or prayers, I should
Recall a noble spirit which hath wander'd;
But is not yet all lost.
Man. Thou know'st me not;
My days are number'd, and my deeds recorded:
Retire, or 't will be dangerous—Away!
Abbot. Thou dost not mean to menace me?
Man. Not I;
I simply tell thee peril is at hand,
And would preserve thee.
Abbot. What dost thou mean?
Man. Look there!
What dost thou see?
Abbot. Nothing.
Man. Look there I say,
And stedfastly;—now tell me what thou seest?
Abbot. That which should shake me, but I fear it not:
I see a dusk and awful figure rise,
Like an infernal god, from out the earth;
His face wrapt in a mantle, and his form
Robed as with angry clouds: he stands between
Thyself and me—but I do fear him not.
Man. Thou hast no cause—he shall not harm thee—but
His sight may shock thine old limbs into palsy.
I say to thee—Retire!
Abbot. And I reply—
Never—till I have battled with this fiend:—
What doth he here?
Man. Why—ay—what doth he here?
I did not send for him,—he is unbidden.
Abbot. Alas! lost mortal! what with guests like these
Hast thou to do? I tremble for thy sake:
Why doth he gaze on thee, and thou on him?
Ah! he unveils his aspect: on his brow
The thunder-scars are graven: from his eye
Glares forth the immortality of hell—
Avaunt!—
Man. Pronounce—what is thy mission?
Spirit. Come!
Abbot. What art thou, unknown being? answer!—speak!
Spirit. The genius of this mortal.—Come! 't is time.
Man. I am prepared for all things, but deny
The power which summons me. Who sent thee here?
Spirit. Thou'lt know anon— Come! come!
Man. I have commanded
Things of an essence greater far than thine,
And striven with thy masters. Get thee hence!
Spirit. Mortal! thine hour is come— Away! I say.
Man. I knew, and know my hour is come, but not
To render up my soul to such as thee:
Away! I'll die as I have lived—alone.
Spirit. Then I must summon up my brethren.—Rise! [*Other Spirits rise up.*]
Abbot. Avaunt! ye evil ones!—Avaunt! I say;
Ye have no power where piety hath power,
And I do charge ye in the name——
Spirit. Old man!
We know ourselves, our mission, and thine order;
Waste not thy holy words on idle uses,
It were in vain: this man is forfeited.
Once more I summon him—Away, Away!
Man. I do defy ye,—though I feel my soul
Is ebbing from me, yet I do defy ye;
Nor will I hence, while I have earthly breath
To breathe my scorn upon ye—earthly strength

To wrestle, though with spirits; what ye take
Shall be ta'en limb by limb.
SPIRIT. Reluctant mortal!
Is this the Magian who would so pervade
The world invisible, and make himself
Almost our equal? Can it be that thou
Art thus in love with life? the very life
Which made thee wretched!
MAN. Thou false fiend, thou liest!
My life is in its last hour,—*that* I know,
Nor would redeem a moment of that hour;
I do not combat against death, but thee
And thy surrounding angels; my past power,
Was purchased by no compact with thy crew,
But by superior science—penance, daring,
And length of watching, strength of mind, and skill
In knowledge of our fathers—when the earth
Saw men and spirits walking side by side,
And gave ye no supremacy: I stand
Upon my strength—I do defy—deny—
Spurn back, and scorn ye!—
SPIRIT. But thy many crimes
Have made thee——
MAN. What are they to such as thee?
Must crimes be punish'd but by other crimes,
And greater criminals?—Back to thy hell!
Thou hast no power upon me, *that* I feel;
Thou never shalt possess me, *that* I know:
What I have done is done; I bear within
A torture which could nothing gain from thine:
The mind which is immortal makes itself
Requital for its good or evil thoughts,—
Is its own origin of ill and end
And its own place and time: its innate sense,
When stripp'd of this mortality, derives
No colour from the fleeting things without,
But is absorb'd in sufferance or in joy,
Born from the knowledge of its own desert.
Thou didst not tempt me, and thou couldst not tempt me;
I have not been thy dupe, nor am thy prey—
But was my own destroyer, and will be
My own hereafter.—Back, ye baffled fiends!—
The hand of death is on me—but not yours!
[*The Demons disappear.*]
ABBOT. Alas! how pale thou art—thy lips are white—
And thy breast heaves—and in thy gasping throat
The accents rattle: Give thy prayers to heaven—
Pray—albeit but in thought,—but die not thus.
MAN. 'T is over—my dull eyes can fix thee not;
But all things swim around me, and the earth
Heaves as it were beneath me. Fare thee well!
Give me thy hand.
ABBOT. Cold—cold—even to the heart—
But yet one prayer— Alas! how fares it with thee?
MAN. Old man! 't is not so difficult to die.
[MANFRED *expires.*]
ABBOT. He's gone—his soul hath ta'en its earthless flight;
Whither? I dread to think—but he is gone.

(1816-1817)

So We'll Go No More A Roving

So, we'll go no more a roving
  So late into the night,
Though the heart be still as loving,
  And the moon be still as bright.

For the sword outwears its sheath,
  And the soul wears out the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
  And love itself have rest.

Though the night was made for loving,
  And the day returns too soon,
Yet we'll go no more a roving
  By the light of the moon.

(1817)

From *Don Juan*

Don Juan was begun in Venice in 1818. By the next year Byron was fairly through with amatory adventuring. He had fallen in love with the Countess Guiccioli, to whom he remained, in his own peculiar manner, attached for the rest of his life, and was writing rapidly. Some of his best friends, having read the early cantos of this work, urged him not to publish it. Convinced that "it *is* poetry," Byron issued the first two cantos anonymously in 1819. It begins with a dedication (added later) that insults the Poet Laureate, Southey, as an "Epic Renegade" from earlier radicalism, proceeds to confound Coleridge for "Explaining metaphysics to the nation—I wish he would explain his explanation," and goes on to speak witheringly of Wordsworth's *Excursion*—"'Tis poetry—at least by his assertion." The poem itself begins as an impudent farce, with pathos and bawdry intermixed, and many a brilliantly witty digression.

Byron completed sixteen cantos of *Don Juan* and was working on the seventeenth at the time of his death. In England the poem naturally caused something of a panic because of its seemingly purposeful immorality. The reviewer of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* said of it that it contains "unquestionably a more thorough and intense infusion of genius and vice—power and profligacy—than any poem which had ever before been written in English, or indeed in any other modern language. . . . The moral strain of the whole poem is pitched in the lowest key—and if the genius of the author lifts him now and then out of his pollution, it seems as if he regretted the elevation, and made all haste to descend again. . . . Love—honor—patriotism—religion, are mentioned only to be scoffed at and derided, as if their sole resting-place were or ought to be, in the bosoms of fools. . . . Impiously railing against his God—madly and meanly disloyal to his Sovereign and his country,—and brutally outraging all the best feelings of female honor, affection, and confidence—How small a part of chivalry is that which remains to the descendant of the Byrons—a gloomy vizor, and a deadly weapon!"

Posterity has reversed this shocked judgment. *Don Juan* is usually spoken of as Byron's most characteristic, if not his most remarkable, achievement. Certainly here at last he found fullest expression for the double side of his genius: the heroic and the satiric. In the adventures of his frank and spontaneous hero, the Byron who loved Pope is to be read as plainly as the Byron who was a close kinsman of Werther and of the hero of *The Robbers*. Sometimes the poem will rise to heights of poetic fervor and inspiration; and then, suddenly, Byron will mock you for having taken him seriously by cutting outrageous capers in the succeeding stanzas or by pointing his lines (and even his rhymes) with malice. It is, indeed, the nearest thing to a picture of Byron as he actually lived.

Canto the Third

85

Thus, usually, when *he* was asked to sing,
He gave the different nations something national;
'Twas all the same to him—"God save the king,"[1]
Or *"Ça ira,"*[2] according to the fashion all:

His muse made increment of any thing,
From the high lyric down to the low rational:
If Pindar[3] sang horse-races, what should hinder
Himself from being as pliable as Pindar?

86

In France, for instance, he would write a chanson;
In England a six canto quarto tale;
In Spain, he'd make a ballad or romance on

[1] the British national hymn.
[2] a song used during the French Revolution.
[3] Cf. Vol. II, p. 14.

The last war—much the same in Portugal;
In Germany, the Pegasus[4] he'd prance on
Would be old Goethe's (see what says De Staël)[5];
In Italy he'd ape the "Trecentisti;"[6]
In Greece, he'd sing some sort of hymn like this t' ye:

I

The Isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho[7] loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,
Where Delos[8] rose, and Phœbus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set.

II

The Scian[9] and the Teian[10] muse,
The hero's harp, the lover's lute,
Have found the fame your shores refuse;
Their place of birth alone is mute
To sounds which echo further west
Than your sires' "Islands of the Blest."[11]

III

The mountains look on Marathon—[12]
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dreamed that Greece might still be free;
For standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave.

IV

A king[13] sate on the rocky brow
Which looks o'er sea-born Salamis[13];
And ships, by thousands, lay below,
And men in nations;—all were his!
He counted them at break of day—
And when the sun set where were they?

V

And where are they? and where art thou,
My country? On thy voiceless shore
The heroic lay is tuneless now—
The heroic bosom beats no more!
And must thy lyre, so long divine,
Degenerate into hands like mine?

VI

'Tis something, in the dearth of fame,
Though linked among a fettered race,
To feel at least a patriot's shame,
Even as I sing, suffuse my face;
For what is left the poet here?
For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear.

VII

Must *we* but weep o'er days more blest?
Must *we* but blush?—Our fathers bled.
Earth! render back from out thy breast
A remnant of our Spartan dead!
Of the three hundred grant but three,
To make a new Thermopylæ![14]

VIII

What, silent still? and silent all?
Ah! no;—the voices of the dead
Sound like a distant torrent's fall,
And answer, "Let one living head,
But one arise,—we come, we come!"
'Tis but the living who are dumb.

IX

In vain—in vain: strike other chords;
Fill high the cup with Samian[15] wine!
Leave battles to the Turkish hordes,
And shed the blood of Scio's vine![16]
Hark! rising to the ignoble call—
How answers each bold Bacchanal![17]

[4] the winged horse of the Muses.
[5] Madame de Staël (1766-1817), celebrated French writer who had met Goethe in Germany.
[6] Italian artists of the 14th century.
[7] Cf. Vol. I, p. 373.
[8] supposed to be the birthplace of Phoebus Apollo.
[9] Homer, supposed by some to have been born at Scio.
[10] Anacreon; Vol. I, p. 374.
[11] the happy otherworld frequently referred to in Greek literature.
[12] where the Persians were defeated by the Athenians in 490 B.C.
[13] Xerxes, who saw his fleet defeated at Salamis in 480 B.C.
[14] In 480 B.C. Xerxes and his host were halted by three hundred Spartans who were defending the pass at Thermopylae.
[15] famous wine from the island of Samos.
[16] a wine-growing island off the coast of Asia Minor.
[17] those who celebrate the festival of Bacchus, the god of wine.

X

You have the Pyrrhic dance[18] as yet,
Where is the Pyrrhic phalanx gone?
Of two such lessons, why forget
The nobler and the manlier one?
You have the letters Cadmus[19] gave—
Think ye he meant them for a slave?

XI

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
We will not think of themes like these!
It made Anacreon's[20] song divine:
He served—but served Polycrates—
A tyrant; but our masters then
Were still, at least, our countrymen.

XII

The tyrant of the Chersonese[21]
Was freedom's best and bravest friend;
That tyrant was Miltiades![22]
Oh! that the present hour would lend
Another despot of the kind!
Such chains as his were sure to bind.

XIII

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
On Suli's rock, and Parga's shore,[23]
Exists the remnant of a line
Such as the Doric[24] mothers bore;
And there, perhaps, some seed is sown,
The Heracleidan blood[25] might own.

XIV

Trust not for freedom to the Franks—
They have a king who buys and sells:
In native swords, and native ranks,
The only hope of courage dwells;
But Turkish force, and Latin fraud,
Would break your shield, however broad.

XV

Fill high the bowl with Samian wine!
Our virgins dance beneath the shade—
I see their glorious black eyes shine;
But gazing on each glowing maid,
My own the burning tear-drop laves,
To think such breasts must suckle slaves.

XVI

Place me on Sunium's[26] marbled steep,
Where nothing, save the waves and I,
May hear our mutual murmurs sweep;
There, swan-like, let me sing and die:
A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine—
Dash down yon cup of Samian wine!

87

Thus sung, or would, or could, or should have sung,
The modern Greek, in tolerable verse;
If not like Orpheus[27] quite, when Greece was young,
Yet in these times he might have done much worse:
His strain displayed some feeling—right or wrong;
And feeling, in a poet, is the source
Of others' feeling; but they are such liars,
And take all colors—like the hands of dyers.

88

But words are things, and a small drop of ink,
Falling like dew, upon a thought, produces
That which makes thousands, perhaps millions, think;
'Tis strange, the shortest letter which man uses
Instead of speech, may form a lasting link
Of ages; to what straits old Time reduces
Frail man, when paper—even a rag like this,
Survives himself, his tomb, and all that's his.

89

And when his bones are dust, his grave a blank,
His station, generation, even his nation,
Become a thing, or nothing, save to rank
In chronological commemoration,

[18] an ancient Greek dance practiced by armed soldiers.
[19] According to tradition, Cadmus invented the alphabet.
[20] Cf. Vol. I, p. 374.
[21] land lying along the European side of the Hellespont.
[22] the victorious general at Marathon.
[23] Turkish fortresses in Epirus.
[24] belonging to that branch of the Greek race settled in southern Greece.
[25] descended from Hercules.
[26] the promontory between the Ægean and the Gulf of Ægina.
[27] the mythical musician.

Some dull MS.[28] Oblivion long has sank,
Or graven stone found in a barrack's station
In digging the foundation of a closet,
May turn his name up, as a rare deposit.

90

And Glory long has made the sages smile;
'Tis something, nothing, words, illusion, wind—
Depending more upon the historian's style
Than on the name a person leaves behind:
Troy owes to Homer what whist owes to Hoyle:[29]
The present century was growing blind
To the great Marlborough's[30] skill in giving knocks,
Until his late Life by Archdeacon Coxe.

91

Milton 's the Prince of Poets—so we say;
A little heavy, but no less divine:
An independent being in his day—
Learned, pious, temperate in love and wine;
But, his life falling into Johnson's[31] way,
We're told this great High Priest of all the Nine[32]
Was whipt at college—a harsh sire—odd spouse,
For the first Mrs. Milton left his house.

92

All these are, *certes,* entertaining facts,
Like Shakespeare's stealing deer, Lord Bacon's bribes;
Like Titus' youth, and Cæsar's earliest acts;
Like Burns (whom Doctor Currie well describes);
Like Cromwell's pranks;—but although Truth exacts
These amiable descriptions from the scribes,
As most essential to their hero's story,
They do not much contribute to his glory.

93

All are not moralists, like Southey, when
He prated to the world of "Pantisocracy;"[33]
Or Wordsworth unexcised, unhired,[34] who then
Seasoned his pedlar poems with Democracy;
Or Coleridge, long before his flighty pen
Let to the *Morning Post* its aristocracy;
When he and Southey, following the same path,
Espoused two partners[35] (milliners of Bath).

94

Such names at present cut a convict figure,
The very Botany Bay[36] in moral geography;
Their loyal treason, renegado rigor,
Are good manure for their more bare biography.
Wordsworth's last quarto, by the way, is bigger
Than any since the birthday of typography;
A drowsy frowzy poem, called the *"Excursion,"*
Writ in a manner which is my aversion.

95

He there builds up a formidable dyke
Between his own and others' intellect;
But Wordsworth's poem, and his followers, like
Joanna Southcote's[37] Shiloh, and her sect,
Are things which in this century don't strike
The public mind,—so few are the elect;
And the new births of both their stale virginities
Have proved but dropsies, taken for divinities.

96

But let me to my story: I must own,
If I have any fault, it is digression—
Leaving my people to proceed alone,
While I soliloquize beyond expression;
But these are my addresses from the throne,
Which put off business to the ensuing session:
Forgetting each omission is a loss to
The world, not quite so great as Ariosto.[38]

[28] manuscript.
[29] Edmund Hoyle (1672-1769), authority on whist.
[30] John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough (1650-1722), famous English general and statesman.
[31] Dr. Samuel Johnson; cf. Vol. I, p. 745 ff.
[32] the nine Muses.
[33] the name of a scheme for an ideal community which Southey, Coleridge, and others planned to establish in America.
[34] a reference to Wordsworth's appointment in 1813 as Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland. Byron implies that Wordsworth had changed from his earlier democratic ideas.
[35] Coleridge and Southey married sisters, the Misses Fricker, who used to take their vacations at Bath.
[36] a convict station on the east coast of Australia.
[37] Miss Southcote prophesied that on October 19, 1814, she would give birth to a second Shiloh, or Messiah. When the date arrived she fell into a trance and died within ten days.
[38] Cf. Vol. I. p. 253.

97

I know that what our neighbors call *"longueurs"*[39]
(We've not so good a *word*, but have the *thing*,
In that complete perfection which insures
An epic from Bob Southey every spring),
Form not the true temptation which allures
The reader; but 'twould not be hard to bring
Some fine examples of the *epopée*,[40]
To prove its grand ingredient is *ennui*.

98

We learn from Horace,[41] "Homer sometimes sleeps;"
We feel without him,—Wordsworth sometimes wakes,—
To show with what complacency he creeps,
With his dear *"Wagoners,"* around his lakes.
He wishes for "a boat" to sail the deeps—
Of Ocean?—No, of air; and then he makes
Another outcry for "a little boat,"
And drivels seas to set it well afloat.

99

If he must fain sweep o'er the ethereal plain,
And Pegasus runs restive in his "Wagon,"
Could he not beg the loan of Charles's Wain?[42]
Or pray Medea[43] for a single dragon?
Or if, too classic for his vulgar brain,
He feared his neck to venture such a nag on,
And he must needs mount nearer to the moon,
Could not the blockhead ask for a balloon?

100

"Pedlars," and "Boats," and "Wagons!" Oh! ye shades
Of Pope and Dryden, are we come to this?
That trash of such sort not alone evades
Contempt, but from the bathos' vast abyss
Floats scumlike uppermost, and these Jack Cades[44]
Of sense and song above your graves may hiss—
The "little boatman" and his "Peter Bell"
Can sneer at him who drew "Achitophel"![45]

101

T' our tale.—The feast was over, the slaves gone,
The dwarfs and dancing girls had all retired;
The Arab lore and Poet's song were done,
And every sound of revelry expired;
The lady and her lover, left alone,
The rosy flood of Twilight's sky admired;—
Ave Maria! o'er the earth and sea,
That heavenliest hour of Heaven is worthiest thee!

102

Ave Maria! blessèd be the hour!
The time, the clime, the spot, where I so oft
Have felt that moment in its fullest power
Sink o'er the earth so beautiful and soft,
While swung the deep bell in the distant tower,
Or the faint dying day-hymn stole aloft,
And not a breath crept through the rosy air,
And yet the forest leaves seemed stirred with prayer.

103

Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of prayer!
Ave Maria! 'tis the hour of Love!
Ave Maria! may our spirits dare
Look up to thine and to thy Son's above!
Ave Maria! oh that face so fair!
Those downcast eyes beneath the Almighty Dove—
What though 'tis but a pictured image?—strike—
That painting is no idol,—'tis too like.

104

Some kinder casuists are pleased to say,
In nameless print—that I have no devotion;
But set those persons down with me to pray,
And you shall see who has the properest notion
Of getting into Heaven the shortest way;
My altars are the mountains and the Ocean,
Earth, air, stars,—all that springs from the great Whole,
Who hath produced, and will receive the Soul.

105

Sweet Hour of Twilight!—in the solitude
Of the pine forest, and the silent shore
Which bounds Ravenna's[46] immemorial wood,

[39] tediousness.
[40] epic.
[41] Cf. *The Art of Poetry*, Vol. I, p. 528.
[42] a name for the constellation of the Great Bear.
[43] at the end of the play of *Medea*, Euripides has his heroine escape in a dragon-drawn chariot.
[44] Cade was the leader of a rebellion in Kent in 1450.
[45] Dryden; cf. Vol. I, pp. 539 ff.
[46] a city in northern Italy, the last capital of the Roman emperors of the West.

Rooted where once the Adrian wave flowed o'er,
To where the last Cæsarean fortress stood,
Evergreen forest! which Boccaccio's lore
And Dryden's lay[47] made haunted ground to me,
How have I loved the twilight hour and thee!

106

The shrill cicalas, people of the pine,
Making their summer lives one ceaseless song,
Were the sole echoes, save my steed's and mine,
And Vesper bell's that rose the boughs along;
The spectre huntsman[48] of Onesti's line,
His hell-dogs, and their chase, and the fair throng
Which learned from this example not to fly
From a true lover,—shadowed my mind's eye.

107

Oh, Hesperus! thou bringest all good things—
Home to the weary, to the hungry cheer,
To the young bird the parent's brooding wings,
The welcome stall to the o'erlabored steer;[49]
Whate'er of peace about our hearthstone clings,
Whate'er our household gods protect of dear,
Are gathered round us by thy look of rest;
Thou bring'st the child, too, to the mother's breast.

108

Soft Hour! which wakes the wish and melts the heart
Of those who sail the seas, on the first day
When they from their sweet friends are torn apart;
Or fills with love the pilgrim on his way
As the far bell of Vesper makes him start,
Seeming to weep the dying day's decay;
Is this a fancy which our reason scorns?
Ah! surely Nothing dies but Something mourns!

109

When Nero perished by the justest doom
Which ever the Destroyer yet destroyed,
Amidst the roar of liberated Rome,
Of nations freed, and the world overjoyed,
Some hands unseen strewed flowers upon his tomb:
Perhaps the weakness of a heart not void
Of feeling for some kindness done, when Power
Had left the wretch an uncorrupted hour.

110

But I'm digressing; what on earth has Nero,
Or any such like sovereign buffoons,
To do with the transactions of my hero,
More than such madmen's fellow man—the moon's?
Sure my invention must be down at zero,
And I grown one of many "wooden spoons"
Of verse (the name with which we Cantabs[50] please
To dub the last of honors in degrees).

111

I feel this tediousness will never do—
'Tis being *too* epic, and I must cut down
(In copying) this long canto into two;
They'll never find it out, unless I own
The fact, excepting some experienced few;
And then as an improvement 'twill be shown:
I'll prove that such the opinion of the critic is
From Aristotle *passim*.—See Ποιητικης.[51]

(1819)

On This Day I Complete My Thirty-sixth Year[1]

MISSOLONGHI, JANUARY 22, 1824

'Tis time this heart should be unmoved,
Since others it hath ceased to move·
Yet, though I cannot be beloved,
Still let me love!

My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of Love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone!

[47] Dryden's poem, *Theodore and Honoria,* based on a story in Boccaccio's *Decameron*.
[48] a reference to Boccaccio's story.
[49] This passage is a close paraphrase of one of the poems of Sappho; cf. Vol. I, p. 373.
[50] students of Cambridge.
[51] *The Poetics;* cf. Vol. I, p. 526.
[1] Byron's last poem, written three months before his death.

The fire that on my bosom preys
  Is lone as some volcanic isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze—
    A funeral pile.

The hope, the fear, the jealous care,
  The exalted portion of the pain
And power of love, I cannot share,
    But wear the chain.

But 'tis not *thus*—and 'tis not *here*—
  Such thoughts should shake my soul, nor *now*,
Where glory decks the hero's bier,
    Or binds his brow.

The sword, the banner, and the field,
  Glory and Greece, around me see!
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,
    Was not more free.

Awake! (not Greece—she *is* awake!)[2]
  Awake, my spirit! Think through *whom*
Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake,
    And then strike home!

Tread those reviving passions down,
  Unworthy manhood!—unto thee
Indifferent should the smile or frown
    Of Beauty be.

If thou regret'st thy youth, *why live*?
  The land of honorable death
Is here:—up to the field, and give
    Away thy breath!

Seek out—less often sought than found—
  A soldier's grave, for thee the best;
Then look around, and choose thy ground,
    And take thy rest.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

(1792-1822)

Textbooks frequently refer to the period of the Romantic Movement as the Age of Wordsworth, but it is likely that the most beloved poet of that era is Shelley. Often called, like Spenser, "the poet's poet," he possessed a genius of the first order. Wordsworth was a greater innovator, Coleridge had a more profoundly philosophic mind, Byron's career was more spectacular, Keats has exerted a wider influence; but Shelley was, of all of them, most perfectly the poet. His great creations—and they are many—are beyond praise. Similar in no other respect, perhaps, to those of Shakespeare, they are like them in this: they possess an ultimate, untranslatable, indescribable perfection that is completely inimitable.

One of the tragedies of literary history is that the narrow codes of his time caused him to be anathematized. Even when his poetry was virtually unknown, his name was a subject of public abhorrence because of his connection with a sensational scandal. Yet few men of purer soul and greater integrity than he have ever lived. His life, which he conducted consistently on the highest ethical plane, was judged by the straitest criteria of respectability. "There is another man gone," wrote Byron to Moore after Shelley's death, "about whom the world was ill-naturedly, and ignorantly, and brutally mistaken." And to Murray he wrote: "You were all brutally mistaken about Shelley who was without exception the *best* and least selfish man I ever knew." Byron's cynicism, it should be remembered, led him to lavish such words on no one; but of Shelley he never tired of asserting that he was "the *best* man" of his acquaintance. It is testimony to a frustrated vein of goodness in Byron's nature that he should have been able to do Shelley this justice. For two men more unlike would be hard to name. Byron was self-consciously ribald, malicious, and flippant. Shelley was tense, sincere, modest, not quite of this world.

Shelley was born August 4, 1792, at Field Place, in Sussex. His father, Timothy Shelley, was a wealthy country squire, conservative and conventional, to whom his son was ever

[2] This poem was written in Greece where Byron was assisting the cause of the Greek patriots.

a complete mystery. His unavailing efforts to make the poet subscribe to his canons of behavior and politics resulted in friction that increased with the years, until the elder Shelley came to personify for his son all that he detested in the world. After a dreamlike boyhood spent in the company of his sisters, Shelley was sent to Eton, where he soon was disgracing himself because of his inability to conform to the traditional studies and sports of the place. By preference he wandered off over the countryside, sailed pieces of driftwood or paper down rapid streams, or in private performed dangerous experiments with chemicals.

His great discovery at Eton, however, was the *Political Justice* of Godwin (cf. Vol. I, p. 816). This analysis of the woes of mankind and program for their cures, long discredited since its brief influence on Wordsworth and Coleridge, fired the imagination of the boy and made him a disciple at once. "I burn with impatience for the moment of the dissolution of Intolerance," he wrote to his friend Hogg in 1811. "On one subject I am cool," he continued, "toleration; yet that coolness alone possesses me that I may with more certainty guide the spear to the breast of my adversary, with more certainty ensanguine it with the heart's blood of Intolerance,—hated name! Adieu. Down with Bigotry! Down with Intolerance!"

In 1810 Shelley entered University College, Oxford. Again he was little inclined to accept the routine of college life and made few friendships besides the lasting, close one with Thomas Jefferson Hogg (who later wrote an important biography of him). His stay at Oxford was short. Having devoured the writings of the French skeptical philosophers, particularly D'Holbach, he published and circulated at the university a tract which he himself had written on *The Necessity of Atheism*. When he was forthwith summoned to account, Hogg loyally managed to be involved in the case, and both lads were expelled from Oxford in March 1811. Timothy Shelley, horrified, stipulated that his son break off his friendship with Hogg. The boy refused, and was thereupon denied admission to Field Place.

Shelley, aided by his sister's pocket-money, took lodgings in London, where he became acquainted with Harriet Westbrook, who fell in love with him. To him she was an interesting disciple, like his friends and sisters, to whom he could propound the wonderful doctrines of Godwin which, by his own admission, had made him "a wiser and a better man." Was he not himself exerting his powers to the full in the cause of justice? When an Irish journalist was sentenced to prison for an attack on Lord Castlereagh, Minister of War, Shelley wrote his *Poetic Essay on the Existing State of Things* (1811). When Leigh Hunt (cf. *below*) was acquitted after a trial resulting from his charges of brutality against the army, Shelley wrote him a letter of self-introduction, proposing a society to propagate freedom of speech (1811). To members of the clergy he sent copies of *The Necessity of Atheism*. Harriet listened with attention to her new tutor. And with matrimony clearly in mind, she represented to him that she was being persecuted at home and at school. In order to save her, Shelley eloped with her to Scotland, and, although matrimony was against his Godwinian philosophy, married her in August 1811, when she was sixteen and he nineteen.

Together they went to deliver the Irish people from tyranny. From the balcony of their hotel, he and Harriet showered down copies of *An Address to the Irish People*, *Proposals for an Association of Philanthropists*, and the *Declaration of Rights*—pamphlets composed by Shelley and published at his expense (1812). But, as the Irish people showed a distressing reluctance to save themselves, Shelley left. Besides, Godwin, to whom he had sent texts, thoroughly disapproved of this attempt to hasten the slow process of human perfectibility. "When you reprove me," Shelley humbly acknowledged, "reason speaks and I acquiesce." He satisfied himself with adding that he would "look for events . . . ages after I have mouldered in the dust."

At college he had published some verse and two extravagant prose romances. In 1813 he finished his first important poem, *Queen Mab*, under the influence of Volney's *Ruins*

of Empires (cf. *above*). Although inferior to his later works, it exhibits one salient characteristic of all his poetry. Shelley wrote because he was convinced that by so doing he was helping to prepare the way for a better society. The social message is the motivating ingredient in all his major works, and in many of his shorter pieces. Even a superb nature poem, like the *Ode to the West Wind*, owes its inspiration to Shelley's dream of a better world. Common though it is to think of him as one of our supreme poets of nature pure "nature poems" like *The Cloud* (cf. *below*) are not frequently to be found in his works. *Queen Mab* is significant, therefore, as his earliest extended revolutionary poem, presenting, as it does, a vision of Godwinian society. In the copious notes he furnished for it, he reveals himself as a rebel against institutions and government, which he found responsible for all the ills of society.

After two years of marriage, Harriet began to tire of their nomadic life and of the revolutionary fervor that prompted it. She was tiring, too, of sharing her young husband's vast schemes, and she resented his friends. Her thoughts turned more and more toward the settled life to which she felt that the wife of Timothy Shelley's heir was entitled. In this mode of thinking she was abetted by her ever-present sister, Eliza, whom Shelley came to dislike, with good reason. Meanwhile, Godwin, with whom Shelley had become personally acquainted, had presented his financial difficulties (as he was to do for many years) to the poet, and in his desire to aid his master Shelley called frequently at the Godwin home. There he met Mary Godwin, daughter of the philosopher and a wonderful mother, Mary Wollstonecraft. Their ideas, their sympathies seemed perfectly attuned, and Shelley felt that he had met his destined mate. Unwilling to live with any subterfuge, Shelley informed Harriet that it was immoral for them to live longer together, since they had nothing in common. "Our connection was not one of passion and impulse," he told her, but only of friendship. She refused, however, to agree to his living with Mary. At his wits' end to find a solution agreeable to all, he made a proposal that only he could have made: why should not all three live together, Mary as his wife, and Harriet as his friend? Naturally, Harriet rejected the idea. In despair, for even the nobly iconoclastic Godwin stopped short of consenting to an illegal union for his daughter, Shelley took laudanum. The dose did not prove fatal. In July 1814, casting discretion to the winds, he eloped with Mary to the Continent. Two years later Harriet drowned herself, and made Shelley's name synonymous with that of scoundrel for the rest of his days. Nor did he ever acquit himself of the responsibility for her death, even though he had acted throughout on principle. Over his short life there always hovered the cloud of that catastrophe; the anguish it cost him can be read in *Adonais*.

In the meantime, Mary and Shelley returned to England. There, after a summer spent in Windsor Forest, he composed his beautiful *Alastor; or the Spirit of Solitude* (pub. 1816), the first work in his true poetic vein. A masterpiece of rhythmic design, it is an expression of one of his favorite themes: ideal love. In 1816 Mary and he, accompanied by her half-sister, Jane Clairmont, went to Switzerland, where they met Byron, with whom they became good friends. When they came back to England in the autumn, a double shock soon stunned them: first the suicide of Mary's sister Fanny, and then Harriet's suicide. Broken in health by these disasters, and further shattered by a losing suit to gain custody of the two children Harriet had borne him, Shelley nevertheless engaged himself on several ambitious tasks. To this year (1817) belongs the composition of *Prince Athanase*, *Rosalind and Helen*, and *The Revolt of Islam* (pub. 1818). This last is a kind of supplement to *Queen Mab*, and deals with the temporarily successful revolt of a people against their tyrants. A poetic commentary on the French Revolution, it accounts for the failure of the enterprise on the grounds that the people were not ready for liberty. Thus Shelley alone, of the romantic poets, refused to consider the French Revolution as a complete cause of despair or of reversion to conservatism. The "people have seen a type of peace," he said, and eventual triumph of freedom was assured.

Everywhere met with loathing, hounded as a villain (his obituary in *The Gentleman's*

Magazine a few years later reads: "We ought as justly to regret the decease of the devil"), but conscious of having lived according to the purest of systems, Shelley found dwelling any longer in England impossible. In March 1818 he left it forever with Mary (now legally his wife), Jane Clairmont, and the latter's child. The remaining four years of his life were spent in Italy, under whose beneficent skies his genius flowered in magnificence. Although he still had troubles enough, his life was now comparatively tranquil. He had leisure to study and write and to enjoy, when he could free himself of his heavy depression, the manifold beauties about him. His visit to Byron in Venice (1818) is commemorated in his interesting portraits of himself and his friend in *Julian and Maddalo*. In the Euganean Hills, while staying at Byron's villa, he began working on his masterpiece, *Prometheus Unbound* (cf. *below*).

The year 1819 proved to be *annus mirabilis* for Shelley—and for English poetry—for in it he achieved complete maturity in his art. In this "wonderful year" he composed: *The Cenci*, the noblest poetic tragedy since the Elizabethans; the *Ode to the West Wind* (cf. *below*), one of the most inspired pieces of lyrical utterance ever conceived; *Peter Bell the Third*, a satire on renegades from liberalism, such as he conceived Wordsworth and Coleridge to be; and the republican *Mask of Anarchy*. In this year, too, he completed *Prometheus Unbound*, his triumphant prophecy of the liberation of humanity from tyranny and oppression.

In the winter of this year the Shelleys moved from Florence to Pisa. There a circle of friends accumulated about them—Medwin, the Williamses, the Greek patriot Prince Mavrocordato, the adventurer Trelawney, Byron, and, later, Leigh Hunt with his wife and six children. Some of Shelley's finest lyrics were written during these last two and one-half years: *To a Skylark* (cf. *below*), *To Night* (cf. *below*), and the final *Chorus* to his drama *Hellas* (cf. *below*). *Epipsychidion* (cf. *below*)—a longer work—and the unfinished *Triumph of Life*, as well as the prose *Defense of Poetry* (cf. *below*) were all written at this time. But the most important of these latest creations was his marvelous elegy on Keats, *Adonais* (cf. *below*), comparable only to Milton's *Lycidas* among English threnodies.

On July 8, 1822, Shelley and his friend Williams set out from Leghorn on a trip aboard his cherished sailboat *Ariel*. Some leagues out from shore, they were caught in a terrific squall. Ten days later their bodies were washed ashore. Byron, Hunt, and Trelawney were present at the cremation of Shelley's body on the beach. His ashes and his heart, which would not burn, were buried in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, near the grave of Keats.

There are several recurrent motives in Shelley's poetry. The basic one is love, through which he believed mankind would become regenerated; to the theme of ideal love he devoted *Alastor*, the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* (cf. *below*), *The Sensitive Plant*, *Prometheus Unbound*, and various lyrical poems. This part of his work derives from his profound admiration of Plato's treatment of the subject in his dialogues. His other chief subject, which he fused with his conception of ideal love, was the establishment of a more perfect society; in *Queen Mab*, *The Revolt of Islam*, and *Prometheus Unbound* (which form an ideological trilogy), and in such lyrics as in the *Ode to the West Wind* and *To a Skylark* this concern is uppermost. There is another theme, characteristic of an age that admired Goethe's *Werther* (cf. *above*), often found in his lyrics: a desire for death—but this is as attributable to the twisted circumstances of his life as to any literary trend.

The greatness of Shelley consists in more than the nobility of his thought and ideals. The passionate sincerity of his convictions lends an inner fire to his song. It is one of the most amazing phenomena in literature that the cold dogmas of Godwin could have inspired such burning rapture as Shelley's. But it is as an artist that Shelley is supreme. Subtler than Wordsworth, his genius penetrated closer to the mystic wonder of nature, and he has caught her in her most evanescent moods. It is out of the most immaterial, intangible aspects of nature that he builds up his most marvelous images. What he says of Keats is far truer of his own poetry:

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light.

For it is when he speaks of light and dark, of sunrise and sunset, of clouds and vapors, of clear skies and starry heavens that Shelley is most himself. And with all this, he was a master of an ethereal enchantment that passes "into the panting heart beneath, With lightning and with music."

The standard edition of his verse and prose was edited by H. B. Forman in eight volumes (1880). A good one-volume edition of the poems was edited by G. E. Woodberry (1901). Among the best biographical studies are: J. A. Symonds's *Shelley* (1887), E. Dowden's *Life of Shelley* in two volumes (1886), and F. Winwar's *The Romantic Rebels: Byron, Shelley, and Keats* (1935). A. Maurois's *Ariel*, though interesting, is unreliable. Many essays have been written on Shelley's work by distinguished English authors: Leigh Hunt, Arnold, Browning, and Francis Thompson, among others. C. Grabo's *The Magic Plant* (1936) is an important study.

Hymn to Intellectual Beauty

Mary Shelley tells us that "the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* was conceived during his voyage round the lake [i.e. Lake Geneva] with Lord Byron. He occupied himself during this voyage by reading the *Nouvelle Heloise* for the time. . . . There was something in the character of Saint-Preux [cf. Vol. II, p. 44], in his abnegation of self, and in the worship he paid to Love, that coincided with Shelley's own disposition; and, though differing in many of the views and shocked by others, yet the effect of the whole was fascinating and delightful."

This poem exhibits Shelley's acceptance of the Platonic conception of Beauty.

The awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats though unseen among us—visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower—
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening—
Like clouds in starlight widely spread—
Like memory of music fled—
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form—where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not forever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain river,
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown,
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom—why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope?

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
To sage or poet these responses given—
Therefore the names of Dæmon, Ghost, and Heaven,
Remain the records of their vain endeavor,
Frail spells—whose uttered charm might not avail to sever,
From all we hear and all we see,
Doubt, chance, and mutability.
Thy light alone—like mist o'er mountains driven,
Or music by the night wind sent,
Through strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

Love, Hope, and Self-Esteem, like clouds depart
And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.

Thou messenger of sympathies,
That wax and wane in lovers' eyes—
Thou—that to human thought art nourishment,
Like darkness to a dying flame!
Depart not as thy shadow came,
Depart not—lest the grave should be,
Like life and fear, a dark reality.

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed;
I was not heard—I saw them not—
When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at the sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming—
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine—have I not kept the vow?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave; they have in visioned bowers
Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatched with me the envious night—
They know that never joy illumed my brow
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,
That thou—O awful Loveliness,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past—there is a harmony
In autumn, and a luster in its sky,
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm—to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, Spirit fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.

(1816)

Ozymandias

I met a traveler from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

(1817)

Stanzas Written in Dejection Near Naples

"Our winter was spent at Naples. . . . At this time Shelley suffered greatly in health. . . . Constant and poignant physical suffering exhausted him; and though he preserved the appearance of cheerfulness, and often greatly enjoyed our wanderings in the environs of Naples, and our excursions on its sunny sea, yet many hours were passed when his thoughts, shadowed by illness, became gloomy,—and then he escaped to solitude, and in verses, which he hid from fear of wounding me, poured forth morbid but too natural bursts of discontent and sadness."—*Mary Shelley.*

The sun is warm, the sky is clear,
The waves are dancing fast and bright,
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
The purple noon's transparent might;
The breath of the moist earth is light
Around its unexpanded buds;
Like many a voice of one delight,
The winds', the birds', the ocean-floods',
The City's voice itself is soft like Solitude's.

I see the Deep's untrampled floor
With green and purple sea-weeds strown;
I see the waves upon the shore
Like light dissolved in star-showers thrown;
I sit upon the sands alone—
The lightning of the noon-tide ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone

Arises from its measured motion,
How sweet! did any heart now share in my emotion.

Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content, surpassing wealth,
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned—
Nor fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure.
Others I see whom these surround—
Smiling they live, and call life pleasure;
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have borne, and yet must bear,
Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

Some might lament that I were cold,
As I, when this sweet day is gone,
Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,
Insults with this untimely moan;
They might lament—for I am one
Whom men love not,—and yet regret,
Unlike this day, which, when the sun
Shall on its stainless glory set,
Will linger, though enjoyed, like joy in memory yet.

(1818)

Ode to the West Wind

This is certainly one of the most amazing lyrical poems in our literature, matchless in its perfection. If the verse has the rush and sweep of spontaneity, that is because great art has so contrived it. The marvelous orchestration of the music—like the music of the wind itself—was possible only to a poet who had mastered his technique. Some idea of Shelley's artistry may be obtained by noting his skillful use of Dante's *terza rima* (cf. Vol. I, p. 102), here modified to form a stanza (*aba bcb cdc ded ee*). Admirable, too, is the growth of the central idea as the poem progresses. The first stanza describes the wind in the forest, the second the wind in the sky, and the third the wind on the sea; the fourth unites these pictures; and the last is devoted to the invocation containing the poet's message.

"This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapors which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions. The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathizes with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it."—*Shelley.*

I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes! O thou
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wingèd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odors plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and Preserver; hear, oh hear!

2

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of heaven and ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning! there are spread
On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Mænad[1] even from the dim verge

[1] a priestess or female worshipper of Bacchus, the god of wine.

Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapors, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail, will burst: Oh hear!

3

Thou who didst waken from his summer-dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's[2] bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss, and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear
And tremble and despoil themselves: Oh hear!

4

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than Thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skyey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee—tameless, and swift, and proud.

[2] a seaport near Naples.

5

Make me thy lyre, ev'n as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe,
Like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

(1819)

The Indian Serenade

I arise from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright;
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Hath led me—who knows how!
To thy chamber window, Sweet!

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream—
And the Champak[1] odors fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart—
As I must on thine,
O! beloved as thou art!

Oh, lift me from the grass!
I die! I faint! I fail!
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
My heart beats loud and fast—
Oh, press it to thine own again,
Where it will break at last!

(1819)

[1] an Indian tree of the magnolia family.

The Cloud

The music of this poem is now buoyant, now swift, as the picture changes. Scientific fact is elevated to the level of the highest poetic imagination, as the poet traces the "life history of a cloud." Nothing is more characteristic of its author than his ecstatic images made of the very elements—light, rain, hail, thunder, snow, lightning, sunset, and moonlight.

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skyey bowers,
Lightning my pilot sits;
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder;
It struggles and howls at fits.
Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead,
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
Its ardors of rest and of love,
And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of heaven above,
With wings folded I rest, on mine airy nest,
As still as a brooding dove.

That orbèd maiden, with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof.
The stars peep behind her and peer;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the moon's with a girdle of pearl;
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,
The mountains its columns be.
The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the powers of the air are chained to my chair,
Is the million-colored bow;
The sphere-fire above its soft colors wove,
While the moist earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of earth and water,
And the nursling of the sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when, with never a stain,
The pavilion of heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.

(1820)

To a Skylark

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run;
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of heaven
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not;

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower;

Like a glowworm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aërial hue
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view;

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-wingèd thieves.

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine;
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine:

Chorus Hymeneal,
Or triumphal chaunt,
Matched with thine, would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be—
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest—but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after
And pine for what is not;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound—
Better than all treasures
That in books are found—
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then—as I am listening now.

(1820)

To Night

1

Swiftly walk o'er the western wave,
Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where all the long and lone daylight
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear,—
Swift be thy flight!

2

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day;
Kiss her until she be wearied out;
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long-sought!

3

When I arose and saw the dawn,
I sighed for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And moon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sighed for thee.

4

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
Wouldst thou me?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noontide bee,
Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?—and I replied,
No, not thee!

5

Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon;
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night,—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon!

(1821)

Time

Unfathomable Sea! whose waves are years,
Ocean of Time, whose waters of deep woe
Are brackish with the salt of human tears!
Thou shoreless flood, which in thy ebb and flow
Claspest the limits of mortality,
And sick of prey, yet howling on for more,
Vomitest thy wrecks on its inhospitable shore;
Treacherous in calm, and terrible in storm,
Who shall put forth on thee,
Unfathomable Sea?

(1821)

Mutability

1

The flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow dies;
All that we wish to stay,
Tempts and then flies.
What is this world's delight?
Lightning that mocks the night,
Brief even as bright.

2

Virtue, how frail it is!
Friendship, how rare!
Love, how it sells poor bliss
For proud despair!
But we, though soon they fall,
Survive their joy and all
Which ours we call.

3

Whilst skies are blue and bright,
Whilst flowers are gay,
Whilst eyes that change ere night
Make glad the day;
Whilst yet the calm hours creep,
Dream thou—and from thy sleep
Then wake to weep.

(1821)

MOSCHUS (fl. 150 B.C.)

Among the disciples of Theocritus (cf. Vol. I, p. 243), father of pastoral poetry, were the Sicilian poet Moschus, who was born at Syracuse, and Bion, of Smyrna. Little of their work has survived, and we know nearly nothing of their lives. Even their dates are uncertain. Formerly it was supposed that Bion was a contemporary of Theocritus and tutor to Moschus. On metrical grounds, however, scholars have established him as writing in the first half of the first century B.C. If this conclusion is correct it merely opens the question of whether he can possibly be the Bion celebrated in Moschus's most famous poem. Bion's authorship of *The Lament for Adonis*, on the other hand, has been a strong argument for assuming him to be the subject of Moschus's elegy.

What is possible to state, however, is that *A Lament for Bion* has been the model for the pastoral elegy, and in particular for the two greatest pastoral elegies in English—*Lycidas* (cf. Vol. I, p. 428) and *Adonais* (cf. *below*).

The poems of Bion and of Moschus are usually to be found included in the same volume with translations of Theocritus. The present excellent version was issued by Mr. Hallard in 1924.

A LAMENT FOR BION

(Translated by J. H. Hallard)

Wail me a sad lament, ye dells and Dorian water;
Weep, ye rivers, aloud for Bion the darling of all.
Trees and plants, make moan, ye groves, give voice to your mourning;
Clustering flowers, breathe forth grief from your garlands of woe.
Blush, ye roses, blush; ye wind-flowers, redden with anguish;
Hyacinth, loudlier speak that lamentation of thine,
Loudlier speak that word of woe enwrit on thy petals,
Cry more shrilly "alas!", for dead is the minstrel sweet.
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Nightingales sadly warbling your lays in the leafy branches,
Hie you to Sicily now and tell Arethusa this:
"Gone is Bion the herdsman; with him all singing hath perished,
Music is now no more; mute is the Dorian strain;"
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Swans on the Strymon river, oh raise your sad lamentation,
Chant with your moaning mouths music of bitterest woe,
Yea, such a ditty as eld will one day grant you to carol;
Say to your native nymphs: "The Dorian Orpheus is dead."
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

He that was dear to the herds no longer singeth among them,
Sits no longer, alas! under the lonely oaks;
Nay, but in Pluto's realm[1] he hymns a forgetful ditty;
Dumb are the vales and hills, silent the mountains all.
Even the very kine that roam with the bulls in the meadow

[1] Hades.

Are wailing, and now no more care on the pasture to browse.
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Apollo himself too wept for the fate untimely of Bion,
The satyrs and dark-clad sons of the garden-god all wept.
The Pans[2] bewail thee in song, and the nymphs of the streams in the woodland
Uttered a woeful cry, and the fountains turned to tears.
Echo,[3] her rocks among sore grieveth she now is voiceless;
Never again any more to return thee the lay from thy lips,
Fruit-trees cast their fruits, and the sweet flowers all of them wither;
No juice flows from the apples, no honey flows from the combs;
Shrunken it rots in the wax; for the honey of thy sweet singing
Flowing no more, what needs honey of bees to be culled?
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Not so mourned that Siren of old on the lone sea-beaches,
Not so pensively sang the Nightingale 'mong the leaves;
Ne'er on the heights of the hills so plaintively piped the Swallow,[4]
Never did Ceyx[5] grieve so for her Halcyon's fate;
Not so fluted the Ceryl[6] of yore on the green sea-billows,
Never so keened the birds down in the dells of the East,
Fluttering round the tomb of Memnon,[7] son of the Morning,

[2] wood-spirits.
[3] the nymph who pined away for love of Narcissus until nothing was left but her voice.
[4] Procne's husband Tereus violated Philomela, her sister, and then deprived her of her tongue so that she might not tell of the deed. The sisters were turned into birds—Procne, a swallow; Philomela a nightingale.
[5] Ceyx was drowned at sea and the body was found by his wife Alcyone (or Halcyon). The gods took pity on her grief and changed the pair into kingfishers (alcyones).
[6] a seabird of the halcyon-kind.
[7] The statue at Thebes in Egypt said to emit harplike sounds under the first rays of the sun.

As when they all made moan at the passing of Bion away.
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

The nightingales and the swallows to whom he taught their music,
They who had loved him well, wailed at the foot of the trees,
Wailed in a chorus of woe, and in song antiphonal chanted:
"Sorrowing birds, make moan, for ye are his mourners too."
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

O, thou thrice-beloved, who now shall play on thy pan-pipe,
Who that will dare lay mouth unto its reeds again?
For still it breathes of thy lips, still breathes with the breath of thy singing,
And Echo still on thy songs feeds in the tuneful pipes.
Lo, shall I bear it a gift unto Pan? Ah, haply the goat-god
Were afraid he should win, e'en he, only the second award!
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Now Galatea[8] regrets thy songs, whom of old thou rejoiced'st
There as she sat by thy side down by the sea-bank's edge.
Sweeter thy songs were to her than the songs of her swain Polyphemus;
Him did the fair nymph fly; dearer wert thou than the wave.
Now, all heedless of ocean, she sits on the lone sea-beaches,
Or, haply, among the hills tendeth the herd that was thine.
Oh, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Perished along with thee now are all the gifts of the Muses,
Passionate kisses of girls, passionate kisses of boys.
Sorrowing round thy corse the Loves are weeping and wailing;
Cypris[9] regrets thee more than Adonis' dying kiss.
O Meles,[10] river of all most sad, this grief is another,
This is a second woe—Homer of old too died,
He that sweetest voice of Calliope[11]; him too, men say,

[8] Cf. Vol. I, p. 246.
[9] Venus.
[10] a river at Smyrna.
[11] Muse of heroic poetry.

All thy waters bewailed, him, of thy children the best.
Yea, and the sea was filled with thy voice, and now for another
Son thou dost weep, yea, now wailest another woe.
Dear were thy both to the wells of song; for of fount Hippocrene,[12]
Homer drank, but Bion, fount Arethusa,[13] of thee.
Homer of Helen told, and Achilles and brave Menelaüs;
Bion sang no wars, nothing for tears or wail.
Pan and the keepers of kine were the gentle themes of our herdsman;
Pan-pipes too he made, and his sweet-breathed heifer milked.
Yea, and he taught us the love of boys, and roused in our bosoms
All Aphrodite's charm, all the delights of desire.
O, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Every famous city, and every town doth lament thee;
Ascra[14] for thee grieves more far than for Hesiod dead;
Not so much do the woods of Boeotia sorrow for Pindar,
Not so much for Alcaeus mourneth Lesbos the fair;
Not so sore for Anacreon waileth the Teian city;
More than for Archilochus Paros lamenteth for thee;
Thy songs more than Sappho's chanteth sad Mitylene,
And Syracuse now in thee another Theocritus hails.
I from the western land of Ausonia[15] bring thee a poem,
I that from thee did learn the pastoral strains I know;
For I did inherit thy Dorian Muse; thy wealth unto others
Didst thou leave, but to me the guerdon of country song.
O, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Woe is me! When the mallows and parsley green in the garden
Fade, and the curling dill that bloometh so fresh and fair,
They ever live again, and flourish anew in the spring-time,
When the revolving year bringeth their season back;
But we mighty and strong, we men so wise in our wisdom,
Whenso we perish, are laid heedless in hollow Earth,
Sleeping the long, long, endless sleep that knows not of waking,
Even as thou shalt lie swathèd in silence for aye.
And now the nymphs all deem they hear but the marsh-frog warbling,
And little I envy them that; for his is an ugly song!
O, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

Poison came to thy lips, O Bion, poison assailed thee.
How could so bitter a thing on *thy* lips not turn sweet?
Who could of mortals be so cruel as mix thee a death-cup,
Or give it to thee at thy call? Nameless in song shall they be.
O, raise, Sicilian Muses, raise the dirge.

But Retribution was theirs! And to me is left lamentation.
Ah, if as Orpheus of old, or Odysseus, or Heracles, I,
I could have gone down too unto Hades, thither had *I* gone,
E'en unto Pluto's house to behold thee; and if that thou sing
There unto Hades' Lord, I had hearkened thee. Now to the Maiden
Raise a Sicilian song, thou, sing her a pastoral lay.
She a Sicilian is, that Queen,[16] and played on the sea-shore
Under the Etna crags, and she knows the Dorian strain.
Not unguerdoned shall be thy song, and, e'en as to Orpheus,
That sweet harper, she gave to lead his Eurydice back,
So unto thee will she give to return to the hills, O Bion—
Ah, and had *my* song power, I too to Pluto had sung.

[12] The spring of the Muses.
[13] a spring in Sicily mythically said to be the exit of a river which had run under the sea. The nymph Arethusa being pursued by the river-god Alpheus was changed by Artemis into this stream.
[14] Here follows a list of birthplaces of Greek poets.
[15] Italy.
[16] Proserpine.

Adonais

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF JOHN KEATS, AUTHOR OF ENDYMION, HYPERION, ETC.

Shelley and Keats were merely acquaintances and during the latter's lifetime had no great esteem for each other's work. Shelley found Keats too deficient in intellectual import to satisfy his tastes, and Keats considered Shelley insufficiently devoted to the art of poetry. But when Shelley learned from friends that Keats's health was in a desperate state, with characteristic generosity he wrote to him, inviting him to be his guest at Pisa. The knowledge of Keats's sufferings was enough to make Shelley revise his opinions of Keats's poetry. "This consumption is a disease particularly fond of people who can write such good verses as you have done," he said, and added that he had been rereading Keats's *Endymion* "ever with a new sense of the treasures of poetry it contains."

Keats's pride would not allow him to accept the kind invitation. When, within a year, Keats was dead—killed, as Shelley erroneously believed, by harsh critics—it was no task for the high-minded Shelley to become convinced that the younger man had been a great poet. His keen sensitiveness to injustice made him furious with Keats's detractors, and he wrote *Adonais* with the double purpose of celebrating Keats's memory and lashing his critic-murderers.

Adonais is one of Shelley's greatest creations. Like its companion piece, Milton's *Lycidas*, it follows in the pastoral traditions of Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus, and particularly in the style of Moschus's *A Lament for Bion* (cf. *above*). Like *Lycidas*, too, it turns aside from pastoralism to digress into harsh, but stirring, invective.

Pastoralism and invective, however, are harmoniously combined and elevated by the splendor of Shelley's music and imagery. Rarely has the Spenserian stanza been handled with such magnificence. Many engrossing aspects of this poem are to be noted—among others, the incomparable beauty of Shelley's personifications, his noble exposition of the Platonic view of the world, the autobiographical passages, and his generosity to fellow poets. The last stanza is breath-taking in its unconsciously precise prophecy of the manner of his own death, which was to be not distant.

PREFACE

It is my intention to subjoin to the London edition of this poem a criticism upon the claims of its lamented object to be classed among the writers of the highest genius who have adorned our age. My known repugnance to the narrow principles of taste on which several of his earlier compositions were modeled prove, at least, that I am an impartial judge. I consider the fragment of *Hyperion* as second to nothing that was ever produced by a writer of the same years.

John Keats died at Rome of a consumption in his twenty-fourth year, and on the ——— of ———[1] 1821; and was buried in the romantic and lonely cemetery of the Protestants in that city, under the pyramid which is the tomb of Cestius, and the massy walls and towers, now moldering and desolate, which formed the circuit of ancient Rome. The cemetery is an open space among the ruins, covered in winter with violets and daisies. It might make one in love with death, to think that one should be buried in so sweet a place.

The genius of the lamented person to whose memory I have dedicated these unworthy verses was not less delicate and fragile than it was beautiful; and where canker worms abound, what wonder if its young flower was blighted in the bud? The savage criticism on his *Endymion*, which appeared in the *Quarterly Review*, produced the most violent effect on his susceptible mind; the agitation thus originated ended in the rupture of a blood-vessel in the lungs; a rapid consumption ensued, and the succeeding acknowledgements from more candid critics of the true greatness of his powers were ineffectual to heal the wound thus wantonly inflicted.

It may be well said that these wretched men know not what they do. They scatter their insults and their slanders without heed as to whether the poisoned shaft lights on a heart made callous by many blows, or one like Keats's composed of more penetrable stuff. One of their associates is, to my knowledge, a most base and unprincipled calum-

[1] twenty-third of February.

niator. As to *Endymion*, was it a poem, whatever might be its defects, to be treated contemptuously by those who had celebrated, with various degress of complacency and panegyric, *Paris* and *Woman* and a *Syrian Tale* and Mrs. Lefanu and Mr. Barrett and Mr. Howard Payne and a long list of the illustrious obscure? Are these the men who in their venal good nature presumed to draw a parallel between the Rev. Mr. Milman[2] and Lord Byron? What gnat did they strain at here, after having swallowed all those camels? Against what woman taken in adultery dares the foremost of these literary prostitutes to cast his opprobrious stone? Miserable man! you, one of the meanest, have wantonly defaced one of the noblest specimens of the workmanship of God. Nor shall it be your excuse, that, murderer as you are, you have spoken daggers, but used none.

The circumstances of the closing scene of poor Keats's life were not made known to me until the *Elegy* was ready for the press. I am given to understand that the wound which his sensitive spirit had received from the criticism of *Endymion* was exasperated by the bitter sense of unrequited benefits; the poor fellow seems to have been hooted from the stage of life, no less by those on whom he had wasted the promise of his genius, than those on whom he had lavished his fortune and his care. He was accompanied to Rome, and attended in his last illness by Mr. Severn, a young artist of the highest promise, who, I have been informed, "almost risked his own life, and sacrificed every prospect to unwearied attendance upon his dying friend." Had I known these circumstances before the completion of my poem, I should have been tempted to add my feeble tribute of applause to the more solid recompense which the virtuous man finds in the recollection of his own motives. Mr. Severn can dispense with a reward from "such stuff as dreams are made of." His conduct is a golden augury of the success of his future career—may the unextinguished Spirit of his illustrious friend animate the creations of his pencil, and plead against Oblivion for his name.—*Shelley.*

I

I weep for Adonais[3]—he is dead!
Oh, weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: "With me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!"

2

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness? where was lorn Urania[4]
When Adonais died? With veilèd eyes,
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sat, while one, with soft enamored breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies,
With which, like flowers that mock the corse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of Death.

3

Oh, weep for Adonais—he is dead!
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
For he is gone where all things wise and fair
Descend.—Oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

4

Most musical of mourners, weep again!
Lament anew, Urania!—He died,
Who was the sire[5] of an immortal strain,
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride,
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide
Trampled and mocked with many a loathèd rite
Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,
Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o'er earth, the third[6] among the sons of light.

5

Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Not all to that bright station dared to climb;
And happier they their happiness who knew,

[2] Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868), English clergyman and professor of poetry at Oxford.

[3] This name is apparently suggested by the *Elegy on Adonis* of the Greek poet Bion.

[4] Urania literally means "pertaining to heaven,"—i.e. the Muse of Astronomy, but Shelley here probably uses it in the sense of the spirit of heavenly love.

[5] Milton.

[6] The three are: Homer, Dante, and Milton.

Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
In which suns perished; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or God,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road,
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode.

6

But now, thy youngest, dearest one has perished,
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished
And fed with true-love tears, instead of dew;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals, nipped before they blew,
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

7

To that high Capital,[7] where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
He came; and bought, with price of purest breath,
A grave among the eternal.—Come away!
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof! while still
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay;
Awake him not! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

8

He will awake no more, oh, never more!—
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness and the law
Of change shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

9

Oh, weep for Adonais!—The quick Dreams,
The passion-winged ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not,—
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
But droop there, whence they sprung; and mourn their lot
Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

10

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries;
"Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead;
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain."
Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise!
She knew not 'twas her own; as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

11

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Washed his light limbs, as if embalming them;
Another clipped her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anadem,[8]
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem;
Another in her willful grief would break
Her bow and winged reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak;
And dull the barbèd fire against his frozen cheek.

12

Another Splendor on his mouth alit,
That mouth whence it was wont to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
And pass into the panting heart beneath
With lightning and with music; the damp death
Quenched its caress upon his icy lips;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapor, which the cold night clips,
It flushed through his pale limbs, and passed to its eclipse.

[7] Rome.

[8] a garland.

13

And others came—Desires and Adorations,
Wingèd Persuasions and veiled Destinies,
Splendors, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations
Of hopes and fears, and twilight Fantasies;
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
Came in slow pomp;—the moving pomp might seem
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

14

All he had loved, and molded into thought
From shape, and hue, and odor, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimmed the aërial eyes that kindle day;
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

15

Lost Echo[9] sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day;
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pined away
Into a shadow of all sounds:—a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

16

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were
Or they dead leaves; since her delight is flown,
For whom should she have waked the sullen year?
To Phœbus was not Hyacinth[10] so dear
Nor to himself Narcissus,[11] as to both
Thou, Adonais; wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turned to tears; odor, to sighing ruth.

17

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale,
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion[12] wails for thee: the curse of Cain[13]
Light on his head who[14] pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest!

18

Ah, woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Season's bier;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere;[15]
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

19

Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst,
As it has ever done, with change and motion,
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawned on Chaos; in its stream immersed,
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light;

[9] the nymph who was condemned never to speak first and never to be silent when others spoke. She pined away for love of Narcissus, so that she became only a voice.

[10] a beautiful youth, beloved of Apollo.

[11] the youth who fell in love with his own image in the water.

[12] England.

[13] Cain was the first murderer.

[14] a reference to the reviewer whose criticism severely affected Keats.

[15] briar.

All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst;
Diffuse themselves; and spend in love's delight
The beauty and the joy of their renewèd might.

20

The leprous corpse, touched by this spirit tender,
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendor
Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death
And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath.
Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
By sightless lightning,—the intense atom glows
A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

21

Alas! that all we loved of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!
Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators? Great and mean
Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.
As long as skies are blue and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

22

He will awake no more, oh, never more!
"Wake thou," cried Misery, "childless Mother, rise
Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
A wound more fierce than his with tears and sighs."
And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
Had held in holy silence, cried, "Arise!"
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendor sprung.

23

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
Out of the East, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapt Urania;
So saddened round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

24

Out of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her airy tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell;
And barbèd tongues, and thoughts more sharp than they,
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

25

In the death-chamber for a moment Death,
Shamed by the presence of that living Might,
Blushed to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and life's pale light
Flashed through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
"Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
As silent lightning leaves the starless night!
Leave me not!" cried Urania; her distress
Roused Death; Death rose and smiled, and met her vain caress.

26

"Stay yet awhile; speak to me once again;
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live;
And in my heartless breast and burning brain
That word, that kiss, shall all thoughts else survive,
With food of saddest memory kept alive,
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
Of thee, my Adonais! I would give
All that I am to be as thou now art!
But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart!

27

"O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men

Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh, where was then
Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear?
Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

28

"The herded wolves, bold only to pursue;
The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead;
The vultures to the conqueror's banner true,
Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
And whose wings rain contagion;—how they fled,
When, like Apollo, from his golden bow
The Pythian[16] of the age one arrow sped
And smiled!—The spoilers tempt no second blow,
They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

29

"The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
Is gathered into death without a dawn,
And the immortal stars awake again;
So is it in the world of living men:
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night."

30

Thus ceased she; and the mountain shepherds came,
Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent;
The Pilgrim of Eternity,[17] whose fame
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
An early but enduring monument,
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
In sorrow; from her wilds Ierne[18] sent
The sweetest lyrist[19] of her saddest wrong,
And love taught grief to fall like music from his tongue

[16] Byron.
[17] Byron.
[18] Ireland.
[19] Thomas Moore.

31

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,[20]
A phantom among men; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell; he, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actæon-like,[21] and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

32

A pardlike[22] Spirit beautiful and swift—
A Love in desolation masked;—A Power
Girt round with weakness;—it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour;
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow;—even whilst we speak
Is it not broken? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly: on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

33

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasped it; of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart;
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

34

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smiled through their tears; well knew that gentle band
Who in another's fate now wept his own,
As in the accents of an unknown land
He sung new sorrow; sad Urania scanned
The Stranger's mien, and murmured: "Who art thou?"

[20] Shelley himself.
[21] Because he had seen Diana bathing, Actaeon was turned into a stag and torn to pieces by his own hounds.
[22] leopardlike.

He answered not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's—oh! that it should be so!

35

What softer voice is hushed over the dead?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?
If it be He,[23] who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honored the departed one,
Let me not vex, with inharmonious sighs,
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

36

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh!
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe?
The nameless worm would now itself disown;
It felt, yet could escape, the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

37

Live thou,[24] whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!
But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow;
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as now.

38

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites that scream below;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.
Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

39

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life—
'Tis we, who, lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings.—*We* decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

40

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown gray in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

41

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendor, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
Cease, ye faint flowers and mountains, and thou Air,
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

42

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird;

[23] Leigh Hunt.
[24] the reviewer.

He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

43

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely; he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing the unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heaven's light.

44

The splendors of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not:
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

45

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton[25]
Rose pale,—his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; Sidney,[26] as he fought
And as he fell and as he lived and loved
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose; and Lucan,[27] by his death approved;
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved.

[25] Cf. Vol. II, p. 35.
[26] Cf. Vol. I, p. 288.
[27] Roman poet (39-65 A.D.).

46

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
"Thou art become as one of us," they cry;
"It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an Heaven of song.
Assume thy wingèd throne, thou Vesper[28] of our throng!"

47

Who mourns for Adonais? Oh, come forth,
Fond wretch! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth;
As from a center, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Satiate the void circumference; then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

48

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
Oh, not of him, but of our joy; 'tis nought
That ages, empires, and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend,—they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

49

Go thou to Rome,—at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness,
Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead

[28] evening star.

Thy footsteps to a slope of green access,
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread;

50

And gray walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory,[29] doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

51

Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

52

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-colored glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

53

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before; from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is passed from the revolving year,
And man, and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles,—the low wind whispers near;
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

54

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

55

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.
(1821)

[29] the pyramid of Cestius, an ancient tomb in the Protestant burial-ground at Rome.

The Final Chorus from *Hellas*[1]

SEMICHORUS I

Victorious Wrong, with vulture scream,
Salutes the risen sun, pursues the flying day!
I saw her, ghastly as a tyrant's dream,
Perch on the trembling pyramid of night,
Beneath which earth and all her realms pavilioned lay
In visions of the dawning undelight.

[1] This fragmentary poem refers to the Greek revolt against the Turks which was going on at the time of its composition (1821).

Who shall impede her flight?
Who rob her of her prey?

Voice without. Victory! Victory! Russia's famished eagles
Dare not to prey beneath the crescent's light.
Impale the remnant of the Greeks! despoil!
Violate! make their flesh cheaper than dust!

SEMICHORUS II

Thou voice which art
The herald of the ill in splendor hid!
Thou echo of the hollow heart
Of monarchy, bear me to thine abode
When desolation flashes o'er a world destroyed:
Oh, bear me to those isles of jagged cloud
Which float like mountains on the earthquake, mid
The momentary oceans of the lightning,
Or to some toppling promontory proud
Of solid tempest, whose black pyramid,
Riven, overhangs the founts intensely bright'ning
Of those dawn-tinted deluges of fire
Before their waves expire,
When heaven and earth are light, and only light
In the thunder-night!

Voice without. Victory! Victory! Austria, Russia, England,
And that tame serpent, that poor shadow, France,
Cry peace, and that means death when monarchs speak.
Ho, there! bring torches, sharpen those red stakes,
These chains are light, fitter for slaves and prisoners
Than Greeks. Kill! plunder! burn! let none remain.

SEMICHORUS I

Alas! for Liberty!
If numbers, wealth, or unfulfilling years,
Or fate, can quell the free!
Alas for Virtue! when
Torments, or contumely, or the sneers
Of erring judging men
Can break the heart where it abides!
Alas! if Love, whose smile makes this obscure world splendid,
Can change with its false times and tides,
Like hope and terror,—
Alas for Love!
And Truth, who wanderest lone and unbefriended,
If thou canst veil thy lie-consuming mirror
Before the dazzled eyes of Error,
Alas for thee! Image of the Above!

SEMICHORUS II

Repulse, with plumes from conquest torn,
Led the ten thousand from the limits of the morn
Through many an hostile Anarchy!
At length they wept aloud, and cried, "The Sea! the Sea!"[2]
Through exile, persecution, and despair,
Rome was, and young Atlantis[3] shall become
The wonder, or the terror, of the tomb
Of all whose step wakes Power lulled in her savage lair.
But Greece was as a hermit-child,
Whose fairest thoughts and limbs were built
To woman's growth, by dreams so mild,
She knew not pain or guilt;
And now, O Victory, blush! and Empire, tremble,
When ye desert the free—
If Greece must be
A wreck, yet shall its fragments reassemble,
And build themselves again impregnably
In a diviner clime,
To Amphionic[4] music on some Cape sublime
Which frowns above the idle foam of Time.

SEMICHORUS I

Let the tyrants rule the desert they have made;
Let the free possess the Paradise they claim;
Be the fortune of our fierce oppressors weighed
With our ruin, our resistance, and our name!

SEMICHORUS II

Our dead shall be the seed of their decay,
Our survivors be the shadow of their pride,
Our adversity a dream to pass away—
Their dishonor a remembrance to abide!

Voice without. Victory! Victory! The bought Briton sends
The keys of ocean to the Islamite.[5]—
Now shall the blazon of the cross be veiled,

[2] a reference to Xenophon's account of the march of ten thousand soldiers from the center of a hostile Persia. He describes their joyful exclamations when they again saw the sea.
[3] America.
[4] Amphion's music caused the walls of Troy to rise.
[5] Mohammedan.

And British skill, directing Othman[5] might,
Thunder-strike rebel victory. Oh, keep holy
This jubilee of unrevengèd blood!
Kill! crush! despoil! Let not a Greek escape!

SEMICHORUS I

Darkness has dawned in the East
On the noon of time;
The death-birds descend to their feast
From the hungry clime.
Let Freedom and Peace flee far
To a sunnier strand,
And follow Love's folding-star
To the Evening land!

SEMICHORUS II

The young moon has fed
Her exhausted horn
With the sunset's fire;
The weak day is dead,
But the night is not born;
And, like loveliness panting with wild desire,
While it trembles with fear and delight,
Hesperus flies from awakening night,
And pants in its beauty and speed with light
Fast-flashing, soft, and bright.
Thou beacon of love! thou lamp of the free!
Guide us far, far away,
To climes where now, veiled by the ardor of day,
Thou art hidden
From waves on which weary Noon
Faints in her summer swoon,
Between kingless continents, sinless as Eden,
Around mountains and islands inviolably
Pranked on the sapphire sea.

SEMICHORUS I

Through the sunset of hope,
Like the shapes of a dream,
What Paradise islands of glory gleam!
Beneath Heaven's cope,
Their shadows more clear float by;
The sound of their oceans, the light of their sky,
The music and fragrance their solitudes breathe
Burst, like morning on dream, or like Heaven on death,
Through the walls of our prison;
And Greece, which was dead, is arisen!

CHORUS

The world's great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn;
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam,
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far;
A new Peneus[6] rolls his fountains
Against the morning star.
Where fairer Tempe[7] bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads[8] on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo[9] cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus[10] sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso[11] for his native shore.

Oh, write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death's scroll, must be!
Nor mix with Laian[12] rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free;
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendor of its prime;
And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued;
Not gold, not blood, their altar dowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

[6] a river in Greece.
[7] a valley in Greece.
[8] a group of Grecian islands.
[9] the ship on which Jason sailed to seek the Golden Fleece.
[10] the mythical musician who went to Hades and played his harp to recover his dead wife Eurydice.
[11] the nymph who detained Ulysses on her island.
[12] referring to the story of Oedipus, son and murderer of Laius, who solved the riddle of the Sphinx.

Oh, cease! must hate and death return?
Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
Oh, might it die or rest at last!

(1821)

To ——

I

One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it;
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother,
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

2

I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not,—
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

(1821)

From *Epipsychidion*[1]

Shelley was introduced late in 1820 to Emilia Viviani. He was told concerning her that her father, on his second marriage, had shut up his daughter in a convent until she should be ready for marriage herself. At once Shelley felt called upon to rescue her from what he conceived to be a prison. Pity, when he saw how beautiful she was, soon turned to love. ("Would we two had been twins of the same mother!" he cries in *Epipsychidion*.) By the end of December 1820, he had written this hymn of Platonic love in which a sublimated earthly passion is nevertheless plainly to be read. Within a few weeks, however, Emilia was delivered by a man who married her. When Shelley sent *Epipsychidion* to Ollier in February 1821, he had no longer any desire to be connected with the poem: "It is a production of a portion of me already dead."

Epipsychidion is allied to other poems of Shelley (*Hymn to Intellectual Beauty, The Sensitive Plant,* and *Prometheus Unbound*) which deal with love and the relation of the individual to it. In all of these the concept is akin to Plato's. Dante's *Vita Nuova* (cf. Vol. I, p. 101) also strongly influenced him in this work.

There was a Being whom my spirit oft
Met on its visioned wanderings, far aloft,
In the clear golden prime of my youth's dawn,
Upon the fairy isles of sunny lawn,
Amid the enchanted mountains, and the caves
Of divine sleep, and on the air-like waves
Of wonder-level dream, whose tremulous floor
Paved her light steps;—on an imagined shore,
Under the gray beak of some promontory
She met me, robed in such exceeding glory,
That I beheld her not. In solitudes
Her voice came to me through the whispering woods,
And from the fountains, and the odors deep
Of flowers, which, like lips murmuring in their sleep
Of the sweet kisses which had lulled them there,
Breathed but of *her* to the enamored air;
And from the breezes whether low or loud,
And from the rain of every passing cloud,
And from the singing of the summer-birds,
And from all sounds, all silence. In the words
Of antique verse and high romance,—in form,
Sound, color—in whatever checks that Storm
Which with the shattered present chokes the past;
And in that best philosophy, whose taste
Makes this cold common hell, our life, a doom
As glorious as a fiery martyrdom;
Her Spirit was the harmony of truth.—

Then, from the caverns of my dreamy youth
I sprang, as one sandalled with plumes of fire,
And towards the lodestar of my one desire,
I flitted, like a dizzy moth, whose flight
Is as a dead leaf's in the owlet light,
When it would seek in Hesper's[2] setting sphere
A radiant death, a fiery sepulchre,
As if it were a lamp of earthly flame.—
But She, whom prayers or tears then could not tame,

[1] The soul out of my soul. Cf. line 238.

[2] the evening star.

Passed, like a God throned on a wingèd planet,
Whose burning plumes to tenfold swiftness fan it,
Into the dreary cone of our life's shade;
And as a man with mighty loss dismayed,
I would have followed, though the grave between
Yawned like a gulph whose spectres are unseen:
When a voice said:—"O Thou of hearts the weakest,
The phantom is beside thee whom thou seekest."
Then I—"Where?" the world's echo answered "Where!"
And in that silence, and in my despair,
I questioned every tongueless wind that flew
Over my tower of mourning, if it knew
Whither 'twas fled, this soul out of my soul;
And murmured names and spells which have control
Over the sightless tyrants of our fate;
But neither prayer nor verse could dissipate
The night which closed on her; nor uncreate
That world within this Chaos, mine and me,
Of which she was the veiled Divinity,
The world I say of thoughts that worshipped her:
And therefore I went forth, with hope and fear
And every gentle passion sick to death,
Feeding my course with expectation's breath,
Into the wintry forest of our life;
And struggling through its error with vain strife,
And stumbling in my weakness and my haste,
And half bewildered by new forms, I passed
Seeking among those untaught foresters
If I could find one form resembling hers,
In which she might have masked herself from me.
There,—One, whose voice was venomed melody,
Sate by a well, under blue night-shade bowers;
The breath of her false mouth was like faint flowers,
Her touch was as electric poison,—flame
Out of her looks into my vitals came,
And from her living cheeks and bosom flew
A killing air, which pierced like honey-dew
Into the core of my green heart, and lay
Upon its leaves; until, as hair grown grey
O'er a young brow, they hid its unblown prime
With ruins of unseasonable time.

In many mortal forms I rashly sought
The shadow of that idol of my thought.
And some were fair—but beauty dies away:
Others were wise—but honeyed words betray:
And One was true—oh! why not true to me?
Then, as a hunted deer that could not flee,
I turned upon my thoughts, and stood at bay,
Wounded and weak and panting; the cold day
Trembled, for pity of my strife and pain.
When, like a noon-day dawn, there shone again
Deliverance. One stood on my path who seemed
As like the glorious shape which I had dreamed,
As is the Moon, whose changes ever run
Into themselves, to the eternal Sun;
The cold chaste Moon, the Queen of Heaven's bright isles,
Who makes all beautiful on which she smiles,
That wandering shrine of soft yet icy flame
Which ever is transformed, yet still the same,
And warms not but illumines. Young and fair
As the descended Spirit of that sphere,
She hid me, as the Moon may hide the night
From its own darkness, until all was bright
Between the Heaven and Earth of my calm mind,
And, as a cloud charioted by the wind,
She led me to a cave in that wild place,
And sate beside me, with her downward face
Illumining my slumbers, like the Moon
Waxing and waning o'er Endymion.[8]
And I was laid asleep, spirit and limb,
And all my being became bright or dim
As the Moon's image in a summer sea,
According as she smiled or frowned on me;
And there I lay, within a chaste cold bed:
Alas, I then was nor alive nor dead:—
For at her silver voice came Death and Life,
Unmindful each of their accustomed strife,
Masked like twin babes, a sister and a brother,
The wandering hopes of one abandoned mother,
And through the cavern without wings they flew,
And cried "Away, he is not of our crew."
I wept, and though it be a dream, I weep.

(1821)

Lines: When the Lamp Is Shattered

I

When the lamp is shattered,
The light in the dust lies dead;
When the cloud is scattered,
The rainbow's glory is shed.
When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remembered not;
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

[8] The moon-goddess, Diana, fell in love with the mortal Endymion; cf. Keats's *Endymion*, p. 342.

2

As music and splendor
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute:
No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruined cell,
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

3

When hearts have once mingled,
Love first leaves the well-built nest;
The weak one is singled
To endure what it once possessed.
O Love! who bewailest
The frailty of all things here,
Why choose you the frailest
For your cradle, your home, and your bier?

4

Its passions will rock thee,
As the storms rock the ravens on high;
Bright reason will mock thee,
Like the sun from a wintry sky.
From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
Leave thee naked to laughter,
When leaves fall and cold winds come.

(1822)

A Dirge

Rough wind, that moanest loud
Grief too sad for song;
Wild wind, when sullen cloud
Knells all the night long;
Sad storm, whose tears are vain,
Bare woods, whose branches strain,
Deep caves and dreary main,—
Wail, for the world's wrong!

(1822)

From *The Defense of Poesy*

In *The Four Ages of Poetry* (1820), Thomas Love Peacock charged that the art of poetry had deteriorated and was on the road to becoming extinct. 'A poet in our times," he said, "is a semi-barbarian in a civilized community. . . . The highest inspirations of poetry are resolvable into three ingredients: the rant of unregulated passion, the whine of exaggerated feeling, and the cant of factitious sentiment. . . . It can never make a philosopher, nor a statesman, nor in any class of life an useful or rational man. It cannot claim the slightest share in any one of the comforts and utilities of life of which we have witnessed so many and so rapid advances. But though not useful, it may be said to be highly ornamental. . . . But in whatever degree poetry is cultivated, it must necessarily be to the neglect of some branch of useful study; and it is a lamentable thing to see minds, capable of better things, running to seed in the spacious indolence of these empty aimless mockeries of the intellectual exertion."

Shelley felt called upon to answer this attack on his beloved art. His noble defense is in the tradition of Sir Philip Sidney (cf. Vol. I, p. 289 ff.).

The poetry of Dante may be considered as the bridge thrown over the stream of time, which unites the modern and ancient world. The distorted notions of invisible things which Dante and his rival Milton have idealized, are merely the mask and mantle in which these great poets walk through eternity enveloped and disguised. It is a difficult question to determine how far they were conscious of the distinction which must have subsisted in their minds between their own creeds and that of the people. Dante at least appears to wish to mark the full extent of it by placing Riphaeus, whom Virgil calls *justissimus unus*,[1] in Paradise, and observing a most poetical caprice in his distribution of rewards and punishments. And Milton's poem contains within itself a philosophical refutation of that system of which, by a strange and natural antithesis, it has been a chief popular support. Nothing can exceed the energy and mag-

[1] one of the most just of men.

nificence of the character of Satan as expressed in *Paradise Lost*. It is a mistake to suppose that he could ever have been intended for the popular personification of evil. Implacable hate, patient cunning, and a sleepless refinement of device to inflict the extremest anguish on an enemy, these things are evil; and, although venial in a slave, are not to be forgiven in a tyrant; although redeemed by much that ennobles his defeat in one subdued, are marked by all that dishonors his conquest in the victor. Milton's Devil as a moral being is as far superior to his God, as one who perseveres in some purpose which he has conceived to be excellent in spite of adversity and torture, is to one who in the cold security of undoubted triumph inflicts the most horrible revenge upon his enemy, not from any mistaken notion of inducing him to repent of a perseverance in enmity, but with the alleged design of exasperating him to deserve new torments. Milton has so far violated the popular creed (if this shall be judged to be a violation) as to have alleged no superiority of moral virtue to his God over his Devil. And this bold neglect of a direct moral purpose is the most decisive proof of the supremacy of Milton's genius. He mingled as it were the elements of human nature as colors upon a single palette, and arranged them in the composition of his great picture according to the laws of epic truth, that is, according to the laws of that principle by which a series of actions of the external universe and of intelligent and ethical beings is calculated to excite the sympathy of succeeding generations of mankind. The *Divina Commedia* and *Paradise Lost* have conferred upon modern mythology a systematic form; and when change and time shall have added one more superstition to the mass of those which have arisen and decayed upon the earth, commentators will be learnedly employed in elucidating the religion of ancestral Europe, only not utterly forgotten because it will have been stamped with the eternity of genius.

Homer was the first and Dante the second epic poet: that is, the second poet, the series of whose creations bore a defined and intelligible relation to the knowledge and sentiment and religion of the age in which he lived, and of the ages which followed it: developing itself in correspondence with their development. For Lucretius had limed the wings of his swift spirit in the dregs of the sensible world; and Virgil, with a modesty that ill became his genius, had affected the fame of an imitator, even whilst he created anew all that he copied; and none among the flock of mock-birds, though their notes are sweet, Appollonius Rhodius, Quintus Calaber, Smyrnaeus, Nonnus, Lucan, Statius, or Claudian,[2] have sought even to fulfill a single condition of epic truth. Milton was the third epic poet. For if the title of epic in its highest sense be refused to the *Aeneid*, still less can it be conceded to the *Orlando Furioso*[3], the *Gerusalemme Liberata*[4], the *Lusiad*[5], or the *Fairy Queen*.[6]

Dante and Milton were both deeply penetrated with the ancient religion of the civilized world; and its spirit exists in their poetry probably in the same proportion as its forms survived in the unreformed worship of modern Europe. The one preceded and the other followed the Reformation at almost equal intervals. Dante was the first religious reformer, and Luther[7] surpassed him rather in the rudeness and acrimony, than in the boldness of his censures, of papal usurpation. Dante was the first awakener of entranced Europe; he created a language, in itself music and persuasion, out of a chaos of inharmonious barbarisms. He was the congregator of those great spirits who presided over the resurrection of learning; the Lucifer[8] of that starry flock which in the thirteenth century shone forth from republican Italy, as from a heaven, into the darkness of the benighted world. His very words are instinct with spirit; each is as a spark, a burning atom of inextinguishable thought; and many yet lie covered in the ashes of their birth, and pregnant with a lightning which has yet found no conductor. All high poetry is infinite; it is as the first acorn, which contained all oaks potentially. Veil after veil may be undrawn, and the inmost naked beauty of the meaning never exposed. A great poem is a fountain for ever overflowing with the waters of wisdom and delight; and after one person and one age has exhausted all of its divine effluence which their peculiar relations enable them to share, another and yet another succeeds, and new relations are ever developed, the source of an unforeseen and unconceived delight. . . .

The functions of the poetical faculty are twofold; by one it creates new materials of knowledge, and power, and pleasure; by the other it engenders

[2] all minor Latin poets.
[3] Cf. Vol. I, p. 254 ff.
[4] Cf. Vol. I, p. 260 ff.
[5] Portuguese epic by Camoëns (1524-1580).
[6] Cf. Vol. I, p. 263 ff.
[7] Martin Luther (1483-1546), the great German Protestant reformer.
[8] Literally, "light-bearer."

in the mind a desire to reproduce and arrange them according to a certain rhythm and order, which may be called the beautiful and the good. The cultivation of poetry is never more to be desired than at periods when, from an excess of the selfish and calculating principle, the accumulation of the materials of external life exceed the quantity of the power of assimilating them to the internal laws of human nature. The body has then become too unwieldy for that which animates it.

Poetry is indeed something divine. It is at once the centre and circumference of knowledge; it is that which comprehends all science, and that to which all science must be referred. It is at the same time the root and blossom of all other systems of thought; it is that from which all spring, and that which adorns all; and that which, if blighted, denies the fruit and seed, and withholds from the barren world the nourishment and the succession of the scions of the tree of life. It is the perfect and consummate surface and bloom of all things; it is as the odor and the color of the rose to the texture of the elements which compose it, as the form and splendor of unfaded beauty to the secrets of anatomy and corruption. What were virtue, love, patriotism, friendship—what were the scenery of this beautiful universe which we inhabit; what were our consolations on this side of the grave—and what were our aspirations beyond it, if poetry did not ascend to bring light and fire from those eternal regions where the owl-winged faculty of calculation dare not ever soar? Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will. A man cannot say, "I will compose poetry." The greatest poet even cannot say it; for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness; this power arises from within, like the color of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our nature are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure. Could this influence be durable in its original purity and force, it is impossible to predict the greatness of its results; but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet. I appeal to the greatest poets of the present day, whether it is not an error to assert that the finest passages of poetry are produced by labor and study. The toil and the delay recommended by critics can be justly interpreted to mean no more than a careful observation of the inspired moments, and an artificial connexion of the spaces between their suggestions, by the intertexture of conventional expressions; a necessity only imposed by the limitedness of the poetical faculty itself: for Milton conceived the *Paradise Lost* as a whole before he executed it in portions. We have his own authority also for the muse having "dictated" to him the "unpremeditated song." And let this be an answer to those who would allege the fifty-six various readings of the first line of the *Orlando Furioso*. Compositions so produced are to poetry what mosaic is to painting. The instinct and intuition of the poetical faculty is still more observable in the plastic and pictorial arts: a great statue or picture grows under the power of the artist as a child in a mother's womb; and the very mind which directs the hands in formation, is incapable of accounting to itself for the origin, the gradations, or the media of the process.

Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds. We are aware of evanescent visitations of thought and feeling, sometimes associated with place or person, sometimes regarding our own mind alone, and always arising unforeseen and departing unbidden, but elevating and delightful beyond all expression: so that even in the desire and the regret they leave, there cannot but be pleasure, participating as it does in the nature of its object. It is as it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own; but its footsteps are like those of a wind over the sea, which the morning calm erases, and whose traces remain only, as on the wrinkled sand which paves it. These and corresponding conditions of being are experienced principally by those of the most delicate sensibility and the most enlarged imagination; and the state of mind produced by them is at war with every base desire. The enthusiasm of virtue, love, patriotism, and friendship, is essentially linked with such emotions; and whilst they last, self appears as what it is, an atom to a universe. Poets are not only subject to these experiences as spirits of the most refined organization, but they can color all that they combine with the evanescent hues of this ethereal world; a word, a trait in the representation of a scene or a passion, will touch the enchanted chord, and reanimate, in those who have ever experienced those emotions, the sleeping, the cold, the buried image of the past. Poetry thus makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world; it

arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life, and veiling them, or in language or in form, sends them forth among mankind, bearing sweet news of kindred joy to those with whom their sisters abide—abide, because there is no portal of expression from the caverns of the spirit which they inhabit into the universe of things. Poetry redeems from decay the visitations of the divinity in man.

Poetry turns all things to loveliness; it exalts the beauty of that which is most beautiful, and it adds beauty to that which is most deformed; it marries exultation and horror, grief and pleasure, eternity and change; it subdues to union, under its light yoke, all irreconcilable things. It transmutes all that it touches, and every form moving within the radiance of its presence is changed by wondrous sympathy to an incarnation of the spirit which it breathes: its secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life; it strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty, which is the spirit of its forms.

(1821)

AESCHYLUS (525-456 B.C.)

PROMETHEUS BOUND

(Translated by Elizabeth B. Browning)

The first of the great Greek tragic dramatists was born near Athens, at Eleusis. For a time he served as a soldier, participating in the momentous battle of Marathon (490 B.C.). He commenced writing plays in 499, but he was forty years of age before he won the coveted prize in the great dramatic festival held twice yearly at Athens. Fifteen times this honor was accorded him, in recognition of his great achievements. Of the ninety plays which he is thought to have written only seven survive.

Prometheus Bound is the only part that remains to us of an original trilogy, in which the first was probably *Prometheus the Fire-bringer* and the last *Prometheus Unbound*. The three together must have told the entire story of that Prometheus who sinned against Zeus by bringing fire to men, who was punished with heavy torture for ages by Zeus, and who was finally set free from his rock of pain. *Prometheus Bound* exhibits Aeschylus's grandeur and power at their best. It is one of the greatest of Greek tragedies. We are fortunate in having a translation by a woman who was herself one of England's leading poets.

Persons

PROMETHEUS.
OCEANUS.
HERMES.
HEPHÆSTUS.
Io, *daughter of* INACHUS.
STRENGTH *and* FORCE.
Chorus of Sea Nymphs.

SCENE.—STRENGTH *and* FORCE, HEPHÆSTUS *and* PROMETHEUS, *at the Rocks.*

STRENGTH. We reach the utmost limit of the earth,
The Scythian track, the desert without man.
And now, Hephæstus, thou must needs fulfil
The mandate of our Father,[1] and with links
Indissoluble of adamantine chains
Fasten against this beetling precipice
This guilty god. Because he filched away
Thine own bright flower, the glory of plastic fire,
And gifted mortals with it,—such a sin
It doth behove he expiate to the gods,
Learning to accept the empery of Zeus
And leave off his old trick of loving man.

HEPHÆSTUS. O Strength and Force, for you, our Zeus's will
Presents a deed for doing, no more!—but *I*,
I lack your daring, up this storm-rent chasm
To fix with violent hands a kindred god,
Howbeit necessity compels me so
That I must dare it, and our Zeus commands
With a most inevitable word. Ho, thou!
High-thoughted son of Themis who is sage!
Thee loth, I loth must rivet fast in chains
Against this rocky height unclomb by man,
Where never human voice nor face shall find
Out thee who lov'st them, and thy beauty's flower,
Scorched in the sun's clear heat, shall fade away.

[1] Zeus.

Night shall come up with garniture of stars
To comfort thee with shadow, and the sun
Disperse with retrickt beams the morning-frosts,
But through all changes sense of present woe
Shall vex thee sore, because with none of them
There comes a hand to free. Such fruit is plucked
From love of man! and in that thou, a god,
Didst brave the wrath of gods and give away
Undue respect to mortals, for that crime
Thou art adjudged to guard this joyless rock,
Erect, unslumbering, bending not the knee,
And many a cry and unavailing moan
To utter on the air. For Zeus is stern,
And new-made kings are cruel.

STRENGTH. Be it so.
Why loiter in vain pity? Why not hate
A god the gods hate? one too who betrayed
Thy glory unto men?

HEPHÆSTUS. An awful thing
Is kinship joined to friendship.

STRENGTH. Grant it be;
Is disobedience to the Father's word
A possible thing? Dost quail not more for that?

HEPHÆSTUS. Thou, at least, art a stern one: ever bold.

STRENGTH. Why, if I wept, it were no remedy;
And do not *thou* spend labor on the air
To bootless uses.

HEPHÆSTUS. Cursed handicraft!
I curse and hate thee, O my craft![2]

STRENGTH. Why hate
Thy craft most plainly innocent of all
These pending ills?

HEPHÆSTUS. I would some other hand
Were here to work it!

STRENGTH. All work hath its pain,
Except to rule the gods. There is none free
Except King Zeus.

HEPHÆSTUS. I know it very well:
I argue not against it.

STRENGTH. Why not, then,
Make haste and lock the fetters over HIM
Lest Zeus behold thee lagging?

HEPHÆSTUS. Here be chains.
Zeus may behold these.

STRENGTH. Seize him: strike amain:
Strike with the hammer on each side his hands—
Rivet him to the rock.

HEPHÆSTUS. The work is done,
And thoroughly done.

STRENGTH. Still faster grapple him;
Wedge him in deeper: leave no inch to stir.
He's terrible for finding a way out
From the irremediable.

HEPHÆSTUS. Here's an arm, at least,
Grappled past freeing.

STRENGTH. Now then, buckle me
The other securely. Let this wise one learn
He's duller than our Zeus.

HEPHÆSTUS. Oh, none but he
Accuse me justly.

STRENGTH. Now, straight through the chest,
Take him and bite him with the clenching tooth
Of the adamantine wedge, and rivet him.

HEPHÆSTUS. Alas, Prometheus, what thou sufferest here
I sorrow over.

STRENGTH. Dost thou flinch again
And breathe groans for the enemies of Zeus?
Beware lest thine own pity find thee out.

HEPHÆSTUS. Thou dost behold a spectacle that turns
The sight o' the eyes to pity.

STRENGTH. I behold
A sinner suffer his sin's penalty.
But lash the thongs about his sides.

HEPHÆSTUS. So much,
I must do. Urge no farther than I must.

STRENGTH. Ay, but I *will* urge!—and, with shout on shout,
Will hound thee at this quarry. Get thee down
And ring amain the iron round his legs.

HEPHÆSTUS. That work was not long doing.

STRENGTH. Heavily now
Let fall the strokes upon the perforant gyves:
For He who rates the work has a heavy hand.

HEPHÆSTUS. Thy speech is savage as thy shape.

STRENGTH. Be thou
Gentle and tender! but revile not me
For the firm will and the untruckling hate.

HEPHÆSTUS. Let us go. He is netted round with chains.

STRENGTH. Here, now, taunt on! and having spoiled the gods
Of honors, crown withal thy mortal men
Who live a whole day out. Why how could *they*
Draw off from thee one single of thy griefs?
Methinks the Dæmons gave thee a wrong name.
"Prometheus," which means Providence,—because
Thou dost thyself need providence to see
Thy roll and ruin from the top of doom.

PROMETHEUS (*alone*). O holy Æther, and swift-wingèd Winds,
And River-wells, and laughter innumerous
Of yon sea-waves! Earth, mother of us all,
And all-viewing cyclic Sun, I cry on you,—
Behold me, a god, what I endure from gods!

[2] Hephæstus was the blacksmith of the gods.

Behold, with throe on throe,
How, wasted by this woe,
I wrestle down the myriad years of time!
Behold, how fast around me,
The new King of the happy ones sublime
Has flung the chain he forged, has shamed and bound me!
Woe, woe! to-day's woe and the coming morrow's
I cover with one groan. And where is found me
A limit to these sorrows?
And yet what word do I say? I have foreknown
Clearly all things that should be; nothing done
Comes sudden to my soul; and I must bear
What is ordained with patience, being aware
Necessity doth front the universe
With an invincible gesture. Yet this curse
Which strikes me now, I find it hard to brave
In silence or in speech. Because I gave
Honor to mortals, I have yoked my soul
To this compelling fate. Because I stole
The secret fount of fire, whose bubbles went
Over the ferule's brim, and manward sent
Art's mighty means and perfect rudiment,
That sin I expiate in this agony,
Hung here in fetters, 'neath the blanching sky.
Ah, ah me! what a sound,
What a fragrance sweeps up from a pinion unseen
Of a god, or a mortal, or nature between,
Sweeping up to this rock where the earth has her bound,
To have sight of my pangs or some guerdon obtain.
Lo, a god in the anguish, a god in the chain!
The god, Zeus hateth sore
And his gods hate again,
As many as tread on his glorified floor,
Because I loved mortals too much evermore.
Alas me! what a murmur and motion I hear,
As of birds flying near!
And the air undersings
The light stroke of their wings—
And all life that approaches I wait for in fear.

Chorus of Sea Nymphs, 1st Strophe.

Fear nothing! our troop
Floats lovingly up
With a quick-daring stroke
Of wings steered to the rock,
Having softened the soul of our father below.
For the gales of swift-bearing have sent me a sound,
And the clank of the iron, the malleted blow,
Smote down the profound
Of my caverns of old,
And struck the red light in a blush from my brow,—
Till I sprang up unsandaled, in haste to behold,
And rushed forth on my chariot of wings manifold.

PROMETHEUS. Alas me!—alas me!
Ye offspring of Tethys who bore at her breast
Many children, and eke of Oceanus, he
Coiling still around earth with perpetual unrest!
Behold me and see
How transfixed with the fang
Of a fetter I hang
On the high-jutting rocks of this fissure and keep
An uncoveted watch o'er the world and the deep.

Chorus, 1st Antistrophe.

I behold thee, Prometheus; yet now, yet now,
A terrible cloud whose rain is tears
Sweeps over mine eyes that witness how
Thy body appears
Hung awaste on the rocks by infrangible chains:
For new is the Hand, new the rudder that steers
The ship of Olympus through surge and wind—
And of old things passed, no track is behind.

PROMETHEUS. Under earth, under Hades
Where the home of the shade is,
All into the deep, deep Tartarus,
I would he had hurled me adown.
I would he had plunged me, fastened thus
In the knotted chain with the savage clang,
All into the dark where there should be none,
Neither god nor another, to laugh and see.
But now the winds sing through and shake
The hurtling chains wherein I hang,
And I, in my naked sorrows, make
Much mirth for my enemy.

Chorus, 2nd Strophe.

Nay! who of the gods hath a heart so stern
As to use thy woe for a mock and mirth?
Who would not turn more mild to learn
Thy sorrows? who of the heaven and earth
Save Zeus? But he
Right wrathfully
Bears on his sceptral soul unbent
And rules thereby the heavenly seed,
Nor will he pause till he content
His thirsty heart in a finished deed;
Or till Another shall appear,
To win by fraud, to seize by fear
The hard-to-be-captured government.

PROMETHEUS. Yet even of *me* he shall have need,
That monarch of the blessed seed,
Of me, of me, who now am cursed
By his fetters dire,—
To wring my secret out withal
And learn by whom his sceptre shall
Be filched from him—as was, at first,
His heavenly fire.
But he never shall enchant me
With his honey-lipped persuasion;
Never, never shall he daunt me
With the oath and threat of passion
Into speaking as they want me,
Till he loose this savage chain,
And accept the expiation
Of my sorrow, in his pain.

Chorus, 2nd Antistrophe.

Thou art, sooth, a brave god,
And, for all thou hast borne
From the stroke of the rod,
Nought relaxest from scorn.
But thou speakest unto me
Too free and unworn;
And a terror strikes through me
And festers my soul
And I fear, in the roll
Of the storm, for thy fate
In the ship far from shore:
Since the son of Saturnus is hard in his hate
And unmoved in his heart evermore.

PROMETHEUS. I know that Zeus is stern;
I know he metes his justice by his will;
And yet, his soul shall learn
More softness when once broken by this ill:
And curbing his unconquerable vaunt
He shall rush on in fear to meet with me
Who rush to meet with him in agony,
To issues of harmonious covenant.
CHORUS. Remove the veil from all things and relate
The story to us,—of what crime accused,
Zeus smites thee with dishonorable pangs.
Speak: if to teach us do not grieve thyself.
PROMETHEUS. The utterance of these things is torture to me,
But so, too, is their silence; each way lies
Woe strong as fate.
When gods began with wrath,
And war rose up between their starry brows,
Some choosing to cast Chronos from his throne
That Zeus might king it there, and some in haste
With opposite oaths that they would have no Zeus
To rule the gods for ever,—I, who brought
The counsel I thought meetest, could not move
The Titans, children of the Heaven and Earth,
What time, disdaining in their rugged souls
My subtle machinations, they assumed
It was an easy thing for force to take
The mastery of fate. My mother, then,
Who is called not only Themis but Earth too,
(Her single beauty joys in many names)
Did teach me with reiterant prophecy
What future should be, and how conquering gods
Should not prevail by strength and violence
But by guile only. When I told them so,
They would not deign to contemplate the truth
On all sides round; whereat I deemed it best
To lead my willing mother upwardly
And set my Themis face to face with Zeus
As willing to receive her. Tartarus,
With its abysmal cloister of the Dark,
Because I gave that counsel, covers up
The antique Chronos and his siding hosts,
And, by that counsel helped, the king of gods
Hath recompensed me with these bitter pangs:
For kingship wears a cancer at the heart,—
Distrust in friendship. Do ye also ask
What crimes it is for which he tortures me?
That shall be clear before you. When at first
He filled his father's throne, he instantly
Made various gifts of glory to the gods
And dealt the empire out. Alone of men,
Of miserable men, he took no count,
But yearned to sweep their track off from the world
And plant a newer race there. Not a god
Resisted such desire except myself.
I dared it! *I* drew mortals back to light,
From meditated ruin deep as hell!
For which wrong, I am bent down in these pangs
Dreadful to suffer, mournful to behold,
And I, who pitied man, am thought myself
Unworthy of pity; while I render out
Deep rhythms of anguish 'neath the harping hand
That strikes me thus—a sight to shame your Zeus!
CHORUS. Hard as thy chains and cold as all these rocks
Is he, Prometheus, who withholds his heart
From joining in thy woe. I yearned before
To fly this sight; and, now I gaze on it,
I sicken inwards.
PROMETHEUS. To my friends, indeed,
I must be a sad sight.
CHORUS. And didst thou sin
No more than so?

PROMETHEUS. I did restrain besides
My mortals from premeditating death.
CHORUS. How didst thou medicine the plague-fear of death?
PROMETHEUS. I set blind Hopes to inhabit in their house.
CHORUS. By that gift thou didst help thy mortals well.
PROMETHEUS. I gave them also fire.
CHORUS. And have they now,
Those creatures of a day, the red-eyed fire?
PROMETHEUS. They have: and shall learn by it many arts.
CHORUS. And truly for such sins Zeus tortures thee
And will remit no anguish? Is there set
No limit before thee to thine agony?
PROMETHEUS. No other: only what seems good to HIM.
CHORUS. And how will it seem good? what hope remains?
Seest thou not that thou hast sinned? But that thou has sinned
It glads me not to speak of, and grieves thee:
Then let it pass from both, and seek thyself
Some outlet from distress.
PROMETHEUS. It is in truth
An easy thing to stand aloof from pain
And lavish exhortation and advice
On one vexed sorely by it. I have known
All in prevision. By my choice, my choice,
I freely sinned—I will confess my sin—
And helping mortals, found my own despair.
I did not think indeed that I should pine
Beneath such pangs against such skyey rocks,
Doomed to this drear hill and no neighboring
Of any life: but mourn not ye for griefs
I bear to-day: hear rather, dropping down
To the plain, how other woes creep on to me,
And learn the consummation of my doom.
Beseech you, nymphs, beseech you, grieve for me
Who now am grieving; for Grief walks the earth,
And sits down at the foot of each by turns.
CHORUS. We hear the deep clash of thy words, Prometheus, and obey.
And I spring with a rapid foot away
From the rushing car and the holy air,
The track of birds;
And I drop to the rugged ground and there
Await the tale of thy despair.

OCEANUS *enters.*

OCEANUS. I reach the bourn of my weary road,
Where I may see and answer thee,
Prometheus, in thine agony.
On the back of the quick-winged bird I glode,
And I bridled him in
With the will of a god.
Behold, thy sorrow aches in me
Constrained by the force of kin.
Nay, though that tie were all undone,
For the life of none beneath the sun
Would I seek a larger benison
Than I seek for thine.
And thou shalt learn my words are truth,—
That no fair parlance of the mouth
Grows falsely out of mine.
Now give me a deed to prove my faith;
For no faster friend is named in breath
Than I, Oceanus, am thine.
PROMETHUS. Ha! what has brought thee? Hast thou also come
To look upon my woe? How hast thou dared
To leave the depths called after thee, the caves
Self-hewn and self-roofed with spontaneous rock,
To visit earth, the mother of my chain?
Hast come indeed to view my doom and mourn
That I should sorrow thus? Gaze on, and see
How I, the fast friend of your Zeus,—how I
The erector of the empire in his hand,
Am bent beneath that hand, in this despair.
OCEANUS. Prometheus, I behold: and I would fain
Exhort thee, though already subtle enough,
To a better wisdom. Titan, know thyself,
And take new softness to thy manners since
A new king rules the gods. If words like these,
Harsh words and trenchant, thou wilt fling abroad,
Zeus haply, though he sit so far and high,
May hear thee do it, and so, this wrath of his
Which now affects thee fiercely, shall appear
A mere child's sport at vengeance. Wretched god,
Rather dismiss the passion which thou hast,
And seek a change from grief. Perhaps I seem
To address thee with old saws and outworn sense,—
Yet such a curse, Prometheus, surely waits
On lips that speak too proudly: thou, meantime,
Art none the meeker, nor dost yield a jot
To evil circumstance, preparing still
To swell the account of grief with other griefs
Than what are borne. Beseech thee, use me then
For counsel: do not spurn against the pricks,—
Seeing that who reigns, reigns by cruelty
Instead of right. And now, I go from hence,
And will endeavour if a power of mine
Can break thy fetters through. For thee,—be calm,
And smooth thy words from passion. Knowest thou not

Of perfect knowledge, thou who knowest too much,
That where the tongue wags, ruin never lags?
PROMETHEUS. I gratulate thee who hast shared and dared
All things with me, except their penalty.
Enough so! leave these thoughts. It cannot be
That thou shouldst move HIM. HE may *not* be moved;
And *thou*, beware of sorrow on this road.
OCEANUS. Ay! ever wiser for another's use
Than thine! the event, and not the prophecy,
Attests it to me. Yet where now I rush,
Thy wisdom hath no power to drag me back;
Because I glory, glory, to go hence
And win for thee deliverance from thy pangs,
As a free gift from Zeus.
PROMETHEUS. Why there, again,
I give thee gratulation and applause.
Thou lackest no goodwill. But, as for deeds,
Do nought! 'twere all done vainly; helping nought,
Whatever thou wouldst do. Rather take rest
And keep thyself from evil. If I grieve,
I do not therefore wish to multiply
The griefs of others. Verily, not so!
For still my brother's doom doth vex my soul,—
My brother Atlas, standing in the west,
Shouldering the column of the heaven and earth,
A difficult burden! I have also seen,
And pitied as I saw, the earth-born one,
The inhabitant of old Cilician caves,
The great war-monster of the hundred heads,
(All taken and bowed beneath the violent Hand,)
Typhon the fierce, who did resist the gods,
And, hissing slaughter from his dreadful jaws,
Flash out ferocious glory from his eyes
As if to storm the throne of Zeus. Whereat,
The sleepless arrow of Zeus flew straight at him,
The headlong bolt of thunder breathing flame,
And struck him downward from his eminence
Of exaltation; through the very soul,
It struck him, and his strength was withered up
To ashes, thunder-blasted. Now he lies
A helpless trunk supinely, at full length
Beside the strait of ocean, spurred into
By roots of Ætna[8]; high upon whose tops
Hephæstus sits and strikes the flashing ore.
From thence the rivers of fire shall burst away
Hereafter, and devour with savage jaws
The equal plains of fruitful Sicily,
Such passion he shall boil back in hot darts
Of an insatiate fury and sough of flame,
Fallen Typhon,—howsoever struck and charred
By Zeus's bolted thunder. But for thee,

[8] a volcanic mountain in Sicily.

Thou art not so unlearned as to need
My teaching—let thy knowledge save thyself.
I quaff the full cup of a present doom,
And wait till Zeus hath quenched his will in wrath.
OCEANUS. Prometheus, art thou ignorant of this,
That words do medicine anger?
PROMETHEUS. If the word
With seasonable softness touch the soul
And, where the parts are ulcerous, sear them not
By any rudeness.
OCEANUS. With a noble aim
To dare as nobly—is there harm in *that*?
Dost thou discern it? Teach me.
PROMETHEUS. I discern
Vain aspiration, unresultive work.
OCEANUS. Then suffer me to bear the brunt of this!
Since it is profitable that one who is wise
Should seem not wise at all.
PROMETHEUS. And such would seem
My very crime.
OCEANUS. In truth thine argument
Sends me back home.
PROMETHEUS. Lest any lament for me
Should cast thee down to hate.
OCEANUS. The hate of him
Who sits a new king on the absolute throne?
PROMETHEUS. Beware of him, lest thine heart grieve by him.
OCEANUS. Thy doom, Prometheus, be my teacher!
PROMETHEUS. Go.
Depart—beware—and keep the mind thou hast.
OCEANUS. Thy words drive after, as I rush before.
Lo! my four-footed bird sweeps smooth and wide
The flats of air with balanced pinions, glad
To bend his knee at home in the ocean-stall.
[OCEANUS *departs.*

Chorus, 1st Strophe.

I moan thy fate, I moan for thee,
Prometheus! From my eyes too tender,
Drop after drop incessantly
The tears of my heart's pity render
My cheeks wet from their fountains free;
Because that Zeus, the stern and cold,
Whose law is taken from his breast,
Uplifts his sceptre manifest
Over the gods of old.

1st Antistrophe.

All the land is moaning
With a murmured plaint to-day;

All the mortal nations
Having habitations
In the holy Asia
Are a dirge entoning
For thine honor and thy brothers',
Once majestic beyond others
In the old belief,—
Now are groaning in the groaning
Of thy deep-voiced grief.

2nd Strophe.

Mourn the maids inhabitant
Of the Colchian land,
Who with white, calm bosoms stand
In the battle's roar:
Mourn the Scythian tribes that haunt
The verge of earth, Mæotis' shore.

2nd Antistrophe.

Yea! Arabia's battle-crown,
And dwellers in the beetling town
Mount Caucasus sublimely rears,—
An iron squadron, thundering down
With the sharp-prowed spears.

But one other before, have I seen to remain
By invincible pain
Bound and vanquished,—one Titan! 'twas Atlas, who bears
In a curse from the gods, by that strength of his own
Which he evermore wears,
The weight of the heaven on his shoulder alone,
While he sighs up the stars;
And the tides of the ocean wail bursting their bars,—
Murmurs still the profound,
And black Hades roars up through the chasm of the ground,
And the fountains of pure-running rivers moan low
In a pathos of woe.

PROMETHEUS. Beseech you, think not I am silent thus
Through pride or scorn. I only gnaw my heart
With meditation, seeing myself so wronged.
For see—their honors to these new-made gods,
What other gave but I, and dealt them out
With distribution? Ay—but here I am dumb!
For here, I should repeat your knowledge to you,
If I spake aught. List rather to the deeds
I did for mortals; how, being fools before,
I made them wise and true in aim of soul,
And let me tell you—not as taunting men,
But teaching you the intention of my gifts,
How, first beholding, they beheld in vain,
And hearing, heard not, but, like shapes in dreams,
Mixed all things wildly down the tedious time,
Nor knew to build a house against the sun
With wickered sides, nor any woodcraft knew,
But lived, like silly ants, beneath the ground
In hollow caves unsunned. There, came to them
No steadfast sign of winter, nor of spring
Flower-perfumed, nor of summer full of fruit,
But blindly and lawlessly they did all things,
Until I taught them how the stars do rise
And set in mystery, and devised for them
Number, the inducer of philosophies,
The synthesis of Letters, and, beside,
The artificer of all things, Memory,
That sweet Muse-mother. I was first to yoke
The servile beasts in couples, carrying
An heirdom of man's burdens on their backs.
I joined to chariots, steeds, that love the bit
They champ at—the chief pomp of golden ease.
And none but I originated ships,
The seaman's chariots, wandering on the brine
With linen wings. And I—oh, miserable—
Who did devise for mortals all these arts,
Have no device left now to save myself
From the woe I suffer.

CHORUS. Most unseemly woe
Thou sufferest, and dost stagger from the sense
Bewildered! like a bad leech[4] falling sick
Thou art faint at soul, and canst not find the drugs
Required to save thyself.

PROMETHEUS. Hearken the rest,
And marvel further, what more arts and means
I did invent,—this, greatest: if a man
Fell sick, there was no cure, nor esculent
Nor chrism nor liquid, but for lack of drugs
Men pined and wasted, till I showed them all
Those mixtures of emollient remedies
Whereby they might be rescued from disease.
I fixed the various rules of mantic[5] art,
Discerned the vision from the common dream,
Instructed them in vocal auguries[6]
Hard to interpret, and defined as plain
The wayside omens,—flights of crook-clawed birds,—
Showed which are, by their nature, fortunate,
And which not so, and what the food of each,
And what the hates, affections, social needs,

[4] physician. [5] the art of divination.
[6] foretelling the future by means of sounds.

Of all to one another,—taught what sign
Of visceral lightness, colored to a shade,
May charm the genial gods, and what fair spots
Commend the lung and liver. Burning so
The limbs encased in fat, and the long chine,
I led my mortals on to an art abstruse,
And cleared their eyes to the image in the fire,
Erst[7] filmed in dark. Enough said now of this.
For the other helps of man hid underground,
The iron and the brass, silver and gold,
Can any dare affirm he found them out
Before me? none, I know! unless he choose
To lie in his vaunt. In one word learn the whole,—
That all arts came to mortals from Prometheus.

CHORUS. Give mortals now no inexpedient help,
Neglecting thine own sorrow. I have hope still
To see thee, breaking from the fetter here,
Stand up as strong as Zeus.

PROMETHEUS. This ends not thus,
The oracular fate ordains. I must be bowed
By infinite woes and pangs, to escape this chain.
Necessity is stronger than mine art.

CHORUS. Who holds the helm of that Necessity?

PROMETHEUS. The threefold Fates and the unforgetting Furies.

CHORUS. Is Zeus less absolute than these are?

PROMETHEUS. Yea,
And therefore cannot fly what is ordained.

CHORUS. What is ordained for Zeus, except to be
A king for ever?

PROMETHEUS. 'Tis too early yet
For thee to learn it: ask no more.

CHORUS. Perhaps
Thy secret may be something holy?

PROMETHUS. Turn
To another matter: this, it is not time
To speak abroad, but utterly to veil
In silence. For by that same secret kept,
I 'scape this chain's dishonor and its woe.

Chorus, 1st Strophe.

Never, oh never
May Zeus, the all-giver,
Wrestle down from his throne
In that might of his own
To antagonise mine!
Nor let me delay
As I bend on my way
Toward the gods of the shrine
Where the altar is full
Of the blood of the bull,
Near the tossing brine
Of Ocean my father.
May no sin be sped in the word that is said,
But my vow be rather
Consummated,
Nor evermore fail, nor evermore pine.

1st Antistrophe.

'Tis sweet to have
Life lengthened out
With hopes proved brave
By the very doubt,
Till the spirit enfold
Those manifest joys which were foretold.
But I thrill to behold
Thee, victim doomed,
By the countless cares
And the drear despairs
Forever consumed,—
And all because thou, who art fearless now
Of Zeus above,
Didst overflow for mankind below
With a free-souled, reverent love.
Ah friend, behold and see!
What's all the beauty of humanity?
Can it be fair?
What's all the strength? is it strong?
And what hope can they bear,
These dying livers—living one day long?
Ah, seest thou not, my friend,
How feeble and slow
And like a dream, doth go
This poor blind manhood, drifted from its end?
And how no mortal wranglings can confuse
The harmony of Zeus?

Prometheus, I have learnt these things
From the sorrow in thy face.
Another song did fold its wings
Upon my lips in other days,
When round the bath and round the bed
The hymeneal chant instead
I sang for thee, and smiled,—
And thou didst lead, with gifts and vows,
Hesione,[8] my father's child,
To be thy wedded spouse.

[7] formerly.

[8] Greek myths assign various women as the wife of Prometheus. Among them are Pandora, Pyrrha, Asia, and Hesione—all epithets of the Earth Goddess. Cf. the character of Asia in Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*.

Io *enters.*

Io. What land is this? what people is here?
And who is he that writhes, I see,
In the rock-hung chain?
Now what is the crime that hath brought thee to pain?
Now what is the land—make answer free—
Which I wander through, in my wrong and fear?
Ah! ah! ah me!
The gad-fly stingeth to agony!
O Earth, keep off that phantasm pale
Of earth-born Argus![9]—ah!—I quail
When my soul descries
That herdsman with the myriad eyes
Which seem, as he comes, one crafty eye.
Graves hide him not, though he should die,
But he doggeth me in my misery
From the roots of death, on high—on high—
And along the sands of the siding deep,
All famine-worn, he follows me,
And his waxen reed doth undersound
The waters round
And giveth a measure that giveth sleep.

Woe, woe, woe!
Where shall my weary course be done?
What wouldst thou with me, Saturn's son?[10]
And in what have I sinned, that I should go
Thus yoked to grief by thine hand for ever?
Ah! ah! dost vex me so
That I madden and shiver
Stung through with dread?
Flash the fire down to burn me!
Heave the earth up to cover me!
Plunge me in the deep, with the salt waves over me,
That the sea-beasts may be fed!
O king, do not spurn me
In my prayer!
For this wandering, everlonger, evermore,
Hath overworn me,
And I know not on what shore
I may rest from my despair.

Chorus. Hearest thou what the ox-horned maiden saith?

Prometheus. How could I choose but hearken what she saith,
The phrensied maiden?—Inachus's child?—
Who love-warms Zeus's heart, and now is lashed
By Herè's hate along the unending ways?

Io. Who taught thee to articulate that name,—
My father's? Speak to his child
By grief and shame defiled!
Who art thou, victim, thou who dost acclaim
Mine anguish in true words on the wide air,
And called too by name the curse that came
From Herè's unaware,
To waste and pierce me with its maddening goad?
Ah—ah—I leap
With the pang of the hungry—I bound on the road—
I am driven by my doom—
I am overcome
By the wrath of an enemy strong and deep!
Are any of those who have tasted pain,
Alas! as wretched as I?
Now tell me plain, doth aught remain
For my soul to endure beneath the sky?
Is there any help to be holpen by?
If knowledge be in thee, let it be said!
Cry aloud—cry
To the wandering, woeful maid!

Prometheus. Whatever thou wouldst learn I will declare,—
No riddle upon my lips, but such straight words
As friends should use to each other when they talk.
Thou seest Prometheus, who gave mortals fire.
Io. O common Help of all men, known of all,
O miserable Prometheus,—for what cause
Dost thou endure thus?
Prometheus. I have done with wail
For my own griefs, but lately.
Io. Wilt thou not
Vouchsafe the boon to me?
Prometheus. Say what thou wilt,
For I vouchsafe all.
Io. Speak then, and reveal
Who shut thee in this chasm.
Prometheus. The will of Zeus,
The hand of his Hephæstus.
Io. And what crime
Dost expiate so?
Prometheus. Enough for thee I have told
In so much only.
Io. Nay, but show besides
The limit of my wandering, and the time
Which yet is lacking to fulfil my grief.
Prometheus. Why, not to know were better than to know

[9] the earth-born monster with a hundred eyes who was set as guardian over Io. He was slain by Hermes at the direction of Zeus.
[10] Zeus.

For such as thou.
Io. Beseech thee, blind me not
To that which I must suffer.
PROMETHEUS. If I do,
The reason is not that I grudge a boon.
Io. What reason, then, prevents thy speaking out?
PROMETHEUS. No grudging; but a fear to break thine heart.
Io. Less care for me, I pray thee. Certainty
I count for advantage.
PROMETHEUS. Thou wilt have it so,
And therefore I must speak. Now hear—
CHORUS. Not yet.
Give half the guerdon my way. Let us learn
First, what the curse is that befell the maid,—
Her own voice telling her own wasting woes:
The sequence of that anguish shall await
The teaching of thy lips.
PROMETHEUS. It doth behove
That thou, Maid Io, shouldst vouchsafe to these
The grace they pray,—the more, because they are called
Thy father's sisters: since to open out
And mourn out grief where it is possible
To draw a tear from the audience, is a work
That pays its own price well.
Io. I cannot choose
But trust you, nymphs, and tell you all ye ask,
In clear words—though I sob amid my speech
In speaking of the storm-curse sent from Zeus,
And of my beauty, from what height it took
Its swoop on me, poor wretch! left thus deformed
And monstrous to your eyes. Forevermore
Around my virgin-chamber, wandering went
The nightly visions which entreated me
With syllabled smooth sweetness.—"Blessed maid,
Why lengthen out thy maiden hours when fate
Permits the noblest spousal in the world?
When Zeus burns with the arrow of thy love
And fain would touch thy beauty?—Maiden, thou
Despise not Zeus! depart to Lernè's mead
That's green around thy father's flocks and stalls,
Until the passion of the heavenly Eye
Be quenched in sight." Such dreams did all night long
Constrain me—me, unhappy!—till I dared
To tell my father how they trod the dark
With visionary steps. Whereat he sent
His frequent heralds to the Pythian fane,[11]
And also to Dodona,[12] and inquired
How best, by act or speech, to please the gods.
The same returning brought back oracles
Of doubtful sense, indefinite response,
Dark to interpret; but at last there came
To Inachus an answer that was clear,
Thrown straight as any bolt, and spoken out—
This—"he should drive me from my home and land,
And bid me wander to the extreme verge
Of all the earth—or, if he willed it not,
Should have a thunder with a fiery eye
Leap straight from Zeus to burn up all his race
To the last root of it." By which Loxian[13] word
Subdued, he drove me forth and shut me out,
He loth, me loth,—but Zeus's violent bit
Compelled him to the deed: when instantly
My body and soul were changèd and distraught,
And, hornèd as ye see, and spurred along
By the fanged insect, with a maniac leap
I rushed on to Cenchrea's limpid stream
And Lernè's fountain-water. There, the earth-born,
The herdsman Argus, most immitigable
Of wrath, did find me out, and track me out
With countless eyes set staring at my steps:
And though an unexpected sudden doom
Drew him from life, I, curse-tormented still,
Am driven from land to land before the scourge
The gods hold o'er me. So thou hast heard the past,
And if a bitter future thou canst tell,
Speak on. I charge thee, do not flatter me
Through pity, with false words; for in my mind,
Deceiving works more shame than torturing doth.

Chorus.

Ah! silence here!
Nevermore, nevermore
Would I languish for
The stranger's word
To thrill in mine ear—
Nevermore for the wrong and the woe and the fear
So hard to behold,
So cruel to bear,
Piercing my soul with a double-edged sword
Of a sliding cold.
Ah Fate! ah me!
I shudder to see
This wandering maid in her agony.

PROMETHEUS. Grief is too quick in thee and fear too full:
Be patient till thou hast learnt the rest.
CHORUS. Speak: teach.
To those who are sad already, it seems sweet,
By clear foreknowledge to make perfect, pain.

[11] the seat of the prophetess of the Delphic oracle.
[12] the seat of the oldest Greek oracle, dedicated to Zeus.
[13] an epithet of Apollo.

PROMETHEUS. The boon ye asked me first was lightly won,—
For first ye asked the story of this maid's grief
As her own lips might tell it. Now remains
To list what other sorrows she so young
Must bear from Herè. Inachus's child,
O thou! drop down thy soul my weighty words,
And measure out the landmarks which are set
To end thy wandering. Toward the orient sun
First turn thy face from mine and journey on
Along the desert flats till thou shalt come
Where Scythia's shepherd peoples dwell aloft,
Perched in Wheeled waggons under woven roofs,
And twang the rapid arrow past the bow—
Approach them not; but siding in thy course
The rugged shore-rocks resonant to the sea,
Depart that country. On the left hand dwell
The iron-workers, called the Chalybes,
Of whom beware, for certes they are uncouth
And nowise bland to strangers. Reaching so
The stream Hybristes (well the *scorner* called),
Attempt no passage,—it is hard to pass,—
Or ere thou come to Caucassus[14] itself,
That highest of mountains, where the river leaps
The precipice in his strength. Thou must toil up
Those mountain-tops that neighbor with the stars,
And tread the south way, and draw near, at last,
The Amazonian host that hateth man,
Inhabitants of Themiscyra, close
Upon Thermodon, where the sea's rough jaw
Doth gnash at Salmydessa and provide
A cruel host to seamen, and to ships
A stepdame. They with unreluctant hand
Shall lead thee on and on, till thou arrive
Just where the ocean-gates show narrowest
On the Cimmerian isthmus. Leaving which,
Behoves thee swim with fortitude of soul
The strait Mæotis. Ay, and evermore
That traverse shall be famous on men's lips,
That strait, called Bosphorus, the horned-one's road,
So named because of thee, who so wilt pass
From Europe's plain to Asia's continent.
How think ye, nymphs? the king of gods appears
Impartial in ferocious deeds? Behold!
The god desirous of this mortal's love
Hath cursed her with these wanderings. Ah, fair child,
Thou hast met a bitter groom for bridal troth!
For all thou yet hast heard can only prove
The incompleted prelude of thy doom.

Io. Ah, ah!

PROMETHEUS. Is't thy turn, now, to shriek and moan?
How wilt thou, when thou hast hearkened what remains?

CHORUS. Besides the grief thou hast told can aught remain?

PROMETHEUS. A sea—of foredoomed evil worked to storm.

Io. What boots my life, then? why not cast myself
Down headlong from this miserable rock,
That, dashed against the flats, I may redeem
My soul from sorrow? Better once to die
Than day by day to suffer.

PROMETHEUS. Verily,
It would be hard for thee to bear my woe
For whom it is appointed not to die.
Death frees from woe; but I before me see
In all my far prevision not a bound
To all I suffer, ere that Zeus shall fall
From being a king.

Io. And can it ever be
That Zeus shall fall from empire?

PROMETHEUS. *Thou,* methinks,
Wouldst take some joy to see it.

Io. Could I choose?
I who endure such pangs now, by that god!

PROMETHEUS. Learn from me, therefore that the event shall be.

Io. By whom shall his imperial sceptred hand
Be emptied so?

PROMETHEUS. Himself shall spoil himself,
Through his idiotic counsels.

Io. How? declare:
Unless the word ring evil.

PROMETHEUS. He shall wed;
And in the marriage-bond be joined to grief.

Io. A heavenly bride—or human? Speak it out
If it be utterable.

PROMETHEUS. Why should I say which?
It ought not to be uttered, verily.

Io. Then
It is his wife shall tear him from his throne?

PROMETHEUS. It is his wife shall bear a son to him,
More mighty than the father.

Io. From this doom
Hath he no refuge?

PROMETHEUS. None: or ere that I,
Loosed from these fetters—

Io. Yea—but who shall loose
While Zeus is adverse?

PROMETHEUS. One who is born of thee:
It is ordained so.

Io. What is this thou sayest?
A son of mine shall liberate thee from woe?

[14] It is impossible to follow Io's wanderings with any accuracy.

PROMETHEUS. After ten generations, count three more,
And find him in the third.
Io. The oracle
Remains obscure.
PROMETHEUS. And search it not, to learn
Thine own griefs from it.
Io. Point me not to a good,
To leave me straight bereaved.
PROMETHEUS. I am prepared
To grant thee one of two things.
Io. But which two?
Set them before me; grant me power to choose.
PROMETHEUS. I grant it; choose now: shall I name aloud
What griefs remain to wound thee, or what hand
Shall save me out of mine?
CHORUS. Vouchsafe, O god,
The one grace of the twain to her who prays;
The next to me; and turn back neither prayer
Dishonor'd by denial. To herself
Recount the future wandering of her feet;
Then point me to the looser of thy chain,
Because I learn to know him.
PROMETHEUS. Since ye will,
Of absolute will, this knowledge, I will set
No contrary against it, nor keep back
A word of all ye ask for. Io, first
To thee I must relate thy wandering course
Far winding. As I tell it, write it down
In thy soul's book of memories. When thou hast past
The refluent bound that parts two continents,
Track on the footsteps of the orient sun
In his own fire, across the roar of seas,—
Fly till thou hast reached the Gorgonæan flats
Beside Cisthené. There, the Phorcides,
Three ancient maidens, live, with shape of swan,
One tooth between them, and one common eye:
On whom the sun doth never look at all
With all his rays, nor evermore the moon
When she looks through the night. Anear to whom
Are the Gorgon sisters three, enclothed with wings,
With twisted snakes for ringlets, man-abhorred:
There is no mortal gazes in their face
And gazing can breathe on. I speak of such
To guard thee from their horror. Ay, and list
Another tale of a dreadful sight; beware
The Griffins, those unbarking dogs of Zeus,
Those sharp-mouthed dogs!—and the Arimaspian host
Of one-eyed horsemen, habiting beside
The river of Pluto that runs bright with gold:
Approach them not, beseech thee! Presently
Thou'lt come to a distant land, a dusky tribe
Of dwellers at the fountain of the Sun,
Whence flows the river Æthiops; wind along
Its banks and turn off at the cataracts,
Just as the Nile pours from the Bybline hills
His holy and sweet wave; his course shall guide
Thine own to that triangular Nile-ground
Where, Io, is ordained for thee and thine
A lengthened exile. Have I said in this
Aught darkly or incompletely?—now repeat
The question, make the knowledge fuller! Lo,
I have more leisure than I covet, here.
CHORUS. If thou canst tell us aught that's left untold,
Or loosely told, of her most dreary flight,
Declare it straight: but if thou hast uttered all,
Grant us that latter grace for which we prayed,
Remembering how we prayed it.
PROMETHEUS. She has heard
The uttermost of her wandering. There it ends.
But that she may be certain not to have heard
All vainly, I will speak what she endured
Ere coming hither, and invoke the past
To prove my prescience true. And so—to leave
A multitude of words and pass at once
To the subject of thy course—when thou hadst gone
To those Molossian plains which sweep around
Dodona shouldering Heaven, whereby the fane
Of Zeus Thesprotian keepeth oracle,
And, wonder past belief, where oaks do wave
Articulate adjurations—(ay, the same
Saluted thee in no perplexèd phrase
But clear with glory, noble wife of Zeus
That shouldst be,—there some sweetness took thy sense!)
Thou didst rush further onward, stung along
The ocean-shore, toward Rhea's mighty bay[15]
And, tost back from it, wast tost to it again
In stormy evolution:—and, know well,
In coming time that hollow of the sea
Shall bear the name Ionian and present
A monument of Io's passage through
Unto all mortals. Be these words the signs
Of my soul's power to look beyond the veil
Of visible things. The rest, to you and her
I will declare in common audience, nymphs,
Returning thither where my speech brake off.
There is a town Canobus, built upon
The earth's fair margin at the mouth of Nile
And on the mound washed up by it; Io, there
Shall Zeus give back to thee thy perfect mind,
And only by the pressure and the touch
Of a hand not terrible; and thou to Zeus
Shalt bear a dusky son who shall be called

[15] The Adriatic Sea.

Thence, Epaphus, *Touched*. That son shall pluck the fruit
Of all that land wide-watered by the flow
Of Nile; but after him, when counting out
As far as the fifth full generation, then
Full fifty maidens, a fair woman-race,
Shall back to Argos turn reluctantly,
To fly the proffered nuptials of their kin,
Their father's brothers. These being passion-struck,
Like falcons bearing hard on flying doves,
Shall follow, hunting a quarry of love
They should not hunt; till envious Heaven maintain
A curse betwixt that beauty and their desire,
And Greece receive them, to be overcome
In murtherous woman-war, by fierce red hands
Kept savage by the night. For every wife
Shall slay a husband, dyeing deep in blood
The sword of a double edge—(I wish indeed
As fair a marriage-joy to all my foes!)
One bride alone shall fail to smite to death
The head upon her pillow, touched with love,
Made impotent of purpose and impelled
To choose the lesser evil,—shame on her cheeks,
Than blood-guilt on her hands: which bride shall bear
A royal race in Argos. Tedious speech
Were needed to relate particulars
Of these things; 'tis enough that from her seed
Shall spring the strong He, famous with the bow,
Whose arm shall break my fetters off. Behold,
My mother Themis, that old Titaness,
Delivered to me such an oracle,—
But how and when, I should be long to speak,
And thou, in hearing, wouldst not gain at all.

Io. Eleleu, Eleleu!
How the spasm and the pain
And the fire on the brain
Strike, burning me through!
How the sting of the curse, all aflame as it flew,
Pricks me onward again!
How my heart in its terror is spurning my breast,
And my eyes, like the wheels of a chariot, roll round!
I am whirled from my course, to the east, to the west,
In the whirlwind of phrensy all madly inwound—
And my mouth is unbridled for anguish and hate,
And my words beat in vain, in wild storms of unrest,
On the sea of my desolate fate.

[Io *rushes out.*

Chorus.—Strophe.

Oh, wise was he, oh, wise was he
Who first within his spirit knew
And with his tongue declared it true
That love comes best that comes unto
The equal of degree!
And that the poor and that the low
Should seek no love from those above,
Whose souls are fluttered with the flow
Of airs about their golden height,
Or proud because they see arow
Ancestral crowns of light.

Antistrophe.

Oh, never, never may ye, Fates,
Behold me with your awful eyes
Lift mine too fondly up the skies
Where Zeus upon the purple waits!
Nor let me step too near—too near
To any suitor, bright from heaven:
Because I see, because I fear
This loveless maiden vexed and led
By this fell curse of Heré, driven
On wanderings dread and drear.

Epode.

Nay, grant an equal troth instead
Of nuptial love, to bind me by!
It will not hurt, I shall not dread
To meet it in reply.
But let not love from those above
Revert and fix me, as I said,
With that inevitable Eye!
I have no sword to fight that fight,
I have no strength to tread that path,
I know not if my nature hath
The power to bear, I cannot see
Whither from Zeus's infinite
I have the power to flee.

Prometheus. Yet Zeus, albeit most absolute of will,
Shall turn to meekness,—such a marriage-rite
He holds in preparation, which anon
Shall thrust him headlong from his gerent seat
Adown the abysmal void, and so the curse
His father Chronos muttered in his fall,
As he fell from his ancient throne and cursed,
Shall be accomplished wholly. No escape
From all that ruin shall the filial Zeus
Find granted to him from any of his gods,
Unless I teach him. I the refuge know,
And I, the means. Now, therefore, let him sit
And brave the imminent doom, and fix his faith
On his supernal noises, hurtling on
With restless hand the bolt that breathes out fire;

For these things shall not help him, none of them,
Nor hinder his perdition when he falls
To shame, and lower than patience: such a foe
He doth himself prepare against himself,
A wonder of unconquerable hate,
An organiser of sublimer fire
Than glares in lightnings, and of grander sound
Than aught the thunder rolls, out-thundering it,
With power to shatter in Poseidon's[16] fist
The trident-spear which, while it plagues the sea,
Doth shake the shores around it. Ay, and Zeus,
Precipitated thus, shall learn at length
The difference betwixt rule and servitude.

CHORUS. Thou makest threats for Zeus of thy desires.

PROMETHEUS. I tell you, all these things shall be fulfilled.
Even so as I desire them.

CHORUS. Must we then
Look out for one shall come to master Zeus?

PROMETHEUS. These chains weigh lighter than his sorrows shall.

CHORUS. How art thou not afraid to utter such words?

PROMETHEUS. What should *I* fear who cannot die?

CHORUS. But *he*
Can visit thee with dreader woe than death's.

PROMETHEUS. Why, let him do it! I am here, prepared
For all things and their pangs.

CHORUS. The wise are they
Who reverence Adrasteia.[17]

PROMETHEUS. Reverence thou,
Adore thou, flatter thou, whomever reigns,
Whenever reigning! but for me, your Zeus
Is less than nothing. Let him act and reign
His brief hour out according to his will—
He will not, therefore, rule the gods too long.
But lo! I see that courier-god of Zeus,
That new-made menial of the new-crowned king:
He doubtless comes to announce to us something new.

HERMES *enters.*

HERMES. I speak to thee, the sophist, the talker-down
Of scorn by scorn, the sinner against gods,
The reverencer of men, the thief of fire,—
I speak to thee and adjure thee! Zeus requires
Thy declaration of what marriage-rite
Thus moves thy vaunt and shall hereafter cause
His fall from empire. Do not wrap thy speech
In riddles, but speak clearly! Never cast
Ambiguous paths, Prometheus, for my feet,
Since Zeus, thou mayst perceive, is scarcely won
To mercy by such means.

PROMETHEUS. A speech well-mouthed
In the utterance, and full-minded in the sense,
As doth befit a servant of the gods!
New gods, ye newly reign, and think forsooth
Ye dwell in towers too high for any dart
To carry a wound there!—have I not stood by
While two kings fell from thence? and shall I not
Behold the third, the same who rules you now,
Fall, shamed to sudden ruin?—Do I seem
To tremble and quail before your modern gods?
Far be it from me!—For thyself, depart,
Re-tread thy steps in haste. To all thou hast asked
I answer nothing.

HERMES. Such a wind of pride
Impelled thee of yore full-sail upon these rocks.

PROMETHEUS. I would not barter—learn thou soothly that!—
My suffering for thy service. I maintain
It is a nobler thing to serve these rocks
Than live a faithful slave to father Zeus.
Thus upon scorners I retort their scorn.

HERMES. It seems that thou dost glory in thy despair.

PROMETHEUS. I glory? would my foes did glory so,
And I stood by to see them!—naming whom,
Thou are not unremembered.

HERMES. Dost thou charge
Me also with the blame of thy mischance?

PROMETHEUS. I tell thee I loathe the universal gods,
Who for the good I gave them rendered back
The ill of their injustice.

HERMES. Thou art mad—
Thou art raving, Titan, at the fever-height.

PROMETHEUS. If it be madness to abhor my foes,
May I be mad!

HERMES. If thou wert prosperous
Thou wouldst be unendurable.

PROMETHEUS. Alas!

HERMES. Zeus knows not that word.

PROMETHEUS. But maturing Time
Teaches all things.

HERMES. Howbeit, thou hast not learnt
The wisdom yet, thou needest.

PROMETHEUS. If I had,
I should not talk with a slave like thee.

HERMES. No answer thou vouchsafest, I believe,
To the great Sire's requirement.

PROMETHEUS. Verily
I owe him grateful service,—and should pay it.

HERMES. Why, thou dost mock me, Titan, as I stood

[16] God of the Sea.
[17] fate.

A child before thy face.
PROMETHEUS. No child, forsooth,
But yet more foolish than a foolish child,
If thou expect that I should answer aught
Thy Zeus can ask. No torture from his hand
Nor any machination in the world
Shall force mine utterance ere he loose, himself,
These cankerous fetters from me. For the rest,
Let him now hurl his blanching lightnings down,
And with his white-winged snows and mutterings deep
Of subterranean thunders mix all things,
Confound them in disorder. None of this
Shall bend my sturdy will and make me speak
The name of his dethroner who shall come.
HERMES. Can this avail thee? Look to it!
PROMETHEUS. Long ago
It was looked forward to, precounselled of.
HERMES. Vain god, take righteous courage! dare for once
To apprehend and front thine agonies
With a just prudence.
PROMETHEUS. Vainly dost thou chafe
My soul with exhortation, as yonder sea
Goes beating on the rock. Oh, think no more
That I, fear-struck by Zeus to a woman's mind,
Will supplicate him, loathèd as he is,
With feminine upliftings of my hands,
To break these chains. Far from me be the thought!
HERMES. I have indeed, methinks, said much in vain,
For still thy heart beneath my showers of prayers
Lies dry and hard—nay, leaps like a young horse
Who bites against the new bit in his teeth,
And tugs and struggles against the new-tried rein,—
Still fiercest in the feeblest thing of all,
Which sophism is; since absolute will disjoined
From perfect mind is worse than weak. Behold,
Unless my words persuade thee, what a blast
And whirlwind of inevitable woe
Must sweep persuasion through thee! For at first
The Father will split up this jut of rock
With the great thunder and the bolted flame
And hide thy body where a hinge of stone
Shall catch it like an arm; and when thou hast passed
A long black time within, thou shalt come out
To front the sun while Zeus's winged hound,
The strong carnivorous eagle, shall wheel down
To meet thee, self-called to a daily feast,
And set his fierce beak in thee and tear off
The long rags of thy flesh and batten deep
Upon thy dusky liver. Do not look
For any end moreover to this curse
Or ere some god appear, to accept thy pangs
On his own head vicarious, and descend
With unreluctant step the darks of hell
And gloomy abysses around Tartarus.
Then ponder this—this threat is not a growth
Of vain invention; it is spoken and meant;
King Zeus's mouth is impotent to lie,
Consummating the utterance by the act;
So, look to it, thou! take heed, and nevermore
Forget good counsel, to indulge self-will.
CHORUS. Our Hermes suits his reasons to the times;
At least I think so, since he bids thee drop
Self-will for prudent counsel. Yield to him!
When the wise err, their wisdom makes their shame.
PROMETHEUS. Unto me the foreknower, this mandate of power
He cries, to reveal it.
What's strange in my fate, if I suffer from hate
At the hour that I feel it?
Let the locks of the lightning, all bristling and whitening,
Flash, coiling me round,
While the æther goes surging 'neath thunder and scourging
Of wild winds unbound!
Let the blast of the firmament whirl from its place
The earth rooted below,
And the brine of the ocean, in rapid emotion,
Be driven in the face
Of the stars up in heaven, as they walk to and fro!
Let him hurl me anon into Tartarus—on—
To the blackest degree,
With Necessity's vortices strangling me down;
But he cannot join death to a fate meant for *me*!
HERMES. Why, the words that he speaks and the thoughts that he thinks
Are maniacal!—add,
If the Fate who hath bound him should loose not the links,
He were utterly mad.
Then depart ye who groan with him,
Leaving to moan with him,—
Go in haste! lest the roar of the thunder anearing
Should blast you to idiocy, living and hearing.
CHORUS. Change thy speech for another, thy thought for a new,
If to move me and teach me indeed be thy care!
For thy words swerve so far from the loyal and true
That the thunder of Zeus seems more easy to bear,
How! couldst teach me to venture such vileness? behold!
I *choose*, with this victim, this anguish foretold!

I recoil from the traitor in hate and disdain,
And I know that the curse of the treason is worse
Than the pang of the chain.
HERMES. Then remember, O nymphs, what I tell you before,
Nor, when pierced by the arrows that Até will throw you,
Cast blame on your fate and declare evermore
That Zeus thrust you on anguish he did not foreshow you.
Nay, verily, nay! for ye perish anon
For your deed—by your choice. By no blindness of doubt,
No abruptness of doom, but by madness alone,
In the great net of Até, whence none cometh out,
Ye are wound and undone.
PROMETHEUS. Ay! in act now, in word now no more,
Earth is rocking in space.
And the thunders crash up with a roar upon roar,
And the eddying lightnings flash fire in my face,
And the whirlwinds are whirling the dust round and round,
And the blasts of the winds universal leap free
And blow each upon each with a passion of sound,
And æther goes mingling in storm with the sea.
Such a curse on my head, in a manifest dread,
From the hand of your Zeus has been hurtled along.
O my mother's fair glory! O Æther, enringing
All eyes with the sweet common light of thy bringing!
Dost see how I suffer this wrong?

Prometheus Unbound

A LYRICAL DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

The Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their national history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary discretion. They by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the common interpretation or to imitate in story as in title their rivals and predecessors. Such a system would have amounted to a resignation of those claims to preference over their competitors which incited the composition. The Agamemnonian story was exhibited on the Athenian theatre with as many variations as dramas.

I have presumed to employ a similar licence. The *Prometheus Unbound* of Aeschylus supposed the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure of the danger threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis. Thetis, according to this view of the subject, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Prometheus, by the permission of Jupiter, delivered from his captivity by Hercules. Had I framed my story on this model, I should have done no more than have attempted to restore the lost drama of Aeschylus; an ambition which, if my preference to this mode of treating the subject had incited me to cherish, the recollection of the high comparison such an attempt would challenge might well abate. But, in truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary. The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the Hero of *Paradise Lost*, interfere with the interest. The character of Satan engenders in the mind a pernicious casuistry which leads us to weigh his faults with his wrongs, and to excuse the former because the latter exceed all measure. In the minds of those who consider that magnificent fiction with a religious feeling it engenders something worse. But Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends.

This Poem was chiefly written upon the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, among the flowery glades, and thickets of odoriferous blossoming trees, which are extended in ever winding labyrinths upon its immense platforms and dizzy arches suspended in the air. The bright blue sky of Rome, and the effect of the vigorous awakening spring in that divinest climate, and

the new life with which it drenches the spirits even to intoxication, were the inspiration of this drama.

The imagery which I have employed will be found, in many instances, to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed. This is unusual in modern poetry, although Dante and Shakespeare are full of instances of the same kind: Dante indeed more than any other poet, and with greater success. But the Greek poets, as writers to whom no resource of awakening the sympathy of their contemporaries was unknown, were in the habitual use of this power; and it is the study of their works (since a higher merit would probably be denied me) to which I am willing that my readers should impute this singularity.

One word is due in candor to the degree in which the study of contemporary writings may have tinged my composition, for such has been a topic of censure with regard to poems far more popular, and indeed more deservedly popular, than mine. It is impossible that any one who inhabits the same age with such writers as those who stand in the foremost ranks of our own, can conscientiously assure himself that his language and tone of thought may not have been modified by the study of the productions of those extraordinary intellects. It is true, that, not the spirit of their genius, but the forms in which it has manifested itself, are due less to the peculiarities of their own minds than to the peculiarity of the moral and intellectual condition of the minds among which they have been produced. Thus a number of writers possess the form, whilst they want the spirit of those whom, it is alleged, they imitate; because the former is the endowment of the age in which they live, and the latter must be the uncommunicated lightning of their own mind.

The peculiar style of intense and comprehensive imagery which distinguishes the modern literature of England, has not been, as a general power, the product of the imitation of any particular writer. The mass of capabilities remains at every period materially the same; the circumstances which awaken it to action perpetually change. If England were divided into forty republics, each equal in population and extent to Athens, there is no reason to suppose but that, under institutions not more perfect than those of Athens, each would produce philosophers and poets equal to those who (if we except Shakespeare) have never been surpassed. We owe the great writers of the golden age of our literature to that fervid awakening of the public mind which shook to dust the oldest and most oppressive form of the Christian religion. We owe Milton to the progress and development of the same spirit: the sacred Milton was, let it ever be remembered, a republican, and a bold inquirer into morals and religion. The great writers of our own age are, we have reason to suppose, the companions and forerunners of some unimagined change in our social condition or the opinions which cement it. The cloud of mind is discharging its collected lightning, and the equilibrium between institutions and opinions is now restoring, or is about to be restored.

As to imitation, poetry is a mimetic art. It creates, but it creates by combination and representation. Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man or in nature, but because the whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought, and with the contemporary condition of them: one great poet is a masterpiece of nature which another not only ought to study but must study. He might as wisely and as easily determine that his mind should no longer be the mirror of all that is lovely in the visible universe, as exclude from his contemplation the beautiful which exists in the writings of a great contemporary. The pretence of doing it would be presumption in any but the greatest; the effect, even in him, would be strained, unnatural, and ineffectual. A poet is the combined product of such internal powers as modify the nature of others; and of such external influences as excite and sustain these powers; he is not one, but both. Every man's mind is, in this respect, modified by all the objects of nature and art; by every word and every suggestion which he ever admitted to act upon his consciousness; it is the mirror upon which all forms are reflected, and in which they compose one form. Poets, not otherwise than philosophers, painters, sculptors, and musicians, are, in one sense, the creators, and, in another, the creations, of their age. From this subjection the loftiest do not escape. There is a similarity between Homer and Hesiod, between Aeschylus and Euripides, between Virgil and Horace, between Dante and Petrarch, between Shakespeare and Fletcher, between Dryden and Pope; each has a generic resemblance under which their specific distinctions are arranged. If this similarity be the result of imitation, I am willing to confess that I have imitated.

Let this opportunity be conceded to me of acknowledging that I have, what a Scotch philosopher characteristically terms, 'a passion for reforming the world:' what passion incited him to write and publish his book, he omits to explain. For my part I had rather be damned with Plato and Lord Bacon, than go to Heaven with Paley and Malthus. But it is a mistake to suppose that I dedicate my poetical compositions solely to the direct enforcement of reform, or that I consider them in any degree as containing a reasoned system on the theory of human life. Didactic poetry is my abhorrence; nothing can be equally well expressed in prose that is not tedious and supererogatory in verse. My purpose has hitherto been simply to familiarise the highly refined imagination of the more select classes of poetical readers with beautiful idealisms of moral excellence; aware that until the mind can love, and admire, and trust, and hope, and endure, reasoned principles of moral conduct are seeds cast upon the highway of life which the unconscious passenger tramples into dust, although they would bear the harvest of his happiness. Should I live to accomplish what I purpose, that is, produce a systematical history of what appear to me to be the genuine elements of human society, let not the advocates of injustice and superstition flatter themselves that I should take Aeschylus rather than Plato as my model.

The having spoken of myself with unaffected freedom will need little apology with the candid, and let the uncandid consider that they injure me less than their own hearts and minds by misrepresentation. Whatever talents a person may possess to amuse and instruct others, be they ever so inconsiderable, he is yet bound to exert them: if his attempt be ineffectual, let the punishment of an unaccomplished purpose have been sufficient; let none trouble themselves to heap the dust of oblivion upon his efforts; the pile they raise will betray his grave which might otherwise have been unknown.—*Shelley.*

[Mary Shelley's note to the drama is worth quoting:]

"The prominent feature of Shelley's theory of the destiny of the human species was that evil is not inherent in the system of the creation, but an accident that might be expelled. This also forms a portion of Christianity: God made earth and man perfect, till he, by his fall,

'Brought death into the world and all our woe.'

Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there should be no evil, and there would be none. It is not my part in these Notes to notice the arguments that have been urged against this opinion, but to mention the fact that he entertained it, and was indeed attached to it with fervent enthusiasm. That man could be so perfectionized as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation, was the cardinal point of his system. And the subject he loved best to dwell on was the image of One warring with the Evil Principle, oppressed not only by it, but by all—even the good, who were deluded into considering evil a necessary portion of humanity; a victim full of fortitude and hope and the spirit of triumph emanating from a reliance in the ultimate omnipotence of Good. Such he had depicted in his last poem, when he made Laon the enemy and the victim of tyrants. He now took a more idealized image of the same subject. He followed certain classical authorities in figuring Saturn as the good principle, Jupiter the usurping evil one, and Prometheus as the regenerator, who, unable to bring mankind back to primitive innocence, used knowledge as a weapon to defeat evil, by leading mankind, beyond the state wherein they are sinless through ignorance, to that in which they are virtuous through wisdom. Jupiter punished the temerity of the Titan by chaining him to a rock of Caucasus, and causing a vulture to devour his still-renewed heart. There was a prophecy afloat in heaven portending the fall of Jove, the secret of averting which was known only to Prometheus; and the god offered freedom from torture on condition of its being communicated to him. According to the mythological story, this referred to the offspring of Thetis, who was destined to be greater than his father. Prometheus at last bought pardon for his crime of enriching mankind with his gifts, by revealing the prophecy. Hercules killed the vulture, and set him free; and Thetis was married to Peleus, the father of Achilles.

"Shelley adapted the catastrophe of this story to his peculiar views. The son greater than his father, born of the nuptials of Jupiter and Thetis, was to dethrone Evil, and bring back a happier reign than that of Saturn. Prometheus defies the power of his enemy, and endures centuries of torture; till the hour arrives when Jove, blind to the real event, but darkly guessing that some great good to himself will flow, espouses Thetis. At the moment, the Primal Power of the world drives him from his usurped throne, and Strength, in the person of Hercules, liberates Humanity, typified in Prometheus, from the tortures generated by evil done or suffered. Asia, one of the

Oceanides, is the wife of Prometheus—she was, according to other mythological interpretations, the same as Venus and Nature. When the benefactor of mankind is liberated, Nature resumes the beauty of her prime, and is united to her husband, the emblem of the human race, in perfect and happy union. In the Fourth Act, the Poet gives further scope to his imagination, and idealizes the forms of creation—such as we know them, instead of such as they appeared to the Greeks. Maternal Earth, the mighty parent, is superseded by the Spirit of the Earth, the guide of our planet through the realms of sky; while his fair and weaker companion and attendant, the Spirit of the Moon, receives bliss from the annihilation of Evil in the superior sphere.

"Shelley develops, more particularly in the lyrics of this drama, his abstruse and imaginative theories with regard to the Creation. It requires a mind as subtle and penetrating as his own to understand the mystic meanings scattered throughout the poem. They elude the ordinary reader by their abstraction and delicacy of distinction, but they are far from vague. It was his design to write prose metaphysical essays on the nature of Man, which would have served to explain much of what is obscure in his poetry. . . .

"Through the whole poem there reigns a sort of calm and holy spirit of love; it soothes the tortured, and is hope to the expectant, till the prophecy is fulfilled, and Love, untainted by any evil, becomes the law of the world."

Dramatis Personæ

PROMETHEUS.
DEMOGORGON.
JUPITER.
THE EARTH.
OCEAN.
APOLLO.
MERCURY.
ASIA. } *Oceanides.*
PANTHEA. }
IONE. }
HERCULES.
THE PHANTASM OF JUPITER.
THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.
THE SPIRIT OF THE MOON.
SPIRITS OF THE HOURS.
FAUNS. FURIES. SPIRITS. ECHOES.

ACT I

SCENE.—*A Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS *is discovered bound to the Precipice.* PANTHEA *and* IONE *are seated at his feet. Time, night. During the Scene, morning slowly breaks.*

PROMETHEUS. Monarch of Gods and Demons, and all Spirits
But One,[1] who throng those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requitest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs[2] of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair,—these are mine empire:—
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God!
Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever for ever!

No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?
I ask you Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below,
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals, the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.
Heaven's wingèd hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,

[1] Prometheus himself.

[2] sacrifices of a hundred animals.

Mocking me; and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind:
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar frost of the morn,
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-colored east; for then they lead
The wingless, crawling hours, one among whom
—As some dark Priest hales the reluctant victim—
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee. What ruin
Will hunt thee undefended through wide Heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall. Ye Mountains,
Whose many-voiced Echoes, through the mist
Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell!
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering through India! Thou serenest Air,
Through which the Sun walks burning without beams!
And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on poisèd wings
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,
As thunder, louder than your own, made rock
The orbèd world! If then my words had power,
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
Is dead within; although no memory be
Of what is hate, let them not lose it now!
What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak.

First Voice [*from the Mountains*]

Thrice three hundred thousand years
O'er the Earthquake's couch we stood:
Oft, as men convulsed with fears,
We trembled in our multitude.

Second Voice [*from the Springs*]

Thunderbolts had parched our water,
We had been stained with bitter blood,
And had run mute, 'mid shrieks of slaughter,
Thro' a city and a solitude.

Third Voice [*from the Air*]

I had clothed, since Earth uprose,
Its wastes in colors not their own,
And oft had my serene repose
Been cloven by many a rending groan.

Fourth Voice [*from the Whirlwinds*]

We had soared beneath these mountains
Unresting ages; nor had thunder,
Nor yon volcano's flaming fountains,
Nor any power above or under
Ever made us mute with wonder.

First Voice

But never bowed our snowy crest
As at the voice of thine unrest.

Second Voice

Never such a sound before
To the Indian waves we bore.
A pilot asleep on the howling sea
Leaped up from the deck in agony,
And heard, and cried, 'Ah, woe is me!'
And died as mad as the wild waves be.

Third Voice

By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
My still realm was never riven:
When its wound was closed, there stood
Darkness o'er the day like blood.

Fourth Voice

And we shrank back: for dreams of ruin
To frozen caves our flight pursuing
Made us keep silence—thus—and thus—
Though silence is as hell to us.

The Earth. The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills
Cried, 'Misery!' then; the hollow Heaven replied,
'Misery!' And the Ocean's purple waves,
Climbing the land, howled to the lasting winds,
And the pale nations heard it, 'Misery!'

PROMETHEUS. I heard a sound of voices: not the voice
Which I gave forth. Mother, thy sons and thou
Scorn him, without whose all-enduring will
Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove,
Both they and thou had vanished like thin mist
Unrolled on the morning wind. Know ye not me,
The Titan? He who made his agony
The barrier to your else all-conquering foe?
Oh, rock-embosomed lawns, and snow-fed streams,
Now seen athwart frore vapors, deep, below,
Through whose o'ershadowing woods I wandered once
With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes;
Why scorns the spirit which informs ye, now
To commune with me? me alone, who checked,
As one who checks a fiend-drawn charioteer,
The falsehood and the force of him who reigns
Supreme, and with the groans of pining slaves
Fills your dim glens and liquid wilderness:
Why answer ye not, still? Brethren!
THE EARTH. They dare not
PROMETHEUS. Who dares? for I would hear that curse again.
Ha, what an awful whisper rises up!
'Tis scarce like sound: it tingles through the frame
As lightning tingles, hovering ere it strike.
Speak, Spirit! from thine inorganic voice
I only know that thou art moving near
And love. How cursed I him?
THE EARTH. How canst thou hear
Who knowest not the language of the dead?
PROMETHEUS. Thou art a living spirit; speak as they.
THE EARTH. I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell King
Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain
More torturing than the one whereon I roll.
Subtle thou art and good, and though the Gods
Hear not this voice, yet thou art more than God,
Being wise and kind: earnestly hearken now.
PROMETHEUS. Obscurely through my brain, like shadows dim,
Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick. I feel
Faint, like one mingled in entwining love;
Yet 'tis not pleasure.
THE EARTH. No, thou canst not hear:
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
Only to those who die.
PROMETHEUS. And what art thou,
O, melancholy Voice?
THE EARTH. I am the Earth,
Thy mother; she within whose stony veins,
To the last fibre of the loftiest tree
Whose thin leaves trembled in the frozen air,
Joy ran, as blood within a living frame,
When thou didst from her bosom, like a cloud
Of glory, arise, a spirit of keen joy!
And at thy voice her pining sons uplifted
Their prostrate brows from the polluting dust,
And our almighty Tyrant with fierce dread
Grew pale, until his thunder chained thee here.
Then, see those million worlds which burn and roll
Around us: their inhabitants beheld
My sphered light wane in wide Heaven; the sea
Was lifted by strange tempest, and new fire
From earthquake-rifted mountains of bright snow
Shook its portentous hair beneath Heaven's frown;
Lightning and Inundation vexed the plains;
Blue thistles bloomed in cities; foodless toads
Within voluptuous chambers panting crawled:
When Plague had fallen on man, and beast, and worm,
And Famine; and black blight on herb and tree:
And in the corn, and vines, and meadow-grass,
Teemed ineradicable poisonous weeds
Draining their growth, for my wan breast was dry
With grief; and the thin air, my breath, was stained
With the contagion of a mother's hate
Breathed on her child's destroyer; ay, I heard
Thy curse, the which, if thou rememberest not,
Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
Mountains, and caves, and winds, and yon wide air,
And the inarticulate people of the dead,
Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate
In secret joy and hope those dreadful words,
But dare not speak them.
PROMETHEUS. Venerable mother!
All else who live and suffer take from thee
Some comfort; flowers, and fruits, and happy sounds,
And love, though fleeting; these may not be mine.
But mine own words, I pray, deny me not.
THE EARTH. They shall be told. Ere Babylon was dust,
The Magus Zoroaster,[8] my dead child,
Met his own image walking in the garden.
That apparition, sole of men, he saw.
For know there are two worlds of life and death:
One that which thou beholdest; but the other

[8] founder of the ancient religion of Persia.

Is underneath the grave, where do inhabit
The shadows of all forms that think and live
Till death unite them and they part no more;
Dreams and the light imaginings of men,
And all that faith creates or love desires,
Terrible, strange, sublime and beauteous shapes.
There thou art, and dost hang, a writhing shade,
'Mid whirlwind-peopled mountains; all the gods
Are there, and all the powers of nameless worlds,
Vast, sceptred phantoms; heroes, men, and beasts;
And Demogorgon, a tremendous gloom;
And he, the supreme Tyrant, on his throne
Of burning gold. Son, one of these shall utter
The curse which all remember. Call at will
Thine own ghost, or the ghost of Jupiter,
Hades or Typhon, or what mightier Gods
From all-prolific Evil, since thy ruin
Have sprung, and trampled on my prostrate sons.
Ask, and they must reply: so the revenge
Of the Supreme may sweep through vacant shades,
As rainy wind through the abandoned gate
Of a fallen palace.

PROMETHEUS. Mother, let not aught
Of that which may be evil, pass again
My lips, or those of aught resembling me.
Phantasm of Jupiter, arise, appear!

IONE

My wings are folded o'er mine ears:
My wings are crossèd o'er mine eyes:
Yet through their silver shade appears,
And through their lulling plumes arise,
A Shape, a throng of sounds;
May it be no ill to thee
O thou of many wounds!
Near whom, for our sweet sister's sake,
Ever thus we watch and wake.

PANTHEA

The sound is of whirlwind underground,
Earthquake, and fire, and mountains cloven;
The shape is awful like the sound,
Clothed in dark purple, star-inwoven.
A sceptre of pale gold
To stay steps proud, o'er the slow cloud
His veinèd hand doth hold.
Cruel he looks, but calm and strong,
Like one who does, not suffers wrong.

PHANTASM OF JUPITER. Why have the secret powers of this strange world
Driven me, a frail and empty phantom, hither
On direct storms? What unaccustomed sounds
Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice
With which our pallid race hold ghastly talk
In darkness? And, proud sufferer, who art thou?

PROMETHEUS. Tremendous Image, as thou art must be
He whom thou shadowest forth. I am his foe,
The Titan. Speak the words which I would hear,
Although no thought informs thine empty voice.

THE EARTH. Listen! And though your echoes must be mute,
Gray mountains, and old woods, and haunted springs,
Prophetic caves, and isle-surrounding streams,
Rejoice to hear what yet ye cannot speak.

PHANTASM. A spirit seizes me and speaks within:
It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud.

PANTHEA. See, how he lifts his mighty looks, the Heaven
Darkens above.

IONE. He speaks! O shelter me!

PROMETHEUS. I see the curse on gestures proud and cold,
And looks of firm defiance, and calm hate,
And such despair as mocks itself with smiles,
Written as on a scroll: yet speak: Oh speak!

PHANTASM

Fiend, I defy thee! with a calm, fixed mind,
All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do;
Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind,
One only being shalt thou not subdue.
Rain then thy plagues upon me here,
Ghastly disease, and frenzying fear;
And let alternate frost and fire
Eat into me, and be thine ire
Lightning, and cutting hail, and legioned forms
Of furies, driving by upon the wounding storms.
Ay, do thy worst. Thou art omnipotent.
O'er all things but thyself I gave thee power,
And my own will. Be thy swift mischiefs sent
To blast mankind, from yon ethereal tower.
Let thy malignant spirit move
In darkness over those I love:
On me and mine I imprecate
The utmost torture of thy hate;
And thus devote to sleepless agony,
This undeclining head while thou must reign on high.

But thou, who art the God and Lord: O, thou,
Who fillest with thy soul this world of woe,
To whom all things of Earth and Heaven do bow
In fear and worship, all-prevailing foe!
I curse thee! let a sufferer's curse
Clasp thee, his torturer, like remorse;
Till thine Infinity shall be
A robe of envenomed agony;[4]
And thine Omnipotence a crown of pain.
To cling like burning gold round thy dissolving brain.

Heap on thy soul, by virtue of this Curse,
Ill deeds, then be thou damned, beholding good;
Both infinite as is the universe,
And thou, and thy self-torturing solitude.
An awful image of calm power
Though now thou sittest, let the hour
Come, when thou must appear to be
That which thou art internally;
And after many a false and fruitless crime
Scorn track thy lagging fall through boundless space and time.

PROMETHEUS. Were these my words, O Parent?
THE EARTH. They were thine.
PROMETHEUS. It doth repent me: words are quick and vain;
Grief for a while is blind, and so was mine.
I wish no living thing to suffer pain.

THE EARTH

Misery, Oh misery to me,
That Jove at length should vanquish thee.
Wail, howl aloud, Land and Sea.
The Earth's rent heart shall answer ye.
Howl, Spirits of the living and the dead,
Your refuge, your defence lies fallen and vanquishèd.

FIRST ECHO

Lies fallen and vanquishèd!

SECOND ECHO

Fallen and vanquishèd!

[4] a reference to the poison shirt of Nessus which destroyed its owner.

IONE

Fear not: 'tis but some passing spasm,
The Titan is unvanquished still.
But see, where through the azure chasm
Of yon forked and snowy hill
Tramping the slant winds on high
With golden-sandalled feet, that glow
Under plumes of purple dye,
Like rose-ensanguined ivory,
A Shape comes now,
Stretching on high from his right hand
A serpent-cinctured wand.

PANTHEA. 'Tis Jove's world-wandering herald, Mercury.

IONE

And who are those with hydra tresses
And iron wings that climb the wind,
Whom the frowning God represses
Like vapors steaming up behind,
Clanging loud, an endless crowd—

PANTHEA

These are Jove's tempest-walking hounds,
Whom he gluts with groans and blood,
When charioted on sulphurous cloud
He bursts Heaven's bounds.

IONE

Are they now led, from the thin dead
On new pangs to be fed?

PANTHEA

The Titan looks as ever, firm, not proud.

FIRST FURY. Ha! I scent life!
SECOND FURY. Let me but look into his eyes!
THIRD FURY. The hope of torturing him smells like a heap
Of corpses to a death-bird after battle.
FIRST FURY. Darest thou delay, O Herald! take cheer, Hounds
Of Hell: what if the Son of Maia[5] soon
Should make us food and sport—who can please long
The Omnipotent?

[5] Hermes.

MERCURY. Back to your towers of iron,
And gnash, beside the streams of fire and wail,
Your foodless teeth. Geryon,[6] arise! and Gorgon,[7]
Chimæra,[8] and thou Sphinx,[9] subtlest of fiends
Who ministered to Thebes Heaven's poisoned wine,
Unnatural love, and more unnatural hate:
These shall perform your task.
FIRST FURY. Oh, mercy! mercy!
We die with our desire: drive us not back!
MERCURY. Crouch then in silence.
Awful Sufferer!
To thee unwilling, most unwillingly
I come, by the great Father's will driven down,
To execute a doom of new revenge.
Alas! I pity thee, and hate myself
That I can do no more: aye from thy sight
Returning, for a season, Heaven seems Hell,
So thy worn form pursues me night and day,
Smiling reproach. Wise art thou, firm and good,
But vainly wouldst stand forth alone in strife
Against the Omnipotent; as yon clear lamps
That measure and divide the weary years
From which there is no refuge, long have taught
And long must teach. Even now thy Torturer arms
With the strange might of unimagined pains
The powers who scheme slow agonies in Hell,
And my commission is to lead them here,
Or what more subtle, foul, or savage fiends
People the abyss, and leave them to their task.
Be it not so! there is a secret known
To thee, and to none else of living things,
Which may transfer the sceptres of wide Heaven,
The fear of which perplexes the Supreme:
Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne
In intercession; bend thy soul in prayer,
And like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane,
Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart:
For benefits and meek submission tame
The fiercest and the mightiest.
PROMETHEUS. Evil minds
Change good to their own nature. I gave all
He has; and in return he chains me here
Years, ages, night and day: whether the Sun
Split my parched skin, or in the moony night
The crystal-winged snow cling round my hair:
Whilst my beloved race is trampled down
By his thought-executing ministers.
Such is the tyrant's recompense: 'tis just:
He who is evil can receive no good;
And for a world bestowed, or a friend lost,
He can feel hate, fear, shame; not gratitude;
He but requites me for his own misdeed.
Kindness to such is keen reproach, which breaks
With bitter stings the light sleep of Revenge.
Submission, thou dost know I cannot try.
For what submission but that fatal word,
The death-seal of mankind's captivity,
Like the Sicilian's hair-suspended sword,[10]
Which trembles o'er his crown, would he accept,
Or could I yield? Which yet I will not yield.
Let others flatter Crime, where it sits throned
In brief Omnipotence: secure are they:
For Justice, when triumphant, will weep down
Pity, not punishment, on her own wrongs,
Too much avenged by those who err. I wait,
Enduring thus, the retributive hour
Which since we spake is even nearer now.
But hark, the hell-hounds clamor: fear delay:
Behold! Heaven lowers under thy Father's frown.
MERCURY. Oh, that we might be spared: I to inflict
And thou to suffer! Once more answer me:
Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power?
PROMETHEUS. I know but this, that it must come.
MERCURY. Alas!
Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain?
PROMETHEUS. They last while Jove must reign: nor more, nor less
Do I desire or fear.
MERCURY. Yet pause, and plunge
Into Eternity, where recorded time,
Even all that we imagine, age on age,
Seems but a point, and the reluctant mind
Flags wearily in its unending flight,
Till it sink, dizzy, blind, lost, shelterless;
Perchance it has not numbered the slow years
Which thou must spend in torture, unreprieved?
PROMETHEUS. Perchance no thought can count them, yet they pass.
MERCURY. If thou might'st dwell among the Gods the while
Lapped in voluptuous joy?
PROMETHEUS. I would not quit
This bleak ravine, these unrepentant pains.
MERCURY. Alas! I wonder at, yet pity thee.

[6] the three-bodied giant.
[7] the giant whose head Perseus cut off.
[8] a she-monster with a lion's head, goat's body and dragon's tail.
[9] a monster with a lion's body and wings, and the head and bust of a woman.
[10] the sword of Damocles. In the midst of a banquet given by the king of Sicily, Damocles observed above his head a sword suspended by a single horse-hair.

PROMETHEUS. Pity the self-despising slaves of Heaven,
Not me, within whose mind sits peace serene,
As light in the sun, throned: how vain is talk!
Call up the fiends.
IONE. O, sister, look! White fire
Has cloven to the roots yon huge snow-loaded cedar;
How fearfully God's thunder howls behind!
MERCURY. I must obey his words and thine: alas!
Most heavily remorse hangs at my heart!
PANTHEA. See where the child of Heaven, with wingèd feet,
Runs down the slanted sunlight of the dawn.
IONE. Dear sister, close thy plumes over thine eyes
Lest thou behold and die: they come: they come
Blackening the birth of day with countless wings,
And hollow underneath, like death.
FIRST FURY. Prometheus!
SECOND FURY. Immortal Titan!
THIRD FURY. Champion of Heaven's slaves!
PROMETHEUS. He whom some dreadful voice invokes is here,
Prometheus, the chained Titan. Horrible forms,
What and who are ye? Never yet there came
Phantasms so foul through monster-teeming Hell
From the all-miscreative brain of Jove;
Whilst I behold such execrable shapes,
Methinks I grow like what I contemplate,
And laugh and stare in loathsome sympathy.
FIRST FURY. We are the ministers of pain, and fear,
And disappointment, and mistrust, and hate,
And clinging crime; and as lean dogs pursue
Through wood and lake some struck and sobbing fawn,
We track all things that weep, and bleed, and live,
When the great King betrays them to our will.
PROMETHEUS. Oh! many fearful natures in one name,
I know ye; and these lakes and echoes know
The darkness and the clangor of your wings.
But why more hideous than your loathèd selves
Gather ye up in legions from the deep?
SECOND FURY. We knew not that: Sisters, rejoice, rejoice!
PROMETHEUS. Can aught exult in its deformity?
SECOND FURY. The beauty of delight makes lovers glad,
Gazing on one another: so are we.
As from the rose which the pale priestess kneels
To gather for her festal crown of flowers
The aëreal crimson falls, flushing her cheek,
So from our victim's destined agony
The shade which is our form invests us round,
Else we are shapeless as our mother Night.
PROMETHEUS. I laugh your power, and his who sent you here,
To lowest scorn. Pour forth the cup of pain.
FIRST FURY. Thou thinkest we will rend thee bone from bone,
And nerve from nerve, working like fire within?
PROMETHEUS. Pain is my element, as hate is thine;
Ye rend me now: I care not.
SECOND FURY. Dost imagine
We will but laugh into thy lidless eyes?
PROMETHEUS I weigh not what ye do, but what ye suffer,
Being evil. Cruel was the power which called
You, or aught else so wretched, into light.
THIRD FURY. Thou think'st we will live through thee, one by one,
Like animal life, and though we can obscure not
The soul which burns within, that we will dwell
Beside it, like a vain loud multitude
Vexing the self-content of wisest men:
That we will be dread thought beneath thy brain,
And foul desire round thine astonished heart,
And blood within thy labyrinthine veins
Crawling like agony?
PROMETHEUS. Why, ye are thus now;
Yet am I king over myself, and rule
The torturing and conflicting throngs within,
As Jove rules you when Hell grows mutinous.

CHORUS OF FURIES

From the ends of the earth, from the ends of the earth,
Where the night has its grave and the morning its birth,
Come, come, come!
Oh, ye who shake hills with the scream of your mirth,
When cities sink howling in ruin; and ye
Who with wingless footsteps trample the sea,
And close upon Shipwreck and Famine's track,
Sit chattering with joy on the foodless wreck;
Come, come, come!
Leave the bed, low, cold, and red,
Strewed beneath a nation dead;

Leave the hatred, as in ashes
Fire is left for future burning.
It will burst in bloodier flashes
When ye stir it, soon returning:
Leave the self-contempt implanted
In young spirits, sense-enchanted,
Misery's yet unkindled fuel:
Leave Hell's secrets half unchanted,
To the maniac dreamer; cruel
More than ye can be with hate
Is he with fear.
Come, come, come!
We are steaming up from Hell's wide gate
And we burthen the blast of the atmosphere,
But vainly we toil till ye come here.

IONE. Sister, I hear the thunder of new wings.
PANTHEA. These solid mountains quiver with the sound
Even as the tremulous air: their shadows make
The space within my plumes more black than night.

FIRST FURY

Your call was as a wingèd car
Driven on whirlwinds fast and far;
It rapped us from red gulfs of war.

SECOND FURY

From wide cities, famine-wasted;

THIRD FURY

Groans half heard, and blood untasted;

FOURTH FURY

Kingly conclaves stern and cold,
Where blood with gold is bought and sold;

FIFTH FURY

From the furnace, white and hot,
In which—

A FURY

Speak not: whisper not:
I know all that ye would tell,
But to speak might break the spell
Which must bend the Invincible,
The stern of thought;
He yet defies the deepest power of Hell.

A FURY

Tear the veil!

ANOTHER FURY

It is torn.

CHORUS

The pale stars of the morn
Shine on a misery, dire to be borne.
Dost thou faint, mighty Titan? We laugh thee to scorn.
Dost thou boast the clear knowledge thou waken'dst for man?
Then was kindled within him a thirst which outran
Those perishing waters; a thirst of fierce fever,
Hope, love, doubt, desire, which consume him for ever.
One came forth[10a] of gentle worth
Smiling on the sanguine earth;
His words outlived him, like swift poison
Withering up truth, peace, and pity.
Look! where round the wide horizon
Many a million-peopled city
Vomits smoke in the bright air.
Hark that outcry of despair!
'Tis his mild and gentle ghost
Wailing for the faith he kindled:
Look again, the flames almost
To a glow-worm's lamp have dwindled:
The survivors round the embers
Gather in dread.
Joy, joy, joy!
Past ages crowd on thee, but each one remembers,
And the future is dark, and the present is spread
Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumberless head.

SEMICHORUS I

Drops of bloody agony flow
From his white and quivering brow.
Grant a little respite now:
See a disenchanted nation[10b]
Springs like day from desolation;
To Truth its state is dedicate,
And Freedom leads it forth, her mate;
A legioned band of linkèd brothers
Whom Love calls children—

[10a] Christ. [10b] France.

SEMICHORUS II

'Tis another's:
See how kindred murder kin:
'Tis the vintage-time for death and sin:
Blood, like new wine, bubbles within:
Till Despair smothers
The struggling world, which slaves and tyrants win.

[*All the* FURIES *vanish, except one.*]

IONE. Hark, sister! what a low yet dreadful groan
Quite unsuppressed is tearing up the heart
Of the good Titan, as storms tear the deep,
And beasts hear the sea moan in inland caves.
Darest thou observe how the fiends torture him?

PANTHEA. Alas! I looked forth twice, but will no more.

IONE. What didst thou see?

PANTHEA. A woful sight: a youth
With patient looks nailed to a crucifix.

IONE. What next?

PANTHEA. The heaven around, the earth below
Was peopled with thick shapes of human death,
All horrible, and wrought by human hands,
And some appeared the work of human hearts.
For men were slowly killed by frowns and smiles:
And other sights too foul to speak and live
Were wandering by. Let us not tempt worse fear
By looking forth: those groans are grief enough.

FURY. Behold an emblem: those who do endure
Deep wrongs for man, and scorn, and chains, but heap
Thousandfold torment on themselves and him.

PROMETHEUS. Remit the anguish of that lighted stare;
Close those wan lips; let that thorn-wounded brow
Stream not with blood; it mingles with thy tears!
Fix, fix those tortured orbs in peace and death,
So thy sick throes shake not that crucifix,
So those pale fingers play not with thy gore.
O, horrible! Thy name I will not speak,
It hath become a curse. I see, I see
The wise, the mild, the lofty, and the just,
Whom thy slaves hate for being like to thee,
Some hunted by foul lies from their heart's home,
An early-chosen, late-lamented home;
As hooded ounces cling to the driven hind;
Some linked to corpses in unwholesome cells:
Some—hear I not the multitude laugh loud?—
Impaled in lingering fire: and mighty realms
Float by my feet, like sea-uprooted isles,
Whose sons are kneaded down in common blood
By the red light of their own burning homes.

FURY. Blood thou canst see, and fire; and canst hear groans;
Worse things, unheard, unseen, remain behind.

PROMETHEUS. Worse?

FURY. In each human heart terror survives
The ravin it has gorged: the loftiest fear
All that they would disdain to think were true:
Hypocrisy and custom make their minds
The fanes of many a worship, now outworn.
They dare not devise good for man's estate,
And yet they know not that they do not dare.
The good want power, but to weep barren tears.
The powerful goodness want: worse need for them.
The wise want love; and those who love want wisdom;
And all best things are thus confused to ill.
Many are strong and rich, and would be just,
But live among their suffering fellow-men
As if none felt: they know not what they do.

PROMETHEUS. Thy words are like a cloud of wingèd snakes;
And yet I pity those they torture not.

FURY. Thou pitiest them? I speak no more!

[*Vanishes.*]

PROMETHEUS. Ah woe!
Ah woe! Alas! pain, pain ever, for ever!
I close my tearless eyes, but see more clear
Thy works within my woe-illumèd mind,
Thou subtle tyrant! Peace is in the grave.
The grave hides all things beautiful and good:
I am a God and cannot find it there,
Nor would I seek it: for, though dread revenge,
This is defeat, fierce king, not victory.
The sights with which thou torturest gird my soul
With new endurance, till the hour arrives
When they shall be no types of things which are.

PANTHEA. Alas! what sawest thou more?

PROMETHEUS. There are two woes:
To speak, and to behold; thou spare me one.
Names are there, Nature's sacred watchwords, they
Were borne aloft in bright emblazonry;
The nations thronged around, and cried aloud,
As with one voice, Truth, liberty, and love!
Suddenly fierce confusion fell from heaven
Among them: there was strife, deceit, and fear:
Tyrants rushed in, and did divide the spoil.

This was the shadow of the truth I saw.
THE EARTH. I felt thy torture, son; with such mixed joy
As pain and virtue give. To cheer thy state
I bid ascend those subtle and fair spirits,
Whose homes are the dim caves of human thought,
And who inhabit, as birds wing the wind,
Its world-surrounding æther: they behold
Beyond that twilight realm, as in a glass,
The future: may they speak comfort to thee!
PANTHEA. Look, sister, where a troop of spirits gather,
Like flocks of clouds in spring's delightful weather,
Thronging in the blue air!
IONE. And see! more come,
Like fountain-vapors when the winds are dumb,
That climb up the ravine in scattered lines.
And, hark! is it the music of the pines?
Is it the lake? Is it the waterfall?
PANTHEA. 'Tis something sadder, sweeter far than all.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS

From unremembered ages we
Gentle guides and guardians be
Of heaven-oppressed mortality;
And we breathe, and sicken not,
The atmosphere of human thought:
Be it dim, and dank, and gray,
Like a storm-extinguished day,
Travelled o'er by dying gleams;
Be it bright as all between
Cloudless skies and windless streams,
Silent, liquid, and serene;
As the birds within the wind,
As the fish within the wave,
As the thoughts of man's own mind
Float through all above the grave;
We make there our liquid lair,
Voyaging cloudlike and unpent
Through the boundless element:
Thence we bear the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee!
IONE. More yet come, one by one: the air around them
Looks radiant as the air around a star.

FIRST SPIRIT

On a battle-trumpet's blast
I fled hither, fast, fast, fast,
'Mid the darkness upward cast.
From the dust of creeds outworn,
From the tyrant's banner torn,
Gathering 'round me, onward borne,
There was mingled many a cry—
Freedom! Hope! Death! Victory!
Till they faded through the sky;
And one sound, above, around,
One sound beneath, around, above,
Was moving; 'twas the soul of Love;
'Twast the hope, the prophecy,
Which begins and ends in thee.

SECOND SPIRIT

A rainbow's arch stood on the sea,
Which rocked beneath, immovably;
And the triumphant storm did flee,
Like a conqueror, swift and proud,
Between, with many a captive cloud,
A shapeless, dark and rapid crowd,
Each by lightning riven in half:
I heard the thunder hoarsely laugh:
Mighty fleets were strewn like chaff
And spread beneath a hell of death
O'er the white waters. I alit
On a great ship lightning-split,
And speeded hither on the sigh
Of one who gave an enemy
His plank, then plunged aside to die.

THIRD SPIRIT

I sate beside a sage's bed,
And the lamp was burning red
Near the book where he had fed,
When a Dream with plumes of flame,
To his pillow hovering came,
And I knew it was the same
Which had kindled long ago
Pity, eloquence, and woe;
And the world awhile below
Wore the shade, its lustre made.
It has borne me here as fleet
As Desire's lightning feet:
I must ride it back ere morrow,
Or the sage will wake in sorrow.

FOURTH SPIRIT

On a poet's lips I slept
Dreaming like a love-adept
In the sound his breathing kept;

Nor seeks nor finds he mortal blisses,
But feeds on the aëreal kisses
Of shapes that haunt thought's wildernesses.
He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illume
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see, what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality!
One of these awakened me,
And I sped to succor thee.

IONE

Behold'st thou not two shapes from the east and west
Come, as two doves to one beloved nest,
Twin nurslings of the all-sustaining air
On swift still wings glide down the atmosphere?
And, hark! their sweet, sad voices! 'tis despair
Mingled with love and then dissolved in sound.

PANTHEA. Canst thou speak, sister? all my words are drowned.

IONE. Their beauty gives me voice. See how they float
On their sustaining wings of skiey grain,
Orange and azure deepening into gold:
Their soft smiles light the air like a star's fire.

CHORUS OF SPIRITS

Hast thou beheld the form of Love?

FIFTH SPIRIT

As over wide dominions
I sped, like some swift cloud that wings the wide air's wildernesses,
That planet-crested shape swept by on lightning-braided pinions,
Scattering the liquid joy of life from his ambrosial tresses:
His footsteps paved the world with light; but as I passed 'twas fading,
And hollow Ruin yawned behind: great sages bound in madness,
And headless patriots, and pale youths who perished, unupbraiding,
Gleamed in the night. I wandered o'er, till thou,
O King of sadness,
Turned by thy smile the worst I saw to recollected gladness.

SIXTH SPIRIT

Ah, sister! Desolation is a delicate thing:
It walks not on the earth, it floats not on the air,
But treads with lulling footstep, and fans with silent wing
The tender hopes which in their hearts the best and gentlest bear;
Who, soothed to false repose by the fanning plumes above
And the music-stirring motion of its soft and busy feet,
Dream visions of aëreal joy, and call the monster, Love,
And wake, and find the shadow Pain, as he whom now we greet.

CHORUS

Though Ruin now Love's shadow be,
Following him, destroyingly,
On Death's white and winged steed,
Which the fleetest cannot flee,
Trampling down both flower and weed,
Man and beast, and foul and fair,
Like a tempest through the air;
Thou shalt quell this horseman grim,
Woundless though in heart or limb.

PROMETHEUS. Spirits! how know ye this shall be?

CHORUS

In the atmosphere we breathe,
As buds grow red when the snow-storms flee,
From Spring gathering up beneath,
Whose mild winds shake the elder brake,
And the wandering herdsmen know
That the white-thorn soon will blow:
Wisdom, Justice, Love, and Peace,
When they struggle to increase,
Are to us as soft winds be
To shepherd boys, the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee.

IONE. Where are the Spirits fled?

PANTHEA. Only a sense
Remains of them, like the omnipotence
Of music, when the inspired voice and lute
Languish, ere yet the responses are mute,
Which through the deep and labyrinthine soul,
Like echoes through long caverns, wind and roll.

PROMETHEUS. How fair these airborn shapes! and yet I feel
Most vain all hope but love; and thou art far,
Asia! who, when my being overflowed,
Wert like a golden chalice to bright wine
Which else had sunk into the thirsty dust.
All things are still: alas! how heavily
This quiet morning weighs upon my heart;
Though I should dream I could even sleep with grief
If slumber were denied not. I would fain
Be what it is my destiny to be,
The savior and the strength of suffering man,
Or sink into the original gulf of things:
There is no agony, and no solace left;
Earth can console, Heaven can torment no more.
PANTHEA. Hast thou forgotten one who watches thee
The cold dark night, and never sleeps but when
The shadow of thy spirit falls on her?
PROMETHEUS. I said all hope was vain but love: thou lovest.
PANTHEA. Deeply in truth; but the eastern star looks white,
And Asia waits in that far Indian vale,
The scene of her sad exile; rugged once
And desolate and frozen, like this ravine;
But now invested with fair flowers and herbs,
And haunted by sweet airs and sounds, which flow
Among the woods and waters from the æther
Of her transforming presence, which would fade
If it were mingled not with thine. Farewell!

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II

SCENE I.—*Morning. A lovely Vale in the Indian Caucasus.* ASIA *alone.*

ASIA. From all the blasts of heaven thou hast descended:
Yes, like a spirit, like a thought, which makes
Unwonted tears throng to the horny eyes,
And beatings haunt the desolated heart,
Which should have learnt repose: thou hast descended
Cradled in tempests; thou dost wake, O Spring!
O child of many winds! As suddenly
Thou comest as the memory of a dream,
Which now is sad because it hath been sweet;
Like genius, or like joy which riseth up
As from the earth, clothing with golden clouds
The desert of our life.
This is the season, this the day, the hour;
At sunrise thou shouldst come, sweet sister mine,
Too long desired, too long delaying, come!
How like death-worms the wingless moments crawl!
The point of one white star is quivering still
Deep in the orange light of widening morn
Beyond the purple mountains: through a chasm
Of wind-divided mist the darker lake
Reflects it: now it wanes: it gleams again
As the waves fade, and as the burning threads
Of woven cloud unravel in pale air:
'Tis lost! and through yon peaks of cloud-like snow
The roseate sunlight quivers: hear I not
The Æolian music of her sea-green plumes
Winnowing the crimson dawn?

PANTHEA *enters.*

I feel, I see
Those eyes which burn through smiles that fade in tears,
Like stars half quenched in mists of silver dew.
Beloved and most beautiful, who wearest
The shadow of that soul by which I live,
How late thou art! the spherèd sun had climbed
The sea; my heart was sick with hope, before
The printless air felt thy belated plumes.
PANTHEA. Pardon, great Sister! but my wings were faint
With the delight of a remembered dream,
As are the noontide plumes of summer winds
Satiate with sweet flowers. I was wont to sleep
Peacefully, and awake refreshed and calm
Before the sacred Titan's fall, and thy
Unhappy love, had made, through use and pity,
Both love and woe familiar to my heart
As they had grown to thine: erewhile I slept
Under the glaucous[11] caverns of old Ocean
Within dim bowers of green and purple moss,
Our young Ione's soft and milky arms
Locked then, as now, behind my dark, moist hair,
While my shut eyes and cheek were pressed within
The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom:
But not as now, since I am made the wind
Which fails beneath the music that I bear
Of thy most wordless converse; since dissolved
Into the sense with which love talks, my rest
Was troubled and yet sweet; my waking hours
Too full of care and pain.

[11] yellowish-green.

ASIA. Lift up thine eyes,
And let me read thy dream.
PANTHEA. As I have said
With our sea-sister at his feet I slept.
The mountain mists, condensing at our voice
Under the moon, had spread their snowy flakes
From the keen ice shielding our linkèd sleep.
Then two dreams came. One, I remember not.
But in the other his pale wound-worn limbs
Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night
Grew radiant with the glory of that form
Which lives unchanged within, and his voice fell
Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
Faint with intoxication of keen joy:
'Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world
With loveliness—more fair than aught but her,
Whose shadow thou art—lift thine eyes on me.'
I lifted them: the overpowering light
Of that immortal shape was shadowed o'er
By love; which, from his soft and flowing limbs,
And passion-parted lips, and keen, faint eyes,
Steamed forth like vaporous fire; an atmosphere
Which wrapped me in its all-dissolving power,
As the warm æther of the morning sun
Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.
I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
His presence flow and mingle through my blood
Till it became his life, and his grew mine,
And I was thus absorbed, until it passed,
And like the vapors when the sun sinks down,
Gathering again in drops upon the pines,
And tremulous as they, in the deep night
My being was condensed; and as the rays
Of thought were slowly gathered, I could hear
His voice, whose accents lingered ere they died
Like footsteps of weak melody: thy name
Among the many sounds alone I heard
Of what might be articulate; though still
I listened through the night when sound was none.
Ione wakened then, and said to me:
'Canst thou divine what troubles me to-night?
I always knew what I desired before,
Nor ever found delight to wish in vain.
But now I cannot tell thee what I seek;
I know not; something sweet, since it is sweet
Even to desire; it is thy sport, false sister;
Thou hast discovered some enchantment old,
Whose spells have stolen my spirit as I slept
And mingled it with thine; for when just now
We kissed, I felt within thy parted lips
The sweet air that sustained me, and the warmth
Of the life-blood, for loss of which I faint,
Quivered between our intertwining arms.'
I answered not, for the Eastern star grew pale,
But fled to thee.
ASIA. Thou speakest, but thy words
Are as the air: I feel them not: Oh, lift
Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul!
PANTHEA. I lift them though they droop beneath the load
Of that they would express: what canst thou see
But thine own fairest shadow imaged there?
ASIA. Thine eyes are like the deep, blue, boundless heaven
Contracted to two circles underneath
Their long, fine lashes; dark, far, measureless,
Orb within orb, and line through line inwoven.
PANTHEA. Why lookest thou as if a spirit passed?
ASIA. There is a change: beyond their inmost depth
I see a shade, a shape: 'tis He, arrayed
In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread
Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded moon.
Prometheus, it is thine! depart not yet!
Say not those smiles that we shall meet again
Within that bright pavilion which their beams
Shall build o'er the waste world? The dream is told.
What shape is that between us? Its rude hair
Roughens the wind that lifts it, its regard
Is wild and quick, yet 'tis a thing of air,
For through its gray robe gleams the golden dew
Whose stars the noon has quenched not.
DREAM. Follow! Follow!
PANTHEA. It is mine other dream.
ASIA. It disappears.
PANTHEA. It passes now into my mind. Methought
As we sate here, the flower-infolding buds
Burst on yon lightning-blasted almond-tree,
When swift from the white Scythian wilderness
A wind swept forth wrinkling the Earth with frost:
I looked, and all the blossoms were blown down;
But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells
Of Hyacinth[12] tell Apollo's written grief,
O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!
ASIA. As you speak, your words
Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep
With shapes. Methought among these lawns together
We wandered, underneath the young gray dawn,
And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds

[12] Hyacinth was accidentally killed by Apollo who caused to spring up from his blood a flower inscribed with AI (woe).

Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains
Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind;
And the white dew on the new-bladed grass,
Just piercing the dark earth, hung silently;
And there was more which I remember not:
But on the shadows of the morning clouds,
Athwart the purple mountain slope, was written
FOLLOW, O, FOLLOW! as they vanished by;
And on each herb, from which Heaven's dew had fallen,
The like was stamped, as with a withering fire;
A wind arose among the pines; it shook
The clinging music from their boughs, and then
Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,
Were heard: O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW, FOLLOW ME!
And then I said: 'Panthea, look on me.'
Still I saw, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!

ECHO. Follow, follow!

PANTHEA. The crags, this clear spring morning, mock our voices
As they were spirit-tongued.

ASIA. It is some being
Around the crags. What fine clear sounds! O, list!

ECHOES [*unseen*]
Echoes we: listen!
We cannot stay:
As dew-stars glisten
Then fade away—
Child of Ocean!

ASIA. Hark! Spirits speak. The liquid responses
Of their aëreal tongues yet sound.

PANTHEA. I hear.

ECHOES

O, follow, follow,
As our voice recedeth
Through the caverns hollow,
Where the forest spreadeth;

[*More distant.*]

O, follow, follow!
Through the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
Where the wild bee never flew,
Through the noontide darkness deep,
By the odor-breathing sleep
Of faint night flowers, and the waves
At the fountain-lighted caves
While our music, wild and sweet,
Mocks thy gently falling feet,
Child of Ocean!

ASIA. Shall we pursue the sound? It grows more faint
And distant.

PANTHEA. List! the strain floats nearer now.

ECHOES

In the world unknown
Sleeps a voice unspoken;
By thy step alone
Can its rest be broken;
Child of Ocean!

ASIA. How the notes sink upon the ebbing wind!

ECHOES

O, follow, follow!
Through the caverns hollow,
As the song floats thou pursue,
By the woodland noontide dew;
By the forest, lakes, and fountains,
Through the many-folded mountains;
To the rents, and gulfs, and chasms,
Where the Earth resposed from spasms,
On the day when He and thou
Parted, to commingle now:
Child of Ocean!

ASIA. Come, sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine,
And follow, ere the voices fade away.

SCENE II.—*A Forest,*[18] *intermingled with Rocks and Caverns.* ASIA *and* PANTHEA *pass into it. Two young Fauns are sitting on a Rock listening.*

SEMICHORUS I OF SPIRITS

The path through which that lovely twain
Have passed, by cedar, pine, and yew,
And each dark tree that ever grew,
Is curtained out from Heaven's wide blue;

[18] Allegorically, the forest is human experience, through which Asia (Love) and Panthea (Faith) pursue their way.

Nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain,
  Can pierce its interwoven bowers,
Nor aught, save where some cloud of dew,
Drifted along the earth-creeping breeze,
Between the trunks of the hoar trees,
  Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers
Of the green laurel, blown anew;
And bends, and then fades silently,
One frail and fair anemone:
Or when some star of many a one
That climbs and wanders through steep night,
Has found the cleft through which alone
Beams fall from high those depths upon
Ere it is borne away, away,
By the swift Heavens that cannot stay,
It scatters drops of golden light,
Like lines of rain that ne'er unite:
And the gloom divine is all around,
And underneath is the mossy ground.

SEMICHORUS II

There the voluptuous nightingales,
  Are awake through all the broad noonday.
When one with bliss or sadness fails,
  And through the windless ivy-boughs,
Sick with sweet love, droops dying away
On its mate's music-panting bosom;
Another from the swinging blossom,
  Watching to catch the languid close
Of the last strain, then lifts on high
  The wings of the weak melody,
'Til some new strain of feeling bear
  The song, and all the woods are mute;
When there is heard through the dim air
The rush of wings, and rising there
  Like many a lake-surrounded flute,
Sounds overflow the listener's brain
So sweet, that joy is almost pain.

SEMICHORUS I

There those enchanted eddies play
  Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,
  By Demogorgon's mighty law,
  With melting rapture, or sweet awe,
All spirits on that secret way;
  As inland boats are driven to Ocean
Down streams made strong with mountain-thaw:
  And first there comes a gentle sound
  To those in talk or slumber bound,
  And wakes the destined soft emotion,—
Attracts, impels them; those who saw
  Say from the breathing earth behind
  There steams a plume-uplifting wind
Which drives them on their path, while they
  Believe their own swift wings and feet
The sweet desires within obey:
And so they float upon their way,
Until, still sweet, but loud and strong,
The storm of sound is driven along,
  Sucked up and hurrying: as they fleet
  Behind, its gathering billows meet
And to the fatal mountain bear
Like clouds amid the yielding air.

FIRST FAUN. Canst thou imagine where those spirits live
Which make such delicate music in the woods?
We haunt within the least frequented caves
And closest coverts, and we know these wilds,
Yet never meet them, though we hear them oft:
Where may they hide themselves?
SECOND FAUN. 'Tis hard to tell:
I have heard those more skilled in spirits say,
The bubbles, which the enchantment of the sun
Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave
The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
Are the pavilions where such dwell and float
Under the green and golden atmosphere
Which noontide kindles through the woven leaves;
And when these burst, and the thin fiery air,
The which they breathed within those lucent domes,
Ascends to flow like meteors through the night,
They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed,
And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire
Under the waters of the earth again.
FIRST FAUN. If such live thus, have others other lives,
Under pink blossoms or within the bells
Of meadow flowers, or folded violets deep,
Or on their dying odors, when they die,
Or in the sunlight of the spherèd dew?
SECOND FAUN. Ay, many more which we may well divine.
But, should we stay to speak, noontide would come,
And thwart Silenus[14] find his goats undrawn,
And grudge to sing those wise and lovely songs
Of Fate, and Chance, and God, and Chaos old,
And Love, and the chained Titan's woful doom,
And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth
One brotherhood: delightful strains which cheer

[14] a satyr-like woodland demigod.

Our solitary twilights, and which charm
To silence the unenvying nightingales.

SCENE III.—*A Pinnacle of Rock among Mountains.* ASIA *and* PANTHEA.

PANTHEA. Hither the sound has borne us—to the realm
Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal,
Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
Whence the oracular vapor is hurled up
Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth,
And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy,
That maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain
To deep intoxication; and uplift,
Like Mænads[15] who cry loud, Evoe! Evoe!
The voice which is contagion to the world.
ASIA. Fit throne for such a Power! Magnificent!
How glorious art thou, Earth! And if thou be
The shadow of some spirit lovelier still,
Though evil stain its work, and it should be
Like its creation, weak yet beautiful,
I could fall down and worship that and thee.
Even now my heart adoreth: Wonderful!
Look, sister, ere the vapor dim thy brain:
Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist,
As a lake, paving in the morning sky,
With azure waves which burst in silver light,
Some Indian vale. Behold it, rolling on
Under the curdling winds, and islanding
The peak whereon we stand, midway, around,
Encinctured by the dark and blooming forests,
Dim twilight-lawns, and stream-illumèd caves,
And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist;
And far on high the keen sky-cleaving mountains
From icy spires of sun-like radiance fling
The dawn, as lifted Ocean's dazzling spray,
From some Atlantic islet scattered up,
Spangles the wind with lamp-like water-drops.
The vale is girdled with their walls, a howl
Of cataracts from their thaw-cloven ravines,
Satiates the listening wind, continuous, vast,
Awful as silence. Hark! the rushing snow!
The sun-awakened avalanche! whose mass,
Thrice sifted by the storm, had gathered there
Flake after flake, in heaven-defying minds
As thought by thought is piled, till some great truth
Is loosened, and the nations echo round,
Shaken to their roots, as do the mountains now.

[15] frenzied nymphs attendant on Bacchus, the wine god.

PANTHEA. Look how the gusty sea of mist is breaking
In crimson foam, even at our feet! it rises
As Ocean at the enchantment of the moon
Round foodless men wrecked on some oozy isle.
ASIA. The fragments of the cloud are scattered up;
The wind that lifts them disentwines my hair;
Its billows now sweep o'er mine eyes; my brain
Grows dizzy; see'st thou shapes within the mist?
PANTHEA. A countenance with beckoning smiles: there burns
An azure fire within its golden locks!
Another and another: hark! they speak!

Song of SPIRITS.

To the deep, to the deep,
Down, down!
Through the shade of sleep,
Through the cloudy strife
Of Death and of Life;
Through the veil and the bar
Of things which seem and are
Even to the steps of the remotest throne,
Down, down!

While the sound whirls around,
Down, down!
As the fawn draws the hound,
As the lightning the vapor,
As a weak moth the taper;
Death, despair; love, sorrow;
Time both; to-day, to-morrow;
As steel obeys the spirit of the stone,
Down, down!

Through the gray, void abysm,
Down, down!
Where the air is no prism,
And the moon and stars are not,
And the cavern-crags wear not
The radiance of Heaven,
Nor the gloom to Earth given,
Where there is One pervading, One alone,
Down, down!

In the depth of the deep,
Down, down!
Like veiled lightning asleep,
Like the spark nursed in embers,

The last look Love remembers,
Like a diamond, which shines
On the dark wealth of mines,
A spell is treasured but for thee alone.
Down, down!

We have bound thee, we guide thee;
Down, down!
With the bright form beside thee;
Resist not the weakness,
Such strength is in meekness
That the Eternal, the Immortal,
Must unloose through life's portal
The snake-like Doom coiled underneath his throne
By that alone.

SCENE IV.—*The Cave of Demogorgon.* ASIA *and* PANTHEA.

PANTHEA. What veilèd form sits on that ebon throne?
ASIA. The veil has fallen.
PANTHEA. I see a mighty darkness
Filling the seat of power, and rays of gloom
Dart round, as light from the meridian sun.
—Ungazed upon and shapeless; neither limb,
Nor form, nor outline; yet we feel it is
A living Spirit.
DEMOGORGON. Ask what thou wouldst know.
ASIA. What canst thou tell?
DEMOGORGON. All things thou dar'st demand.
ASIA. Who made the living world?
DEMOGORGON. God.
ASIA. Who made all
That it contains? thought, passion, reason, will,
Imagination?
DEMOGORGON. God: Almighty God.
ASIA. Who made that sense which, when the winds of Spring
In rarest visitation, or the voice
Of one belovèd heard in youth alone,
Fills the faint eyes with falling tears which dim
The radiant looks of unbewailing flowers,
And leaves this peopled earth a solitude
When it returns no more?
DEMOGORGON. Merciful God.
ASIA. And who made terror, madness, crime, remorse,
Which from the links of the great chain of things,
To every thought within the mind of man
Sway and drag heavily, and each one reels
Under the load towards the pit of death:
Abandoned hope, and love that turns to hate;
And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood;
Pain, whose unheeded and familiar speech
Is howling, and keen shrieks, day after day;
And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell?
DEMOGORGON. He reigns.
ASIA. Utter his name: a world pining in pain
Asks but his name: curses shall drag him down.
DEMOGORGON. He reigns.
ASIA. I feel, I know it: who?
DEMOGORGON. He reigns
ASIA. Who reigns? There was the Heaven and Earth at first,
And Light and Love; then Saturn, from whose throne
Time fell, an envious shadow: such the state
Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway,
As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
Before the wind or sun has withered them
And semivital worms! but he refused
The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
The skill which wields the elements, the thought
Which pierces this dim universe like light,
Self-empire, and the majesty of love;
For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus
Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
And with this law alone, 'Let man be free,'
Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
To know nor faith, nor love, nor law; to be
Omnipotent but friendless is to reign;
And Jove now reigned; for on the race of man
First famine, and then toil, and then disease,
Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
Fell; and the unseasonable seasons drove
With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves:
And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent,
And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle
Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes
Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers,
Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth,[16] fadeless blooms,
That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind
The disunited tendrils of that vine
Which bears the wine of life, the human heart;
And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,
Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath
The frown of man; and tortured to his will

[16] the sorrow-banishing drug, the witchcraft-protecting herb, and the never-fading flower.

Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,
And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms
Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind
Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;
And music lifted up the listening spirit
Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;
And human hands first mimicked and then mocked,
With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
The human form, till marble grew divine;
And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.
He told the hidden power of herbs and springs,
And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.
He taught the implicated orbits woven
Of the wide-wandering stars; and how the sun
Changes his lair, and by what secret spell
The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye
Gazes not on the interlunar sea:
He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
The tempest-wingèd chariots of the Ocean,
And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
The warm winds, and the azure æther shone,
And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
Such, the alleviations of his state,
Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
Withering in destined pain: but who rains down
Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while
Man looks on his creation like a God
And sees that it is glorious, drives him on,
The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,
The outcast, the abandoned, the alone?
Not Jove: while yet his frown shook Heaven, ay, when
His adversary from adamantine chains
Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
Who is his master? Is he too a slave?

DEMOGORGON. All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil:
Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no.

ASIA. Whom calledst thou God?

DEMOGORGON. I spoke but as ye speak,
For Jove is the supreme of living things.

ASIA. Who is the master of the slave?

DEMOGORGON. If the abysm
Could vomit forth its secrets. . . . But a voice
Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless;
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
On the revolving world? What to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love.

ASIA. So much I asked before, and my heart gave
The response thou hast given; and of such truths
Each to itself must be the oracle.
One more demand; and do thou answer me
As mine own soul would answer, did it know
That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise
Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world:
When shall the destined hour arrive?

DEMOGORGON. Behold!

ASIA. The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night
I see cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd steeds
Which trample the dim winds: in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.
Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars:
Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before,
And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair: they all
Sweep onward.

DEMOGORGON. These are the immortal Hours,
Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.

ASIA. A spirit with a dreadful countenance
Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulf.
Unlike thy brethren, ghastly charioteer,
Who art thou? Whither wouldst thou bear me? Speak!

SPIRIT. I am the shadow of a destiny
More dread than is my aspect: ere yon planet
Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne.

ASIA. What meanest thou?

PANTHEA. That terrible shadow floats
Up from its throne, as may the lurid smoke
Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea.
Lo! it ascends the car; the coursers fly
Terrified: watch its path among the stars

Blackening the night!
ASIA. Thus I am answered: strange!
PANTHEA. See, near the verge, another chariot stays;
An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,
Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
Of delicate strange tracery; the young spirit
That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope;
How its soft smiles attract the soul! as light
Lures wingèd insects through the lampless air.

SPIRIT

My coursers are fed with the lightning,
They drink of the whirlwind's stream,
And when the red morning is bright'ning
They bathe in the fresh sunbeam;
They have strength for their swiftness I deem,
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

I desire: and their speed make night kindle;
I fear: they outstrip the Typhoon;
Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle
We encircle the earth and the moon:
We shall rest from long labors at noon:
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

SCENE V.—*The Car pauses within a Cloud on the top of a snowy Mountain.* ASIA, PANTHEA, *and the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

SPIRIT

On the brink of the night and the morning
My coursers are wont to respire;
But the Earth has just whispered a warning
That their flight must be swifter than fire:
They shall drink the hot speed of desire!

ASIA. Thou breathest on their nostrils, but my breath
Would give them swifter speed.
SPIRIT. Alas! it could not.
PANTHEA. Oh Spirit! pause, and tell whence is the light
Which fills this cloud? the sun is yet unrisen.
SPIRIT. The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo
Is held in heaven by wonder; and the light
Which fills this vapor, as the aëreal hue
Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,
Flows from thy mighty sister.
PANTHEA. Yes, I feel—
ASIA. What is it with thee, sister? Thou art pale.
PANTHEA. How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
Is working in the elements, which suffer
Thy presence thus unveiled. The Nereids[17] tell
That on the day when the clear hyaline
Was cloven at thine uprise, and thou didst stand
Within a veinèd shell, which floated on
Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,
Among the Ægean isles, and by the shores
Which bear thy name; love, like the atmosphere
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven
And the deep ocean and the sunless caves
And all that dwells within them; till grief cast
Eclipse upon the soul from which it came:
Such art thou now; nor is it I alone,
Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,
But the whole world which seeks thy sympathy.
Hearest thou not sounds i' the air which speak the love
Of all articulate beings? Feelest thou not
The inanimate winds enamored of thee? List!
[*Music.*]
ASIA. Thy words are sweeter than aught else but his
Whose echoes they are: yet all love is sweet,
Given or returned. Common as light is love,
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.
Like the wide heaven, the all-sustaining air,
It makes the reptile equal to the God:
They who inspire it most are fortunate,
As I am now; but those who feel it most
Are happier still, after long sufferings,
As I shall soon become.
PANTHEA. List! Spirits speak.

VOICE IN THE AIR, *singing*

Life of life! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them;
And thy smiles before they dwindle
Make the cold air fire; then screen them
In those looks, where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light! thy limbs are burning
Through the vest which seems to hide them;
As the radiant lines of morning
Through the clouds ere they divide them;
And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

[17] sea-nymphs.

Fair are others; none beholds thee,
But thy voice sounds low and tender
Like the fairest, for it folds thee
From the sight, that liquid splendor,
And all feel, yet see thee never,
As I feel now, lost for ever!

Lamp of Earth! where'er thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!

ASIA

My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
And thine doth like an angel sit
Beside a helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever, for ever,
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses,
A paradise of wildernesses!
Till, like one in slumber bound,
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound:

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions
In music's most serene dominions;
Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.
And we sail on, away, afar,
Without a course, without a star,
But, by the instinct of sweet music driven;
Till through Elysian garden islets
By thee, most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnace glided,
The boat of my desire is guided:
Realms where the air we breathe is love,
Which in the winds and on the waves doth move,
Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

We have passed Age's icy caves,
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray:
Beyond the glassy gulfs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day;
A paradise of vaulted bowers,
Lit by downward-gazing flowers,
And watery paths that wind between
Wildernesses calm and green,
Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
And rest, having beheld; somewhat like thee;
Which walk upon the sea, and chant melodiously!

END OF THE SECOND ACT

ACT III

SCENE I.—*Heaven.* JUPITER *on his Throne;* THETIS *and the other Deities assembled.*

JUPITER. Ye congregated powers of heaven, who share
The glory and the strength of him ye serve,
Rejoice! henceforth I am omnipotent,
All else had been subdued to me; alone
The soul of man, like unextinguished fire,
Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt,
And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
Hurling up insurrection, which might make
Our antique empire insecure, though built
On eldest faith, and hell's coeval, fear;
And though my curses through the pendulous air,
Like snow on herbless peaks, fall flake by flake,
And cling to it; though under my wrath's night
It climbs the crags of life, step after step,
Which wound it, as ice wounds unsandalled feet,
It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
Aspiring, unrepressed, yet soon to fall:
Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
That fatal child, the terror of the earth,
Who waits but till the destined hour arrive,
Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,
To redescend, and trample out the spark.
Pour forth heaven's wine, Idæan Ganymede,[18]
And let it fill the Dædal[19] cups like fire,
And from the flower-inwoven soil divine
Ye all-triumphant harmonies arise,
As dew from earth under the twilight stars:
Drink! be the nectar circling through your veins
The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods,
Till exultation burst in one wide voice
Like music from Elysian winds.
And thou
Ascend beside me, veilèd in the light

[18] the youth stolen by Zeus from Mount Ida to become cupbearer of the gods.
[19] cunningly formed (as by the mythical artisan Daedalus).

Of the desire which makes thee one with me,
Thetis,[20] bright image of eternity!
When thou didst cry, 'Insufferable might!
God! Spare me! I sustain not the quick flames,
The penetrating presence; all my being,
Like him whom the Numidian seps[21] did thaw
Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,
Sinking through its foundations': even then
Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third
Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,
Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld,
Waiting the incarnation, which ascends,
(Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
Grinding the winds?) from Demogorgon's throne.
Victory! victory! Feel'st thou not, O world,
The earthquake of his chariot thundering up
Olympus?

[*The Car of the* HOUR *arrives.* DEMOGORGON *descends, and moves towards the Throne of* JUPITER.]

Awful shape, what art thou? Speak!

DEMOGORGON. Eternity. Demand no direr name.
Descend, and follow me down the abyss.
I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;
Mightier than thee: and we must dwell together
Henceforth in darkness. Lift thy lightnings not.
The tyranny of heaven none may retain,
Or reassume, or hold, succeeding thee:
Yet if thou wilt, as 'tis the destiny
Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead,
Put forth thy might.

JUPITER. Detested prodigy!
Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons
I trample thee! thou lingerest?
Mercy! mercy!
No pity, no release, no respite! Oh,
That thou wouldst make mine enemy my judge,
Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge,
On Caucasus! he would not doom me thus.
Gentle, and just, and dreadless, is he not
The monarch of the world? What then art thou?
No refuge! no appeal!
Sink with me then,
We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shoreless sea. Let hell unlock
Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire,
And whelm on them into the bottomless void
This desolated world, and thee, and me,
The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck
Of that for which they combated.
Ai! Ai!
The elements obey me not. I sink
Dizzily down, ever, for ever, down.
And, like a cloud, mine enemy above
Darkens my fall with victory! Ai, Ai!

SCENE II.—*The Mouth of a great River in the Island Atlantis.*[22] OCEAN *is discovered reclining near the Shore;* APOLLO *stands beside him.*

OCEAN. He fell, thou sayest, beneath his conqueror's frown?

APOLLO. Ay, when the strife was ended which made dim
The orb I rule, and shook the solid stars,
The terrors of his eye illumined heaven
With sanguine light, through the thick ragged skirts
Of the victorious darkness, as he fell:
Like the last glare of day's red agony,
Which, from a rent among the fiery clouds,
Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep.

OCEAN. He sunk to the abyss? To the dark void?

APOLLO. An eagle so caught in some bursting cloud
On Caucasus, his thunder-baffled wings
Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes
Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded
By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail
Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at length
Prone, and the aëreal ice clings over it.

OCEAN. Henceforth the fields of heaven-reflecting sea
Which are my realm, will heave, unstained with blood,
Beneath the uplifting winds, like plains of corn
Swayed by the summer air; my streams will flow
Round many-peopled continents, and round
Fortunate isles; and from their glassy thrones
Blue Proteus[23] and his humid nymphs shall mark
The shadow of fair ships, as mortals see
The floating bark of the light-laden moon
With that white star, its sightless pilot's crest,
Borne down the rapid sunset's ebbing sea;
Tracking their path no more by blood and groans,
And desolation, and the mingled voice

[20] sea-nymph, sister of Asia.
[21] a poisonous snake.
[22] the traditional island west of the Pillars of Hercules, said to have been sunk beneath the ocean by an earthquake.
[23] a sea-god, son of Neptune.

Of slavery and command; but by the light
Of wave-reflected flowers, and floating odors,
And music soft, and mild, free, gentle voices,
And sweetest music, such as spirits love.
APOLLO. And I shall gaze not on the deeds which make
My mind obscure with sorrow, as eclipse
Darkens the sphere I guide; but list, I hear
The small, clear, silver lute of the young Spirit
That sits i' the morning star.
OCEAN. Thou must away;
Thy steeds will pause at even, till when farewell:
The loud deep calls me home even now to feed it
With azure calm out of the emerald urns
Which stand for ever full beside my throne.
Behold the Nereids under the green sea,
Their wavering limbs borne on the wind-like stream,
Their white arms lifted o'er their streaming hair
With garlands pied and starry sea-flower crowns,
Hastening to grace their mighty sister's joy.
[*A sound of waves is heard.*]
It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm.
Peace, monster; I come now. Farewell.
APOLLO. Farewell.

SCENE III.—*Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS, HERCULES, IONE, *the* EARTH, SPIRITS, ASIA, *and* PANTHEA, *borne in the Car with the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR. HERCULES *unbinds* PROMETHEUS, *who descends.*

HERCULES. Most glorious among Spirits, thus doth strength
To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,
And thee, who art the form they animate,
Minister like a slave.
PROMETHEUS. Thy gentle words
Are sweeter even than freedom long desired
And long delayed.
Asia, thou light of life,
Shadow of beauty unbeheld: and ye,
Fair sister nymphs, who made long years of pain
Sweet to remember, through your love and care:
Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave,
All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,
And paved with veinèd emerald, and a fountain
Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.
From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears
Like snow, or silver, or long diamond spires,
Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light:
And there is heard the ever-moving air,
Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,
And bees; and all around are mossy seats,
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass;
A simple dwelling, which shall be our own;
Where we will sit and talk of time and change,
As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.
What can hide man from mutability?
And if ye sigh, then I will smile; and thou,
Ione, shalt chant fragments of sea-music,
Until I weep, when ye shall smile away
The tears she brought, which yet were sweet to shed.
We will entangle buds and flowers and beams
Which twinkle on the fountain's brim, and make
Strange combinations out of common things,
Like human babes in their brief innocence;
And we will search, with looks and words of love,
For hidden thoughts, each lovelier than the last,
Our unexhausted spirits; and like lutes
Touched by the skill of the enamored wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be;
And hither come, sped on the charmèd winds,
Which meet from all the points of heaven, as bees
From every flower aëreal Enna[24] feeds,
At their known island-homes in Himera,[25]
The echoes of the human world, which tell
Of the low voice of love, almost unheard,
And dove-eyed pity's murmured pain, and music,
Itself the echo of the heart, and all
That tempers or improves man's life, now free;
And lovely apparitions,—dim at first,
Then radiant, as the mind, arising bright
From the embrace of beauty (whence the forms
Of which these are the phantoms) casts on them
The gathered rays which are reality—
Shall visit us, the progeny immortal
Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy,
And arts, though unimagined, yet to be.
The wandering voices and the shadows these
Of all that man becomes, the mediators
Of that best worship, love, by him and us
Given and returned; swift shapes and sounds, which grow
More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind,
And, veil by veil, evil and error fall:
Such virtue has the cave and place around.
[*Turning to the* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.]
For thee, fair Spirit, one toil remains. Ione,
Give her that curvèd shell, which Proteus old

[24] a town in Sicily, from which Proserpine was carried away by Pluto.
[25] a town in Sicily famous for its bees.

Made Asia's nuptial boon, breathing within it
A voice to be accomplished, and which thou
Didst hide in grass under the hollow rock.
IONE. Thou most desired Hour, more loved and lovely
Than all thy sisters, this is the mystic shell;
See the pale azure fading into silver
Lining it with a soft yet glowing light:
Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there?
SPIRIT. It seems in truth the fairest shell of Ocean:
Its sound must be at once both sweet and strange.
PROMETHEUS. Go, borne over the cities of mankind
On whirlwind-footed coursers: once again
Outspeed the sun around the orbèd world;
And as thy chariot cleaves the kindling air,
Thou breathe into the many-folded shell,
Loosening its mighty music; it shall be
As thunder mingled with clear echoes: then
Return; and thou shalt dwell beside our cave.
And thou. O, Mother Earth!—
THE EARTH. I hear, I feel;
Thy lips are on me, and their touch runs down
Even to the adamantine central gloom
Along these marble nerves; 'tis life, 'tis joy,
And through my withered, old, and icy frame
The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down
Circling. Henceforth the many children fair
Folded in my sustaining arms; all plants,
And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-winged,
And birds, and beasts, and fish, and human shapes,
Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom,
Draining the poison of despair, shall take
And interchange sweet nutriment; to me
Shall they become like sister-antelopes
By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,
Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream.
The dew-mists of my sunless sleep shall float
Under the stars like balm: night-folded flowers
Shall suck unwithering hues in their repose:
And men and beasts in happy dreams shall gather
Strength for the coming day, and all its joy:
And death shall be the last embrace of her
Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother
Folding her child, says, 'Leave me not again.'
ASIA. Oh, mother! wherefore speak the name of death?
Cease they to love, and move, and breathe, and speak,
Who die?
THE EARTH. It would avail not to reply;
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
But to the uncommunicating dead.
Death is the veil which those who live call life:
They sleep, and it is lifted: and meanwhile
In mild variety the seasons mild
With rainbow-skirted showers, and odorous winds,
And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,
And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun's
All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain
Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild,
Shall clothe the forests and the fields, ay, even
The crag-built deserts of the barren deep,
With ever-living leaves, and fruits, and flowers.
And thou! There is a cavern where my spirit
Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain
Made my heart mad, and those who did inhale it
Became mad too, and built a temple there,
And spoke, and were oracular, and lured
The erring nations round to mutual war.
And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee;
Which breath now rises, as amongst tall weeds
A violet's exhalation, and it fills
With a serener light and crimson air
Intense, yet soft, the rocks and woods around;
It feeds the quick growth of the serpent vine,
And the dark linkèd ivy tangling wild,
And budding, blown, or odor-faded blooms
Which star the winds with points of colored light,
As they rain through them, and bright golden globes
Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven,
And through their veinèd leaves and amber stems
The flowers whose purple and translucid bowls
Stand ever mantling with aëreal dew,
The drink of spirits: and it circles round,
Like the soft waving wings of noonday dreams,
Inspiring calm and happy thoughts, like mine,
And thou art thus restored. This cave is thine.
Arise! Appear!
[A SPIRIT *rises in the likeness of a winged child.*]
This is my torch-bearer;
Who let his lamp out in old time gazing
On eyes from which he kindled it anew
With love, which is as fire, sweet daughter mine,
For such is that within thine own. Run, wayward,
And guide this company beyond the peak
Of Bacchic Nysia, Mænad-haunted mountain,
And beyond Indus[26] and its tribute rivers,
Trampling the torrent streams and glassy lakes
With feet unwet, unwearied, undelaying,
And up the green ravine, across the vale,
Beside the windless and crystalline pool,
Where ever lies, on unerasing waves,

[26] a river in India.

The image of a temple, built above,
Distinct with column, arch, and architrave,
And palm-like capital, and over-wrought,
And populous with most living imagery,
Praxitelean[27] shapes, whose marble smiles
Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.
It is deserted now, but once it bore
Thy name, Prometheus; there the emulous youths
Bore to thy honor through the divine gloom
The lamp which was thine emblem; even as those
Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope
Into the grave, across the night of life,
As thou hast borne it most triumphantly
To this far goal of Time. Depart, farewell.
Beside that temple is the destined cave.

SCENE IV.—*A Forest. In the Background a Cave.* PROMETHEUS, ASIA, PANTHEA, IONE, *and the* SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

IONE. Sister, it is not earthly: how it glides
Under the leaves! how on its head there burns
A light, like a green star, whose emerald beams
Are twined with its fair hair! how, as it moves,
The splendor drops in flakes upon the grass!
Knowest thou it?

PANTHEA. It is the delicate spirit
That guides the earth through heaven. From afar
The populous constellations call that light
The loveliest of the planets; and sometimes
It floats along the spray of the salt sea,
Or makes its chariot of a foggy cloud,
Or walks through fields or cities while men sleep,
Or o'er the mountain tops, or down the rivers,
Or through the green waste wilderness, as now,
Wondering at all it sees. Before Jove reigned
It loved our sister Asia, and it came
Each leisure hour to drink the liquid light
Out of her eyes, for which it said it thirsted
As one bit by a dipsas, and with her
It made its childish confidence, and told her
All it had known or seen, for it saw much,
Yet idly reasoned what it saw; and called her—
For whence it sprung it knew not, nor do I—
Mother, dear mother.

THE SPIRIT OF THE EARTH [*running to* ASIA]. Mother, dearest mother;
May I then talk with thee as I was wont?
May I then hide my eyes in thy soft arms,
After thy looks have made them tired of joy?
May I then play beside thee the long noons,
When work is none in the bright silent air?

ASIA. I love thee, gentlest being, and henceforth
Can cherish thee unenvied: speak, I pray:
Thy simple talk once solaced, now delights.

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH. Mother, I am grown wiser, though a child
Cannot be wise like thee, within this day;
And happier too; happier and wiser both.
Thou knowest that toads, and snakes, and loathly worms,
And venomous and malicious beasts, and boughs
That bore ill berries in the woods, were ever
An hindrance to my walks o'er the green world:
And that, among the haunts of humankind,
Hard-featured men, or with proud, angry looks,
Or cold, staid gait, or false and hollow smiles,
Or the dull sneer of self-loved ignorance,
Or other such foul masks, with which ill thoughts
Hide that fair being whom we spirits call man;
And women too, ugliest of all things evil,
(Though fair, even in a world where thou art fair,
When good and kind, free and sincere like thee),
When false or frowning made me sick at heart
To pass them, though they slept, and I unseen.
Well, my path lately lay through a great city
Into the woody hills surrounding it:
A sentinel was sleeping at the gate:
When there was heard a sound, so loud, it shook
The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet
Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all;
A long, long sound, as it would never end:
And all the inhabitants leaped suddenly
Out of their rest, and gathered in the streets,
Looking in wonder up to Heaven, while yet
The music pealed along. I hid myself
Within a fountain in the public square,
Where I lay like the reflex of the moon
Seen in a wave under green leaves; and soon
Those ugly human shapes and visages
Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain,
Passed floating through the air, and fading still
Into the winds that scattered them; and those
From whom they passed seemed mild and lovely forms
After some foul disguise had fallen, and all
Were somewhat changed, and after brief surprise
And greetings of delighted wonder, all
Went to their sleep again: and when the dawn
Came, wouldst thou think that toads, and snakes, and efts,
Could e'er be beautiful? yet so they were,
And that with little change of shape or hue:
All things had put their evil nature off:

[27] shapes as beautiful as if made by the celebrated Greek sculptor Praxiteles.

I cannot tell my joy, when o'er a lake
Upon a drooping bough with nightshade twined,
I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward
And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries,
With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay
Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky;
So, with my thoughts full of these happy changes,
We meet again, the happiest change of all.

ASIA. And never will we part, till thy chaste sister
Who guides the frozen and inconstant moon
Will look on thy more warm and equal light
Till her heart thaw like flakes of April snow
And love thee.

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH. What; as Asia loves Prometheus?

ASIA. Peace, wanton, thou art yet not old enough.
Think ye by gazing on each other's eyes
To multiply your lovely selves, and fill
With spherèd fires the interlunar air?

SPIRIT OF THE EARTH. Nay, mother, while my sister trims her lamp
'Tis hard I should go darkling.

ASIA. Listen; look!

[*The* SPIRIT OF THE HOUR *enters.*]

PROMETHEUS. We feel what thou hast heard and seen: yet speak.

SPIRIT OF THE HOUR. Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder filled
The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,
There was a change: the impalpable thin air
And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,
As if the sense of love dissolved in them
Had holded itself round the spherèd world.
My vision then grew clear, and I could see
Into the mysteries of the universe:
Dizzy as with delight I floated down,
Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes,
My coursers sought their birthplace in the sun,
Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil,
Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire;
And where my moonlike car will stand within
A temple, gazed upon by Phidian[28] forms
Of thee, and Asia, and the Earth, and me,
And you fair nymphs looking the love we feel,—
In memory of the tidings it has borne,—
Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,
Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone,
And open to the bright and liquid sky.
Yoked to it by an amphisbaenic[29] snake
The likeness of those wingèd steeds will mock
The flight from which they find repose. Alas,
Whither has wandered now my partial tongue
When all remains untold which ye would hear?
As I have said, I floated to the earth:
It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss
To move, to breathe, to be; I wandering went
Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
And first was disappointed not to see
Such mighty change as I had felt within
Expressed in outward things; but soon I looked,
And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked
One with the other even as spirits do,
None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or fear,
Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell,
'All hope abandon ye who enter here';[30]
None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear
Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
Until the subject of a tyrant's will
Became, worse fate, the abject of his own,
Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death.
None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak;
None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart
The sparks of love and hope till these remained
Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,
And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
Infecting all with his own hideous ill;
None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes,
Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
With such a self-mistrust as has no name.
And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
On the wide earth, past; gentle radiant forms,
From custom's evil taint exempt and pure;
Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
And changed to all which once they dared not be,
Yet being now, made earth like heaven; nor pride,
Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill shame,
The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.

Thrones, altars, judgment-seats, and prisons; wherein,

[28] forms like the statues of Phidias, the great sculptor of the Parthenon.

[29] a snake with a head on each end.

[30] the inscription over the entrance to hell in Dante's *Inferno*.

And beside which, by wretched men were borne
Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes
Of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,
Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,
The ghosts of a no-more-remembered fame,
Which, from their unworn obelisks, look forth
In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs
Of those who were their conquerors: mouldering round,
These imaged to the pride of kings and priests
A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide
As is the world it wasted, and are now
But an astonishment; even so the tools
And emblems of its last captivity,
Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,
Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.
And those foul shapes, abhorred by god and man,—
Which, under many a name and many a form
Strange, savage, ghastly, dark and execrable,
Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the world;
And which the nations, panic-stricken, served
With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love
Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless,
And slain amid men's unreclaiming tears,
Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate,—
Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandoned shrines:
The painted veil, by those who were, called life,
Which mimicked, as with colors idly spread,
All men believed or hoped, is torn aside;
The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king
Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but man
Passionless?——no, yet free from guilt or pain,
Which were, for his will made or suffered them,
Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
From chance, and death, and mutability,
The clogs of that which else might oversoar
The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

END OF THE THIRD ACT

ACT IV

SCENE.—*A Part of the Forest near the Cave of* PROMETHEUS. PANTHEA *and* IONE *are sleeping: they awaken gradually during the first Song.*

Voice of SPIRITS

The pale stars are gone!
For the sun, their swift shepherd,
To their folds them compelling,
In the depths of the dawn,
Hastes, in meteor-eclipsing array, and they flee
Beyond his blue dwelling,
As fawns flee the leopard.
But where are ye?

A Train of dark FORMS *and* SHADOWS *passes by confusedly, singing*

Here, oh, here:
We bear the bier
Of the Father of many a cancelled year!
Spectres we
Of the dead Hours be,
We bear Time to his tomb in eternity.

Strew, oh, strew
Hair, not yew!
Wet the dusty pall with tears, not dew!
Be the faded flowers
Of Death's bare bowers
Spread on the corpse of the King of Hours!

Haste, oh, haste!
As shades are chased,
Trembling, by day, from heaven's blue waste.
We melt away,
Like dissolving spray,
From the children of a diviner day,
With the lullaby
Of winds that die
On the bosom of their own harmony!

IONE

What dark forms were they?

PANTHEA

The past Hours weak and gray,
With the spoil which their toil
Raked together
From the conquest but One could foil.

IONE

Have they passed?

PANTHEA

They have passed;

They outspeeded the blast,
While 'tis said, they are fled:

IONE

Whither, oh, whither?

PANTHEA

To the dark, to the past, to the dead.

Voice of unseen SPIRITS

Bright clouds float in heaven,
Dew-stars gleam on earth,
Waves assemble on ocean,
They are gathered and driven
By the storm of delight, by the panic of glee!
They shake with emotion,
They dance in their mirth.
But where are ye?

The pine boughs are singing
Old songs with new gladness,
The billows and fountains
Fresh music are flinging,
Likes the notes of a spirit from land and from sea;
The storms mock the mountains
With the thunder of gladness.
But where are ye?

IONE. What charioteers are these?
PANTHEA. Where are their chariots?

Semichorus of HOURS

The voice of the Spirits of Air and of Earth
Have drawn back the figured curtain of sleep
Which covered our being and darkened our birth
In the deep.

A VOICE

In the deep?

SEMICHORUS II

Oh, below the deep.

SEMICHORUS I

An hundred ages we had been kept
Cradled in visions of hate and care,
And each one who waked as his brother slept,
Found the truth—

SEMICHORUS II

Worse than his visions were!

SEMICHORUS I

We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep;
We have known the voice of Love in dreams;
We have felt the wand of Power, and leap—

SEMICHORUS II

As the billows leap in the morning beams!

CHORUS

Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,
Pierce with song heaven's silent light,
Enchant the day that too swiftly flees,
To check its flight ere the cave of Night.

Once the hungry Hours were hounds
Which chased the day like a bleeding deer,
And it limped and stumbled with many wounds
Through the nightly dells of the desert year.

But now, oh weave the mystic measure
Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,
Let the Hours, and the spirits of might and pleasure,
Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.

A VOICE

Unite!

PANTHEA. See, where the Spirits of the human mind
Wrapped in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach.

Chorus of SPIRITS

We join the throng
Of the dance and the song,
By the whirlwind of gladness borne along,
As the flying-fish leap
From the Indian deep,
And mix with the sea-birds, half asleep.

Chorus of HOURS

Whence come ye, so wild and so fleet,

For sandals of lightning are on your feet,
And your wings are soft and swift as thought,
And your eyes are as love which is veilèd not?

Chorus of SPIRITS

We come from the mind
Of human kind
Which was late so dusk, and obscene, and blind,
Now 'tis an ocean
Of clear emotion,
A heaven of serene and mighty motion.

From that deep abyss
Of wonder and bliss,
Whose caverns are crystal palaces;
From those skiey towers
Where Thought's crowned powers
Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours!

From the dim recesses
Of woven caresses,
Where lovers catch ye by your loose tresses;
From the azure isles,
Where sweet Wisdom smiles,
Delaying your ships with her siren wiles.

From the temples high
Of Man's ear and eye,
Roofed over Sculpture and Poesy;
From the murmurings
Of the unsealed springs
Where Science bedews her Dædal wings.

Years after years,
Through blood, and tears,
And a thick hell of hatreds, and hopes, and fears;
We waded and flew,
And the islets were few
Where the bud-blighted flowers of happiness grew.

Our feet now, every palm,
Are sandalled with calm,
And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm;
And, beyond our eyes,
The human love lies
Which makes all it gazes on Paradise.

Chorus of SPIRITS *and* HOURS

Then weave the web of the mystic measure;
From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth,

Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure,
Fill the dance and the music of mirth,
As the waves of a thousand streams rush by
To an ocean of splendor and harmony!

Chorus of SPIRITS

Our spoil is won,
Our task is done,
We are free to dive, or soar, or run;
Beyond and around,
Or within the bound
Which clips the world with darkness round.

We'll pass the eyes
Of the starry skies
Into the hoar deep to colonize:
Death, Chaos, and Night,
From the sound of our flight,
Shall flee, like mist from a tempest's might.

And Earth, Air, and Light,
And the Spirit of Might,
Which drives round the stars in their fiery flight;
And Love, Thought, and Breath,
The powers that quell Death,
Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build
In the void's loose field
A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield;
We will take our plan
From the new world of man,
And our work shall be called the Promethean.

Chorus of HOURS

Break the dance, and scatter the song;
Let some depart, and some remain.

SEMICHORUS I

We, beyond heaven, are driven along:

SEMICHORUS II

Us the enchantments of earth retain:

SEMICHORUS I

Ceaseless, and rapid, and fierce, and free,
With the Spirits which build a new earth and sea,
And a heaven where yet heaven could never be;

SEMICHORUS II

Solemn, and slow, and serene, and bright,
Leading the Day and outspeeding the Night,
With the powers of a world of perfect light;

SEMICHORUS I

We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,
Till the trees, and the beasts, and the clouds appear
From its chaos made calm by love, not fear.

SEMICHORUS II

We encircle the ocean and mountains of earth,
And the happy forms of its death and birth
Change to the music of our sweet mirth.

Chorus of HOURS *and* SPIRITS

Break the dance, and scatter the song,
Let some depart, and some remain,
Wherever we fly we lead along
In leashes, like starbeams, soft yet strong,
The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain.

PANTHEA. Ha! they are gone!
IONE. Yet feel you no delight
From the past sweetness?
PANTHEA. As the bare green hill
When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,
Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
To the unpavilioned sky!
IONE. Even whilst we speak
New notes arise. What is that awful sound?
PANTHEA. 'Tis the deep music of the rolling world
Kindling within the strings of the waved air
Æolian modulations.
IONE. Listen too,
How every pause is filled with under-notes,
Clear, silver, icy, keen, awakening tones,
Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,
As the sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air
And gaze upon themselves within the sea.
PANTHEA. But see where through two openings in the forest
Which hanging branches overcanopy,
And where two runnels of a rivulet,
Between the close moss violet-inwoven,
Have made their path of melody, like sisters
Who part with sighs that they may meet in smiles,
Turning their dear disunion to an isle
Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet sad thoughts;
Two visions of strange radiance float upon
The ocean-like enchantment of strong sound,
Which flows intenser, keener, deeper yet
Under the ground and through the windless air.
IONE. I see a chariot like that thinnest boat,
In which the Mother of the Months is borne
By ebbing light into her western cave,
When she upsprings from interlunar dreams;
O'er which is curved an orblike canopy
Of gentle darkness, and the hills and woods,
Distinctly seen through that dusk aery veil,
Regard like shapes in an enchanter's glass;
Its wheels are solid clouds, azure and gold,
Such as the genii of the thunderstorm
Pile on the floor of the illumined sea
When the sun rushes under it; they roll
And move and grow as with an inward wind;
Within it sits a wingèd infant, white
Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow,
Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,
Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing folds
Of its white robe, woof of ethereal pearl.
Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
Scattered in strings; yet its two eyes are heavens
Of liquid darkness, which the Deity
Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured
From jaggèd clouds, out of their arrowy lashes,
Tempering the cold and radiant air around,
With fire that is not brightness; in its hand
It sways a quivering moonbeam, from whose point
A guiding power directs the chariot's prow
Over its wheelèd clouds, which as they roll
Over the grass, and flowers, and waves, wake sounds,
Sweet as a singing rain of silver dew.
PANTHEA. And from the other opening in the wood
Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,
A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres,
Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass
Flow, as through empty space, music and light:
Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,
Purple and azure, white, and green, and golden,
Sphere within sphere; and every space between
Peopled with unimaginable shapes,
Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep,
Yet each inter-transpicuous, and they whirl
Over each other with a thousand motions,
Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning,
And with the force of self-destroying swiftness,
Intensely, slowly, solemnly roll on,
Kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones,

Intelligible words and music wild.
With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb
Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist
Of elemental subtlety, like light;
And the wild odor of the forest flowers,
The music of the living grass and air,
The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams
Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed,
Seem kneaded into one aëreal mass
Which drowns the sense. Within the orb itself,
Pillowed upon its alabaster arms,
Like to a child o'erwearied with sweet toil,
On its own folded wings, and wavy hair,
The Spirit of the Earth is laid asleep,
And you can see its little lips are moving,
Amid the changing light of their own smiles,
Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.

IONE. 'Tis only mocking the orb's harmony.

PANTHEA. And from a star upon its forehead, shoot,
Like swords of azure fire, or golden spears
With tyrant-quelling myrtle overtwined,
Embleming heaven and earth united now,
Vast beams like spokes of some invisible wheel
Which whirl as the orb whirls, swifter than thought,
Filling the abyss with sun-like lightenings,
And perpendicular now, and now transverse,
Pierce the dark soil, and as they pierce and pass,
Make bare the secrets of the earth's deep heart;
Infinite mines of adamant and gold,
Valueless stones, and unimagined gems,
And caverns on crystalline columns poised
With vegetable silver overspread;
Wells of unfathomed fire, and water springs
Whence the great sea, even as a child is fed,
Whose vapors clothe earth's monarch mountain-tops
With kingly, ermine snow. The beams flash on
And make appear the melancholy ruins
Of cancelled cycles; anchors, beaks of ships;
Planks turned to marble; quivers, helms, and spears,
And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels
Of scythèd chariots, and the emblazonry
Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,
Round which death laughed, sepulchred emblems
Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin!
The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
Whose population which the earth grew over
Was mortal, but not human; see, they lie,
Their monstrous works, and uncouth skeletons,
Their statues, homes and fanes; prodigious shapes
Huddled in gray annihilation, split,
Jammed in the hard, black deep; and over these,
The anatomies of unknown wingèd things,
And fishes which were isles of living scale.
And serpents, bony chains, twisted around
The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
Had crushed the iron crags; and over these
The jaggèd alligator, and the might
Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once
Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores,
And weed-overgrown continents of earth,
Increased and multiplied like summer worms
On an abandoned corpse, till the blue globe
Wrapped deluge round it like a cloak, and they
Yelled, gasped, and were abolished; or some God
Whose throne was in a comet, passed, and cried,
'Be not!' And like my words they were no more.

THE EARTH

The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!
The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness,
The vaporous exultation not to be confined!
Ha! ha! the animation of delight
Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,
And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind.

THE MOON

Brother mine, calm wanderer,
Happy globe of land and air,
Some Spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
Which penetrates my frozen frame,
And passes with the warmth of flame,
With love, and odor, and deep melody
Through me, through me!

THE EARTH

Ha! ha! the caverns of my hollow mountains,
My cloven fire-crags, sound-exulting fountains
Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter.
The oceans, and the deserts, and the abysses,
And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,
Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing after.
They cry aloud as I do. Sceptred curse,
Who all our green and azure universe
Threatenedst to muffle round with black destruction, sending
A solid cloud to rain hot thunderstones,

And splinter and knead down my children's bones,
All I bring forth, to one void mass battering and blending,—

Until each crag-like tower, and storied column,
Palace, and obelisk, and temple solemn,
My imperial mountains crowned with cloud, and snow, and fire;
My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom
Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,
Were stamped by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire:

How art thou sunk, withdrawn, covered, drunk up
By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup
Drained by a desert-troop, a little drop for all;
And from beneath, around, within, above,
Filling thy void annihilation, love
Burst in like light on caves cloven by the thunder-ball.

The Moon

The snow upon my lifeless mountains
Is loosened into living fountains,
My solid oceans flow, and sing, and shine:
A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
It clothes with unexpected birth
My cold bare bosom: Oh! it must be thine
On mine, on mine!

Gazing on thee I feel, I know
Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
And living shapes upon my bosom move:
Music is in the sea and air,
Wingèd clouds soar here and there,
Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of:
'Tis love, all love!

The Earth

It interpenetrates my granite mass,
Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass
Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers;
Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,
They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers.

And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen
Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being:
With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver
Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever,
Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows, fleeing,

Leave Man, who was a many-sided mirror,
Which could distort to many a shape of error,
This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love;
Which over all his kind, as the sun's heaven
Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even,
Darting from starry depths radiance and life, doth move:

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left,
Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs is poured;
Then when it wanders home with rosy smile,
Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
It is a spirit, then, weeps on her child restored.

Man, oh, not men! a chain of linkèd thought,
Of love and might to be divided not,
Compelling the elements with adamantine stress;
As the sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
The unquiet republic of the maze
Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul,
Whose nature is its own divine control,
Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;
Familiar acts are beautiful through love;
Labor, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they could be!

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights,
And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,
A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
Is as a tempest-wingèd ship, whose helm
Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm,
Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold mass
Of marble and of color his dreams pass;
Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their children wear;

Language is a perpetual Orphic[81] song,
Which rules with Dædal harmony a throng
Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were.

The lightning is his slave; heaven's utmost deep
Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on!
The tempest is his steed, he strides the air;
And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me; I have none.

THE MOON

The shadow of white death has passed
From my path in heaven at last,
A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep;
And through my newly-woven bowers,
Wander happy paramours,
Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
Thy vales more deep.

THE EARTH

As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
A half unfrozen dew-globe, green, and gold,
And crystalline, till it becomes a wingèd mist,
And wanders up the vault of the blue day,
Outlives the moon, and on the sun's last ray
Hangs o'er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst.

THE MOON

Thou art folded, thou art lying
In the light which is undying
Of thine own joy, and heaven's smile divine;
All suns and constellations shower
On thee a light, a life, a power
Which doth array thy sphere; thou pourest thine
On mine, on mine!

THE EARTH

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
Which points into the heavens dreaming delight,
Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep;
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth keep.

[81] referring to the mythical musician, Orpheus.

THE MOON

As in the soft and sweet eclipse,
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull;
So when thy shadow falls on me,
Then am I mute and still, by thee
Covered; of thy love, Orb most beautiful,
Full, oh, too full!

Thou art speeding round the sun
Brightest world of many a one;
Green and azure sphere which shinest
With a light which is divinest
Among all the lamps of Heaven
To whom life and light is given;
I, thy crystal paramour
Borne beside thee by a power
Like the polar Paradise,
Magnet-like, of lovers' eyes;
I, a most enamoured maiden
Whose weak brain is overladen
With the pleasure of her love,
Maniac-like around thee move
Gazing, an insatiate bride,
On thy form from every side
Like a Mænad, round the cup
Which Agave lifted up
In the weird Cadmæan forest.
Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest
I must hurry, whirl and follow
Through the heavens wide and hollow,
Sheltered by the warm embrace
Of thy soul from hungry space,
Drinking from thy sense and sight
Beauty, majesty, and might,
As a lover or a chameleon
Grows like what it looks upon,
As a violet's gentle eye
Gazes on the azure sky
Until its hue grows like what it beholds,
As a gray and watery mist
Glows like solid amethyst
Athwart the western mountain it enfolds,
When the sunset sleeps
Upon its snow—

THE EARTH

And the weak day weeps
That it should be so.
Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight
Falls on me like thy clear and tender light

Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night,
Through isles for ever calm;
Oh, gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
The caverns of my pride's deep universe,
Charming the tiger joy, whose tramplings fierce
Made wounds which need thy balm.

PANTHEA. I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,
A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,
Out of the stream of sound.
IONE. Ah me! sweet sister,
The stream of sound has ebbed away from us,
And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
Because your words fall like the clear, soft dew
Shaken from a bathing wood-nymph's limbs and hair.
PANTHEA. Peace! peace! A mighty Power, which is as darkness,
Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky
Is showered like night, and from within the air
Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up
Into the pores of sunlight: the bright visions,
Wherein the singing spirits rode and shone,
Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.
IONE. There is a sense of words upon mine ear.
PANTHEA. An universal sound like words: Oh, list!

DEMOGORGON

Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,
Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies,
Beautiful orb! gathering as thou dost roll
The love which paves thy path along the skies:

THE EARTH

I hear: I am as a drop of dew that dies.

DEMOGORGON

Thou, Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth
With wonder, as it gazes upon thee;
Whilst each to men, and beasts, and the swift birth
Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony:

THE MOON

I hear: I am a leaf shaken by thee!

DEMOGORGON

Ye Kings of suns and stars, Dæmons and Gods,
Æthereal Dominations, who possess
Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes
Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness:

A VOICE *from above*

Our great Republic hears, we are blest, and bless.

DEMOGORGON

Ye happy Dead, whose beams of brightest verse
Are clouds to hide, not colors to portray,
Whether your nature is that universe
Which once ye saw and suffered—

A VOICE *from beneath*

Or as they
Whom we have left, we change and pass away.

DEMOGORGON

Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
From man's high mind even to the central stone
Of sullen lead; from heaven's star-fretted domes
To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on:

A confused VOICE

We hear: thy words waken Oblivion.

DEMOGORGON

Spirits, whose homes are flesh: ye beasts and birds,
Ye worms, and fish; ye living leaves and buds;
Lightning and wind; and ye untameable herds,
Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes:—

A VOICE

Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

DEMOGORGON

Man, who wert once a despot and a slave;
A dupe and a deceiver; a decay;
A traveller from the cradle to the grave
Through the dim night of this immortal day:

ALL

Speak: thy strong words may never pass away.

DEMOGORGON

This is the day, which down the void abysm
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep:
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with its length;
These are the spells by which to reassume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

(1818-9)

John Keats

(1795-1821)

Shelley's Adonais, John Keats, was born in London on October 29, 1795, over his father's livery stable. Well to do, his parents soon moved to better quarters. When he was seven the boy was sent with his younger brother George to Mr. Clarke's school at Enfield. There he became a friend of the headmaster's son, Charles Cowden Clarke, and was early noted for his willingness to "fight any one—morning, noon, and night." This pugnacity was born less of a love of battle than of a readiness to take sides in a worthy cause. Keats is so often represented as a delicate blossom that it is worth noting this persistent strain of strength and courage in his character. He is correctly to be thought of as the apostle of beauty; but slight though he was of physique, his character was entirely virile and sturdy.

His boyhood was so normal that he demonstrated little interest in books until his last year at school, when his attention was turned to them by his friendship for young Clarke. Keats did nothing halfheartedly, and before long he had exhausted the resources of the school library. His father having died in 1804 and his mother in 1810, Keats's guardians removed him from school in 1811 and apprenticed him to a surgeon at Edmonton. For the stipulated five years the lad studied surgery without any visible objection, and he eventually did pass his examinations. But often he would walk from Edmonton to Enfield to see his friend Clarke. On one of these occasions Keats discovered Spenser among Clarke's books. Borrowing the volume, he read through it enthralled. After that experience, he knew that poetry would play a part in his life. One of his earliest pieces is the *Imitation of Spenser* (1812-13?), his first attempt in the stanza that he was to employ masterfully in *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

In 1815 he persuaded his guardians and his employer to allow him to pursue his medical studies at the London hospitals. At first he worked hard at medicine in the metropolis, but poetry was drawing him further and further away from the profession chosen for him. In the spring of 1816 occurred a decisive event in his life. Clarke had shown Leigh Hunt (cf. *below*) some of his friend's verses, and on May 5 Hunt printed in his weekly, *The Examiner*, Keats's *Sonnet to Solitude*. Soon Keats made the personal acquaintance of

Hunt, and the course of his life was set. By autumn he was the favorite disciple of the circle surrounding Hunt, who was then, despite the hostility of the critics, enjoying considerable popularity as a poet and persecuted radical. Although Keats now had his license to practice as an apothecary, he decided to devote himself to poetry. To his guardian's astonished question as to whether he had gone insane, Keats quietly replied: "I know that I possess abilities greater than most men, and therefore I am determined to gain my living by exercising them."

This year, 1816, was a period of joy for the poet who had just found himself. He was conscious of his powers and exhilarated over the possibilities of the future. Fully aware that he had much to learn, he gave all the more enthusiasm to his tasks as a poet. In October Clarke introduced him to Chapman's translation of Homer (cf. Vol. I, p. 341), and this memorable experience he recorded in his famous sonnet, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer* (cf. *below*). His friends were delighted with the poem, and it was published by Hunt in December. By April 1817, he was writing to a friend: "I find I cannot exist without Poetry—without eternal Poetry—half the day will not do—the whole of it—I began with a little, but habit has made me a Leviathan."

In 1817, with the financial assistance of Shelley, whom he had met at Hunt's, Keats published his first slender volume of *Poems*. It passed almost unnoticed. Unperturbed, he began the composition of *Endymion* (cf. *below*). "It will be a test," he wrote, "a trial of my Powers of Imagination, and chiefly of my invention, which is a rare thing indeed—by which I must make 4000 lines of one bare circumstance, and fill them with poetry." When the poem appeared (1818) it was brutally attacked, even though Keats had fully admitted its shortcomings in his preface. The cruelty and stupidity of the critics were sufficiently appalling, but the motive for their abuse was unpardonable. Eager to injure Hunt, whom they had already attacked as the founder of the "Cockney School" of poetry, they now struck at him through his friend and disciple. The reviewer in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* said of Keats's Endymion that "he is merely a young Cockney rhymester," not a Greek shepherd. "Mr. Keats," he continued, "has adopted the loose, nerveless versification, and Cockney rhymes of the poet of Rimini (i.e. Hunt); but in fairness to that gentleman, we must add, that the defects of the system are tenfold more conspicuous in his disciple's work than in his own. Mr. Hunt is a small poet, but he is a clever man. Mr. Keats is a still smaller poet, and he is only a boy of pretty abilities. . . . We venture to make one small prophecy, that his bookseller will not a second time venture £50 upon anything he can write. It is a better and a wiser thing to be a starved apothecary than a starved poet; so back to the shop Mr. John, back to 'plasters, pills, and ointment boxes,' &c. But for Heaven's sake, young Sangrado, be a little more sparing of extenuatives and soporifics in your practice than you have been in your poetry."

For a long time it was thought by Byron, Shelley, and readers of *Adonais* that this attack and the one in the *Quarterly Review* (cf. *Endymion* introduction, *below*) were responsible by their savagery for Keats's early death. Even Wordsworth dismissed *Endymion* as a "pretty piece of paganism." But it is an error to suppose that the young poet was crushed by this universal hostility. Shortly after the publication of the ill-starred poem, he was himself writing to his publisher: "I know nothing—I have read nothing—and I mean to follow Solomon's directions, 'get learning—get understanding.'" On May 3, 1818, he wrote to his friend Reynolds: "I compare human life to a large mansion of many apartments, two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me." In short, there were no valid objections any critic could raise to Keats's work that he himself did not fully know. He was undeterred in his intention to perfect himself, even though he had thus far no public encouragement.

The influence of Hunt upon him had at first been invaluable. The older man's taste for the best in English literature had been contagious. Moreover, he had given courage and hope to Keats by publishing the early sonnets in *The Examiner*. But Hunt, the poet, was a versifier who could not rise above mere prettiness, and Keats, though not ungrateful

for benefits received, began to realize the necessity of growing beyond what Hunt had to teach him. A deeper understanding of humanity and a greater mastery over the technique of verse were still lacking to Keats, and he applied himself to supplying these deficiencies.

It was during his composition of *Endymion* that Keats first experienced the symptoms of tuberculosis, which had afflicted many members of his family. He made a brief excursion to the English Lakes and to Scotland during a vacation. On his return to Hampstead in the fall of 1818 he met Fanny Brawne, with whom he fell deeply in love. Incapable of anything but complete surrender to his passion, Keats was soon involved in a tragic situation. The first months of their acquaintance were blighted by his incessant worry over his beloved brother Tom. No sooner had Keats come back from his vacation than he knew his brother was doomed to die from the disease that had decimated the family. Ill himself, attacked by the critics, and distressed over his love for Fanny, Keats nursed his brother from August until December 1818. If his love for the girl proved disastrous, it was not the fault of Fanny Brawne, who fully returned his affection. He was too proud to propose marriage to his uncomprehending sweetheart, for he was unable to support her. Moreover, the tuberculosis to which he himself was now a victim presented an even more formidable obstacle. She was the one being he desired in the world, and he was convinced that he could not accept her love. In the fierce struggle which racked his breast, he broke his health and peace, and hastened his end.

Distracted by love and disease, Keats for release turned to poetry with greater industry than ever. After his brother's death, he poured forth between January and May 1819 a series of amazing masterpieces: *The Eve of St. Agnes* (cf. *below*), *The Eve of St. Mark*, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* (cf. *below*), the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (cf. *below*), the *Ode to a Nightingale* (cf. *below*), and the *Ode on Melancholy* (cf. *below*). These appeared in July 1820 together with *To Autumn* (cf. *below*), *Isabella* (a tale taken from Boccaccio's *Decameron*), and *Lamia* (cf. *below*), in his last volume, *Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and Other Poems*. When it was issued, too late the *Edinburgh Review* came to his defense. In five short months Keats had produced enough to place him among the major English poets.

He had been working on the wonderful fragment *Hyperion*, and had collaborated with his friend Brown on a tragedy, *Otho the Great* (1819), in the hope of making some money. The failure of his expectations at last deprived him of hope. On February 3, 1820, he coughed up a drop of blood on his pillow. It was then that he was forced to recognize the nature of his disease. "That drop of blood," he told Brown, "is my death-warrant;—I must die." For a year he battled against his fate. Half of it he spent in the same house with Fanny Brawne and her mother; he would stare out the windows at Fanny in the garden, while he lived his "posthumous life" indoors. In September he sailed for Italy, with not much faith that he would find life there. It was a final bitterness that an accident should have prevented his dear friend Brown from seeing him before he left. Accompanied by the young painter, Joseph Severn, he went to Rome, where he died on February 23, 1821. He was buried in the Protestant cemetery there. His epitaph (the words are his own) reads: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water."

Surely English poetry never suffered a greater loss than at Keats's premature death. For he had, since 1819, been growing steadily in mastery and deepening in insight. Almost all his great work was done within a period of two years. Yet this youth of twenty-five erred in supposing that he would leave no mark upon literature. For no poet of his era more influenced the future course of English poetry. A whole movement, that of the Pre-Raphaelites, was to acknowledge its discipleship to him, and he was a formative influence in the work of great successors like Tennyson, Browning, Swinburne, and poets of our own century. For, unlike Shelley, Keats has proved to be not inimitable. The science of his triumphs has been learned by other writers to their great advantage.

Indeed, no two poets are less like each other than Shelley and Keats. Keats did not share and had small sympathy for Shelley's revolutionary idealism and love of ethereal

beauty. Poetry was not the medium, Keats felt, for advancing political doctrine. The beauty he worshiped was not impalpable as was the object of Shelley's adoration. Keats was closer to the "pure" artist. He cultivated the senses, and felt that the experience of beauty was an end in itself. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," is the firm statement of his faith. And that beauty was of the most concrete variety—to be found in line, color, shape, sweet odors, and tastes. Shelley has expressed in *Adonais* Keats's accomplishment when he speaks of

> *"All he had loved, and molded into thought,*
> *From shape, and hue, and odor, and sweet sound."*

To Keats beauty was the only source of true joy. And this joy was made all the keener by the knowledge that all mortal things are transitory. In his poetry we often find that melancholy, typified in Goethe's *Werther* (cf. *above*), which comes from the knowledge that earth is a place

> *". . . where men sit and hear each other groan;*
> *Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,*
> *Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;*
> *Where but to think is to be full of sorrow . . ."*

Since mortality is so uncertain, Keats fastened on beauty with all the intensity of his being. Constantly we find the note of ecstasy so acute that death seems the only possible end of such experience. ("Now more than ever seems it rich to die.") He is the exemplification in poetry of the poet as fine artist.

The standard edition of Keats's *Complete Works* is that edited by G. H. Buxton Forman in four volumes (1889). The best one-volume edition of the poems is E. de Selincourt's (1905). M. Buxton Forman's edition of the *Letters* (1935) is authoritative. S. Colvin's biography (1917) is excellent; Amy Lowell's (1925) is interesting but not always objective; F. Winwar's *The Romantic Rebels* (1935) emphasizes his relations to his contemporaries. Among special studies, H. I. A. Fausset's *Keats* (1922) and M. R. Ridley's *Keats' Craftsmanship* (1933) are important examinations of the poet's development.

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer[1]

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne:
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez[2] when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.[3]

(1815)

[1] For the exact passage which inspired Keats to write this poem, cf. Vol. I, pp. 341-3.

[2] Actually, of course, the Pacific was discovered by Balboa.

[3] Panama.

To My Brothers

Small, busy flames play through the fresh laid coals,
And their faint cracklings o'er our silence creep
Like whispers of the household gods that keep
A gentle empire o'er fraternal souls.
And while, for rhymes, I search around the poles,
Your eyes are fixed, as in poetic sleep,
Upon the lore so voluble and deep,
That aye at fall of night our care condoles.
This is your birth-day Tom,[1] and I rejoice
That thus it passes smoothly, quietly.
Many such eves of gently whisp'ring noise
May we together pass, and calmly try
What are this world's true joys,—ere the great voice,
From its fair face, shall bid our spirits fly.

(1816)

[1] Keats's brother Tom died in December, 1818.

On the Grasshopper and Cricket

Leigh Hunt's warm friendship for Keats, not always poetically beneficent, sheds a pleasant light on this sonnet. In friendly competition they both wrote poems on this subject (cf. p. 431, *below*). The results are ample proof of the difference in their abilities.

The poetry of earth is never dead:
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;
That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead
In summer luxury,—he has never done
With his delights; for when tired out with fun
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The poetry of earth is ceasing never;
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

(1816)

To One Who Has Been Long in City Pent

To one who has been long in city pent,
'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
And open face of heaven,—to breathe a prayer
Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,
Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
And gentle tale of love and languishment?
Returning home at evening, with an ear
Catching the notes of Philomel,[1]—an eye
Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
He mourns that day so soon has glided by:
E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
That falls through the clear ether silently.

(1817)

From *Endymion*

When Keats's first volume was published in March 1817, it was practically ignored. He set to work with greater determination than ever, in consequence, on ***Endymion***, a long, rather over-decorated story of the love of the Moon-Goddess for a mortal. The narrative is an allegory of the soul's search for perfect beauty.

Despite the poet's preface, which admitted that the reader would find in his work "great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished," the poem was viciously attacked. John Wilson Croker, in the *Quarterly Review*, mercilessly dissected the first book, and professed to have abandoned the rest "in despair."

BOOK I

PROEM

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth.
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in; and clear rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season; the mid-forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read:
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour; no, even as the trees
That whisper round a temple become soon
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
The passion poesy, glories infinite,
Haunt us till they become a cheering light
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast,
They always must be with us, or we die.

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I
Will trace the story of Endymion.

[1] the nightingale.

The very music of the name has gone
Into my being, and each pleasant scene
Is growing fresh before me as the green
Of our own valleys: so I will begin
Now while I cannot hear the city's din;
Now while the early budders are just new,
And run in mazes of the youngest hue
About old forests; while the willow trails
Its delicate amber; and the dairy pails
Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year
Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer
My little boat, for many quiet hours,
With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.
Many and many a verse I hope to write,
Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,
Hide in deep herbage; and ere yet the bees
Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,
I must be near the middle of my story.
O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,
See it half finished: but let Autumn bold,
With universal tinge of sober gold,
Be all unto me when I make an end.
And now at once, adventuresome, I send
My herald thought into a wilderness:
There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress
My uncertain path with green, that I may speed
Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.

(1817)

On Seeing the Elgin Marbles[1]

My spirit is too weak—mortality
Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
And each imagined pinnacle and steep
Of godlike hardship tells me I must die
Like a sick Eagle looking at the sky.
Yet 't is a gentle luxury to weep
That I have not the cloudy winds to keep,
Fresh for the opening of the morning's eye.
Such dim-conceivèd glories of the brain
Bring round the heart an undescribable feud;
So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,
That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
Wasting of old Time—with a billowy main—
A sun—a shadow of a magnitude.

(1817)

[1] The bulk of the surviving friezes from the Parthenon at Athens were brought to England in 1801-03 by Lord Elgin. Most of these were executed under the direction of Phidias, the greatest of the Greek sculptors, about 440 B.C.

Robin Hood[1]

To a Friend[2]

No! those days are gone away,
And their hours are old and gray,
And their minutes buried all
Under the down-trodden pall
Of the leaves of many years:
Many times have Winter's shears,
Frozen North, and chilling East,
Sounded tempests to the feast
Of the forest's whispering fleeces,
Since men knew nor rent nor leases.

No, the bugle sounds no more,
And the twanging bow no more;
Silent is the ivy shrill
Past the heath and up the hill;
There is no mid-forest laugh,
Where lone Echo gives the half
To some wight, amazed to hear
Jesting, deep in forest drear.

On the fairest time of June
You may go, with sun or moon,
Or the seven stars[3] to light you,
Or the polar ray[4] to right you;
But you never may behold
Little John, or Robin bold;
Never one, of all the clan,
Thrumming on an empty can
Some old hunting ditty, while
He doth his green way beguile
To fair hostess Merriment,
Down beside the pasture Trent;
For he left the merry tale,
Messenger for spicy ale.

Gone, the merry morris din;
Gone, the song of Gamelyn;[5]
Gone, the tough-belted outlaw
Idling in the "grenè shawe";[6]
All are gone away and past!
And if Robin should be cast

[1] Cf. Vol. I, p. 204.

[2] John Hamilton Reynolds, who had written a series of Robin Hood Sonnets.

[3] the Pleiades.

[4] the North Star.

[5] a poem formerly supposed to be by Chaucer. Its description of life in the woods forms the basis of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

[6] green woods, quoted from Chaucer's *Friar's Tale*.

Sudden from his turfed grave,
And if Marian should have
Once again her forest days,
She would weep, and he would craze:
He would swear, for all his oaks,
Fall'n beneath the dock-yard strokes,
Have rotted on the briny seas;
She would weep that her wild bees
Sang not to her—strange! that honey
Can't be got without hard money!

So it is; yet let us sing
Honor to the old bow-string!
Honor to the bugle horn!
Honor to the woods unshorn!
Honor to the Lincoln green!
Honor to the archer keen!
Honor to tight Little John,
And the horse he rode upon!
Honor to bold Robin Hood,
Sleeping in the underwood!
Honor to Maid Marian,
And to all the Sherwood clan!
Though their days have hurried by,
Let us two a burden[7] try.

(1818)

Lines on the Mermaid Tavern

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?[1]
Have ye tippled drink more fine
Than mine host's Canary wine?
Or are fruits of Paradise
Sweeter than those dainty pies
Of venison? O generous food!
Drest as though bold Robin Hood
Would, with his maid Marian,
Sup and bowse[2] from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day
Mine host's sign-board flew away,
Nobody knew whither, till
An astrologer's old quill
To a sheepskin gave the story,
Said he saw you in your glory,
Underneath a new old-sign
Sipping beverage divine,
And pledging with contented smack
The Mermaid in the Zodiac.

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known,
Happy field or mossy cavern,
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

(1818)

[7] an accompaniment, probably here merely a song.
[1] the chief gathering-place of the Elizabethan poets.
[2] drink.

Fancy

Ever let the Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home:
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth,
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth;
Then let winged Fancy wander
Through the thought still spread beyond her:
Open wide the mind's cage-door,
She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.
O sweet Fancy! let her loose;
Summer's joys are spoilt by use,
And the enjoying of the Spring
Fades as does its blossoming;
Autumn's red-lipped fruitage too,
Blushing through the mist and dew,
Cloys with tasting: What do then?
Sit thee by the ingle,[1] when
The sear faggot blazes bright,
Spirit of a winter's night;
When the soundless earth is muffled,
And the caked snow is shuffled
From the ploughboy's heavy shoon;
When the Night doth meet the Noon
In a dark conspiracy
To banish Even from her sky.
Sit thee there, and send abroad,
With a mind self-overawed,
Fancy, high-commissioned:—send her!
She has vassals to attend her:
She will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauties that the earth has lost;
She will bring thee, all together,
All delights of summer weather;
All the buds and bells of May,
From dewy sward or thorny spray;
All the heaped Autumn's wealth,
With a still, mysterious stealth:
She will mix these pleasures up

[1] fireplace.

Like three fit wines in a cup,
And thou shalt quaff it:—thou shalt hear
Distant harvest-carols clear;
Rustle of the reaped corn;
Sweet birds antheming the morn:
And, in the same moment—hark!
'Tis the early April lark,
Or the rooks, with busy caw,
Foraging for sticks and straw.
Thou shalt, at one glance, behold
The daisy and the marigold;
White-plumed lilies, and the first
Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst;
Shaded hyacinth, alway
Sapphire queen of the mid-May;
And every leaf, and every flower
Pearled with the self-same shower.
Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep
Meagre from its celled sleep;
And the snake all winter-thin
Cast on sunny bank its skin;
Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see
Hatching in the hawthorn-tree
When the hen-bird's wing doth rest
Quiet on her mossy nest;
Then the hurry and alarm
When the bee-hive casts its swarm;
Acorns ripe down-pattering,
While the autumn breezes sing.

Oh, sweet Fancy! let her loose;
Every thing is spoilt by use;
Where's the cheek that doth not fade,
Too much gazed at? Where's the maid
Whose lip mature is ever new?
Where's the eye, however blue,
Doth not weary? Where's the face
One would meet in every place?
Where's the voice, however soft,
One would hear so very oft?
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth.
Let, then, winged Fancy find
Thee a mistress to thy mind:
Dulcet-eyed as Ceres' daughter[2]
Ere the God of Torment taught her
How to frown and how to chide;
With a waist and with a side
White as Hebe's,[3] when her zone
Slipt its golden clasp, and down
Fell her kirtle to her feet,
While she held the goblet sweet,
And Jove grew languid.—Break the mesh
Of the Fancy's silken leash;
Quickly break her prison-string,
And such joys as these she'll bring.—
Let the winged Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home.

(1818)

To Sleep

O soft embalmer of the still midnight,
Shutting, with careful fingers and benign,
Our gloom-pleased eyes, embowered from the light,
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine:
O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close
In midst of this thine hymn my willing eyes,
Or wait the amen, ere thy poppy throws
Around my bed its lulling charities.
Then save me, or the passed day will shine
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes,—
Save me from curious Conscience, that still lords
Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole;
Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards,
And seal the hushed Casket of my Soul.

(1819)

[2] Proserpine, before she was carried away by Pluto to the underworld.
[3] the cupbearer of the gods.

The Eve of St. Agnes

Nowhere does Keats seem to have himself followed more completely his advice to Shelley, to "load every rift of your subject with ore," than in this masterpiece of romance, for which he employed the Spenserian stanza. The story is based upon the old legend that if a maid went fasting to bed on St. Agnes's Eve, she would dream of her future husband. When one considers how easy it might have been to allow his tale to lapse from the radiant moonlit mood which the poet set, one can only wonder at the perfection with which the art is maintained. The succession of glowing pictures rivals the pigment of the painter. Indeed, it is not difficult to understand why the later Pre-Raphaelite poet-painters should have deemed this work incomparable and found in it subjects for their canvases.

I

St. Agnes' Eve[1]—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limped trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told[2]
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seemed taking flight for heaven, without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

2

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptured dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
Emprisoned in black, purgatorial rails:[3]
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,[4]
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

3

Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flattered to tears this aged man and poor;
But no—already had his death-bell rung:
The joys of all his life were said and sung:
His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve:
Another way he went, and soon among
Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

4

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
And so it chanced, for many a door was wide,
From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:
The level chambers, ready with their pride,
Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:
The carved angels, ever eager-eyed,
Stared, where upon their heads the cornice rests,
With hair blown back, and wings put crosswise on their breasts.

5

At length burst in the argent revelry,
With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
Numerous as shadows haunting faerily
The brain, new-stuffed, in youth, with triumphs gay
Of old romance. These let us wish away,
And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there,
Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
On love, and winged St. Agnes' saintly care,
As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

[1] January 20.
[2] numbered the beads on his rosary as he said his "Hail Mary's."
[3] garments.
[4] small chapels for prayer.

6

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
Young virgins might have visions of delight,
And soft adorings from their loves receive
Upon the honeyed middle of the night,
If ceremonies due they did aright;
As, supperless to bed they must retire,
And couch supine their beauties, lily white;
Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

7

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline:
The music, yearning like a God in pain,
She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,
Fixed on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
Pass by—she heeded not at all: in vain
Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
And back retired; not cooled by high disdain,
But she saw not: her heart was otherwhere;
She sighed for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

8

She danced along with vague, regardless eyes,
Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short:
The hallowed hour was near at hand: she sighs
Amid the timbrels, and the thronged resort
Of whisperers in anger, or in sport;
'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn,
Hoodwinked with faery fancy; all amort,[5]
Save to St. Agnes and her lambs[6] unshorn,
And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

9

So, purposing each moment to retire,
She lingered still. Meantime, across the moors,
Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
Buttressed from moonlight, stands he, and implores
All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
But for one moment in the tedious hours,
That he might gaze and worship all unseen;
Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss—in sooth such things have been.

10

He ventures in: let no buzzed whisper tell:
All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel:
For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,
Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,
Whose very dogs would execrations howl
Against his lineage: not one breast affords
Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

11

Ah, happy chance! the aged creature came,
Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand,
To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond
The sound of merriment and chorus bland:
He startled her; but soon she knew his face,
And grasped his fingers in her palsied hand,
Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place;
They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race!

12

"Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand;
He had a fever late, and in the fit
He cursed thee and thine, both house and land:
Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me! flit!
Flit like a ghost away."—"Ah, Gossip[7] dear,
We're safe enough; here in this armchair sit,
And tell me how"—"Good Saints! not here, not here;
Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier."

13

He followed through a lowly arched way,
Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume;
And as she muttered "Well-a—well-a-day!"
He found him in a little moonlight room,
Pale, latticed, chill, and silent as a tomb.
"Now tell me where is Madeline," said he,

[5] dead.

[6] formerly on St. Agnes Day the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) was chanted and two lambs were sacrificed, their wool to be later woven by the nuns.

[7] literally, godmother; loosely used for "friend."

"O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving, piously."

14

"St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve—
Yet men will murder upon holy days:
Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,
And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
To venture so: it fills me with amaze
To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes' Eve!
God's help! my lady fair the conjuror plays
This very night: good angels her deceive!
But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle[8] time to grieve."

15

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
Who keepeth closed a wond'rous riddle-book,
As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.
But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook[9]
Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

16

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose,
Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
Made purple riot: then doth he propose
A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
"A cruel man and impious thou art:
Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
Alone with her good angels, far apart
From wicked men like thee. Go, go! I deem
Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem."

17

"I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,"
Quoth Porphyro: "O may I ne'er find grace
When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
Or look with ruffian passion in her face:
Good Angela, believe me by these tears;
Or I will, even in a moment's space,
Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
And beard them, though they be more fanged than wolves and bears."

18

"Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul? A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;
Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
Were never missed." Thus plaining, doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro:
So woful, and of such deep sorrowing,
That Angela gives promise she will do
Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

19

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
Him in a closet, of such privacy
That he might see her beauty unespied,
And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
While legioned faeries paced the coverlet,
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed.
Never on such a night have lovers met,
Since Merlin paid his Demon[10] all the monstrous debt.

20

"It shall be as thou wishest," said the Dame:
"All cates[11] and dainties shall be stored there
Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambor frame[12]
Her own lute thou wilt see: no time to spare,
For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
Wait here, my child, with patience; kneel in prayer
The while: Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
Or may I never leave my grave among the dead."

[8] much.
[9] restrain.
[10] "The monstrous debt was Merlin's monstrous existence which he owed to a demon and repaid when he died, or disappeared, through the working of one of his own spells by Viviane."—Forman.
[11] delicacies.
[12] an embroidery frame shaped like a drum.

21

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
The lover's endless minutes slowly passed;
The Dame returned, and whispered in his ear
To follow her; with aged eyes aghast
From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
The maiden's chamber, silken, hushed and chaste;
Where Porphyro took covert, pleased amain.[13]
His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

22

Her faltering hand upon the balustrade,
Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
Rose, like a missioned spirit, unaware:
With silver taper's light, and pious care,
She turned, and down the aged gossip led
To a safe level matting.[14] Now prepare,
Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed;
She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove frayed[15] and fled.

23

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died:
She closed the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide:
No uttered syllable, or, woe betide!
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled in her dell.

24

A casement high and triple-arched there was,
All garlanded with carven imag'ries
Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,
As are the tiger-moth's deep-damasked wings;
And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,[16]
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blushed with blood of queens and kings.

25

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules[17] on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven:—Porphyro grew faint:
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

26

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees
Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees:
Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed,
Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees,
In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

27

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
In sort of wakeful swoon, perplexed she lay,
Until the poppied warmth of sleep oppressed
Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away;
Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day;
Blissfully havened both from joy and pain;
Clasped like a missal where swart Paynims pray;[18]
Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

28

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,
Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
And listened to her breathing, if it chanced
To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
And breathed himself: then from the closet crept,

[13] exceedingly.
[14] straw carpet.
[15] frightened.
[16] representations of coat of arms.
[17] red (the term used in descriptions of coat of arms).
[18] closed like a Christian prayer-book when black pagans (who have no use for prayer-books) pray.

Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
And over the hushed carpet, silent, stept,
And 'tween the curtains peeped, where, lo!—how fast she slept.

29

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon
Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
A table, and, half anguished, threw thereon
A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet:—
O for some drowsy Morphean[19] amulet!
The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet,
Affray his ears, though but in dying tone:—
The hall-door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

30

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep,
In blanched linen, smooth, and lavendered,
While he from forth the closet brought a heap
Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
With jellies soother[20] than the creamy curd,
And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon;
Manna and dates, in argosy transferred
From Fez;[21] and spiced dainties, every one,
From silken Samarcand[22] to cedared Lebanon.[23]

31

These delicates he heaped with glowing hand
On golden dishes and in baskets bright
Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand
In the retired quiet of the night,
Filling the chilly room with perfume light.—
"And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!
Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite:[24]
Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache."

32

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm
Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
By the dusk curtains:—'twas a midnight charm
Impossible to melt as iced stream:
The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam;
Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:
It seemed he never, never could redeem
From such a steadfast spell his lady's eyes;
So mused awhile, entoiled in woofed phantasies.

33

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,—
Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be,
He played an ancient ditty, long since mute,
In Provence called "La belle dame sans mercy:"[25]
Close to her ear touching the melody;—
Wherewith disturbed, she uttered a soft moan:
He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly
Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone:
Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

34

Here eyes were open, but she still beheld,
Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
There was a painful change, that nigh expelled
The blisses of her dream so pure and deep
At which fair Madeline began to weep,
And moan forth witless words with many a sigh;
While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
Fearing to move or speak, she looked so dreamingly.

35

"Ah, Porphyro!" said she, "but even now
Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
Made tuneable with every sweetest vow;
And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:
How changed thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!
Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go."

36

Beyond a mortal man impassioned far
At these voluptuous accents, he arose,

[19] sleep-producing.
[20] softer, more soothing.
[21] a city in northern Morocco.
[22] a city in central Asia important for the medieval trade in Chinese silks.
[23] a mountain range in southern Syria famous for its cedars.
[24] hermit; here, devoted lover.
[25] Cf. Vol. II, p. 355.

Ethereal, flushed, and like a throbbing star
Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;
Into her dream he melted, as the rose
Blendeth its odor with the violet,—
Solution sweet: meantime the frost-wind blows
Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

37

'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown[26] sleet:
"This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!"
'Tis dark: the iced gusts still rave and beat:
"No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!
Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine.—
Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring?
I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
Though thou forsakest a deceived thing;—
A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing."

38

"My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest?
Thy beauty's shield, heart-shaped and vermeil[27] dyed?
Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
After so many hours of toil and quest,
A famished pilgrim,—saved by miracle.
Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

39

"Hark! 'tis an elfin storm from faery land,
Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:
Arise—arise! the morning is at hand: —
The bloated wassailers will never heed:—
Let us away, my love, with happy speed;
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,—
Drowned all in Rhenish[28] and the sleepy mead:
Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be,
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee."

40

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears—
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found.—
In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain-drooped lamp was flickering by each door;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
Fluttered in the besieging wind's uproar;
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

41

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall;
Like phantoms to the iron porch they glide,
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flagon by his side:
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide:—
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones;—
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

42

And they are gone: aye, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm,
Were long be-nightmared. Angela the old
Died palsy-twitched, with meagre face deform;
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought-for slept among his ashes cold.

(1819)

[26] gust-blown.
[27] vermillion.
[28] Rhine wine.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth!
Have ye souls in heaven too,
Double-lived in regions new?
Yes, and those of heaven commune
With the spheres of sun and moon;
With the noise of fountains wond'rous
And the parle[1] of voices thund'rous;
With the whisper of heaven's trees
And one another, in soft ease
Seated on Elysian lawns
Browsed by none but Dian's[2] fawns;
Underneath large blue-bells tented,
Where the daisies are rose-scented,

[1] talk. [2] Diana's.

And the rose herself has got
Perfume which on earth is not;
Where the nightingale doth sing
Not a senseless, tranced thing,
But divine melodious truth;
Philosophic numbers smooth;
Tales and golden histories
Of heaven and its mysteries.

Thus ye live on high, and then
On the earth ye live again;
And the souls ye left behind you
Teach us, here, the way to find you,
Where your other souls are joying,
Never slumbered, never cloying.
Here, your earth-born souls still speak
To mortals, of their little week;
Of their sorrows and delights;
Of their passions and their spites;
Of their glory and their shame;
What doth strengthen and what maim.
Thus ye teach us, every day,
Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth!
Ye have souls in heaven too,
Double-lived in regions new!

(1819)

Ode on a Grecian Urn

This beautiful ode shows the ultimate meaninglessness of such arbitrary classifications as "romantic" and "classical." Surely Keats has here managed to reproduce in poetic terms the chaste "classical" elegance of a Greek urn; but he also expresses emotions "romantic" in the extreme. The concluding lines, which express something of his artistic credo, are allied not only to the ethical convictions of Matthew Arnold in the Victorian era, but also to that cult of beauty which was formulated by the esthetes toward the end of the century.

Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady[1]?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loath?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone;
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold lover, never, never canst thou kiss
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
Forever piping songs forever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
Forever warm and still to be enjoyed,
Forever panting, and forever young,
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands dressed?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic[2] shape! Fair attitude! with brede[3]
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity. Cold Pastoral![4]
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe

[1] Tempe and Arcady were a valley and a mountain region respectively in Greece.
[2] referring to Attica, one of the principal states of Greece.
[3] embroidery.
[4] A pastoral story in marble.

Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty"—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.
(1819)

Ode to a Nightingale

Many lovers of poetry have indulged in the pleasant, if futile, controversy as to whether this or Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* is the most wonderful of English romantic lyrical poems. Perhaps in no other poem has Keats transmitted more perfectly his ecstatic apprehension of beauty—an experience with him so keen and intense that the very borderlines of pain and joy became confused.

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards[1] had sunk.
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness—
That thou, light wingèd Dryad[2] of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

Oh, for a draught of vintage that hath been
Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora[3] and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal[4] song, and sun-burnt mirth!
Oh, for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,[5]
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stainèd mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim—

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and specter-thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond tomorrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,[6]
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Clustered around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding, mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmèd darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets covered up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Called him soft names in many a musèd rime,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth,[7] when, sick for home,

[1] toward Lethe, the river of forgetfulness.
[2] tree nymph.
[3] goddess of flowers.
[4] The music of the troubadours flourished in Provence in southern France.
[5] a fountain sacred to the Muses.
[6] leopards, which drew the car of Bacchus, god of wine.
[7] Cf. Vol. I, pp. 348-51.

She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that ofttimes hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hillside; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music—do I wake or sleep?

(1819)

Ode on Melancholy

No, no, go not to Lethe,[1] neither twist
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kissed
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;[2]
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
Your mournful Psyche,[3] nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of Delight
Veiled Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

(1819)

[1] the river of forgetfulness.
[2] Queen of the lower world.
[3] the soul, symbolized by the butterfly. The same Greek word is used for both.

To Autumn

It is doubtful whether words can make a more palpable appeal to the senses than those here employed by Keats. The artist in him is in full evidence. It is in painting, rather than in poetry, that we normally find beauty so tangible. But the poet has the advantage over the painter in the added magic of sound, so that sound and meaning are in this poem perfectly interfused into an amazing unity of sensuous experience.

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

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twinèd flowers
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Aye, where are they?

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

(1819)

La Belle Dame Sans Merci[1]

This is one of the finest of all literary ballads, wonderful in its economy and celerity. The central idea will inevitably remind one of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*. The allegory may be taken as a presentation of the vain and heartbreaking pursuit of ideal beauty.

"Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing.

"Ah, what can ail thee, wretched wight,
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

"I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever-dew,
And on thy cheek a fading rose
Fast withereth too."

"I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

"I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long;
For sideways would she lean, and sing
A faery's song.

"I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She looked at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

"She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild and manna-dew;
And sure in language strange she said,
'I lóve thee true.'

"She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she gazed and sighed deep,
And there I shut her wild, sad eyes—
So kissed to sleep.

"And there we slumbered on the moss,
And there I dreamed—ah! woe betide!—
The latest dream I ever dreamed
On the cold hill side.

"I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all:
They cried—'La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!'

"I saw their starved lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke, and found me here
On the cold hill side.

"And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is withered from the lake,
And no birds sing."

(1819)

[1] The Fair Lady Without Mercy.

Lamia

"Philostratus, in his fourth book *de Vita Apollonii*, hath a memorable instance in this kind, which I may not omit, of one Menippus Lycius, a young man twenty-five years of age, that going betwixt Cenchreas and Corinth, met such a phantasm in the habit of a fair gentlewoman, which, taking him by the hand, carried him home to her house, in the suburbs of Corinth, and told him she was a Phœnician by birth, and if he would tarry with her, he should hear her sing and play, and drink such wine as never any drank, and no man should molest him; but she, being fair and lovely, would live and die with him, that was fair and lovely to behold. The young man, a philosopher, otherwise staid and discreet, able to moderate his passions, though not this of love, tarried with her a while to his great content, and at last married her, to whose wedding, amongst other guests, came Apollonius; who, by some probable conjectures, found her out to be a serpent, a lamia; and that all her furniture was, like Tantalus' gold, described by Homer, no substance but mere illusions. When she saw herself descried, she wept, and desired Apollonius to be silent, but he would not be moved, and thereupon she, plate, house, and all that was in it, vanished in an instant: many thousands took notice of this fact, for it was done in the midst of Greece." (Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part 3. Sect. 2. Memb. 1. Subs. 1.)

Part I

Upon a time, before the faery broods
Drove Nymph and Satyr[1] from the prosperous woods,
Before king Oberon's[2] bright diadem,
Sceptre, and mantle, clasped with dewy gem,
Frighted away the Dryads[3] and the Fauns[4]
From rushes green, and brakes, and cow-slipped lawns,
The ever-smitten Hermes[5] empty left
His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft:
From high Olympus had he stolen light,
On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight
Of his great summoner, and made retreat
Into a forest on the shores of Crete.
For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt
A nymph, to whom all hoofed Satyrs knelt;
At whose white feet the languid Tritons[6] poured
Pearls, while on land they withered and adored.
Fast by the springs where she to bathe was wont,
And in those meads where sometime she might haunt,
Were strewn rich gifts, unknown to any Muse,
Though Fancy's casket were unlocked to choose.
Ah, what a world of love was at her feet!
So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat
Burnt from his winged heels to either ear,
That from a whiteness, as the lily clear,
Blushed into roses 'mid his golden hair,
Fallen in jealous curls about his shoulders bare.

From vale to vale, from wood to wood, he flew,
Breathing upon the flowers his passion new,
And wound with many a river to its head,
To find where this sweet nymph prepared her secret bed:
In vain; the sweet nymph might nowhere be found,
And so he rested, on the lonely ground,
Pensive, and full of painful jealousies
Of the Wood-Gods, and even the very trees.
There as he stood, he heard a mournful voice,
Such as once heard, in gentle heart, destroys
All pain but pity: thus the lone voice spake:
"When from this wreathed tomb shall I awake!
When move in a sweet body fit for life,
And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife
Of hearts and lips! Ah, miserable me!"
The God, dove-footed, glided silently
Round bush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed,
The taller grasses and full-flowering weed,
Until he found a palpitating snake,
Bright, and cirque-couchant[7] in a dusky brake.

She was a gordian[8] shape of dazzling hue,
Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue;
Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard,
Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barred;
And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed,
Dissolved, or brighter shone, or interwreathed

[1] Woodland deity frequently depicted with the tail of a horse or goat, and sometimes with short horns on the forehead.
[2] King of the fairies.
[3] Tree nymphs.
[4] Rural deities, half goat and half man.
[5] Hermes, messenger of the gods, is represented as continually in love.
[6] Deities of the sea.
[7] lying coiled.
[8] intricate.

Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries—
So rainbow-sided, touched with miseries,
She seemed, at once, some penanced lady elf,
Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self.
Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire
Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar:[9]
Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet!
She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete:
And for her eyes: what could such eyes do there
But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair?
As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air.[10]
Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake
Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake,
And thus; while Hermes on his pinions lay,
Like a stooped falcon ere he takes his prey.

"Fair Hermes, crowned with feathers, fluttering light,
I had a splendid dream of thee last night:
I saw thee sitting, on a throne of gold,
Among the Gods, upon Olympus old,
The only sad one; for thou didst not hear
The soft, lute-fingered Muses chaunting clear,
Nor even Apollo when he sang alone,
Deaf to his throbbing throat's long, long melodious moan.
I dreamt I saw thee, robed in purple flakes,
Break amorous through the clouds, as morning breaks,
And, swiftly as a bright Phœbean[11] dart,
Strike for the Cretan isle; and here thou art!
Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid?"
Whereat the star of Lethe[12] not delayed
His rosy eloquence, and thus inquired:
"Thou smooth-lipped serpent, surely high inspired!
Thou beauteous wreath, with melancholy eyes,
Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise,
Telling me only where my nymph is fled,—
Where she doth breathe!" "Bright planet, thou hast said,"
Returned the snake, "but seal with oaths, fair God!"
"I swear," said Hermes, "by my serpent rod,
And by thine eyes, and by thy starry crown!"
Light flew his earnest words, among the blossoms blown.
Then thus again the brilliance feminine:
"Too frail of heart! for this lost nymph of thine,
Free as the air, invisibly, she strays
About these thornless wilds; her pleasant days
She tastes unseen; unseen her nimble feet
Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet;
From weary tendrils, and bowed branches green,
She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen:
And by my power is her beauty veiled
To keep it unaffronted, unassailed
By the love-glances of unlovely eyes,
Of Satyrs, Fauns, and bleared Silenus' sighs.
Pale grew her immortality, for woe
Of all these lovers, and she grieved so
I took compassion on her, bade her steep
Her hair in weird syrops, that would keep
Her loveliness invisible, yet free
To wander as she loves, in liberty.
Thou shalt behold her, Hermes, thou alone,
If thou wilt, as thou swearest, grant my boon!"
Then, once again, the charmed God began
An oath, and through the serpent's ears it ran
Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.[13]
Ravished, she lifted her Circean[14] head,
Blushed a live damask, and swift-lisping said,
"I was a woman, let me have once more
A woman's shape, and charming as before.
I love a youth of Corinth—O the bliss!
Give me my woman's form, and place me where he is.
Stoop, Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow,
And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now."
The God on half-shut feathers sank serene,
She breathed upon his eyes, and swift was seen
Of both the guarded nymph near-smiling on the green.
It was no dream; or say a dream it was.
Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass
Their pleasures in a long immortal dream.
One warm, flushed moment, hovering, it might seem
Dashed by the wood-nymph's beauty, so he burned;
Then, lighting on the printless verdure, turned
To the swooned serpent, and with languid arm,
Delicate, put to proof the lithe Caducean[15] charm.

[9] the seven stars into which Ariadne was transformed after her marriage with Bacchus. Keats is thinking of a picture by Titian wherein the circlet of stars is placed above Ariadne's head as a symbol of her coming transfiguration.

[10] Proserpine was carried off by Pluto from her home in Sicily. [11] belonging to Apollo.

[12] Hermes, so-called because it was his duty to lead the souls of the dead to Hades.

[13] referring to the style of the Psalms.

[14] She is a magician, like Circe in the Odyssey.

[15] Hermes carried the caduceus, an elaborate staff symbolizing his office as messenger of the gods.

So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent
Full of adoring tears and blandishment,
And towards her stept: she, like a moon in wane,
Faded before him, cowered, nor could restrain
Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower
That faints into itself at evening hour:
But the God fostering her chilled hand,
She felt the warmth, her eyelids opened bland,
And, like new flowers at morning song of bees,
Bloomed, and gave up her honey to the lees.
Into the green-recessed woods they flew;
Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

Left to herself, the serpent now began
To change; her elfin blood in madness ran,
Her mouth foamed, and the grass, therewith besprent,[16]
Withered at dew so sweet and virulent;
Her eyes in torture fixed, and anguish drear,
Hot, glazed, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,
Flashed phosphor and sharp sparks, without one cooling tear.
The colors all inflamed throughout her train,
She writhed about, convulsed with scarlet pain:
A deep volcanian yellow took the place
Of all her milder-mooned body's grace;
And, as the lava ravishes the mead,
Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede;
Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars,
Eclipsed her crescents, and licked up her stars:
So that, in moments few, she was undrest
Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst,
And rubious-argent: of all these bereft,
Nothing but pain and ugliness were left.
Still shone her crown; that vanished, also she
Melted and disappeared as suddenly;
And in the air, her new voice luting soft,
Cried, "Lycius! gentle Lycius!"—Borne aloft
With the bright mists about the mountains hoar
These words dissolved: Crete's forests heard no more.

Whither fled Lamia, now a lady bright,
A full-born beauty new and exquisite?
She fled into that valley they pass o'er
Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas shore;
And rested at the foot of those wild hills,
The rugged founts of the Peræan rills,
And of that other ridge whose barren back
Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack,
South-westward to Cleone. There she stood
About a young bird's flutter from a wood,
Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread,
By a clear pool, wherein she passioned
To see herself escaped from so sore ills,
While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.

Ah, happy Lycius!—for she was a maid
More beautiful than ever twisted braid,
Or sighed, or blushed, or on spring-flowered lea
Spread a green kirtle to the minstrelsy:
A virgin purest lipped, yet in the lore
Of love deep learned to the red heart's core:
Not one hour old, yet of sciential[17] brain
To unperplex bliss from its neighbor pain;
Define their pettish limits, and estrange
Their points of contact, and swift counter-change;
Intrigue with the specious chaos, and dispart
Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art;
As though in Cupid's college she had spent
Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent,[18]
And kept his rosy terms in idle languishment.

Why this fair creature chose so faerily
By the wayside to linger, we shall see;
But first 'tis fit to tell how she could muse
And dream, when in the serpent prison-house,
Of all she list, strange or magnificent:
How, ever, where she willed, her spirit went;
Whether to faint Elysium, or where
Down through trees-lifting waves the Nereids fair
Wind into Thetis'[19] bower by many a pearly stair;
Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine,
Stretched out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine;
Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine[20]
Mulciber's[21] columns gleam in far piazzian line.
And sometimes into cities she would send
Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend;
And once, while among mortals dreaming thus,
She saw the young Corinthian Lycius
Charioting foremost in the envious race,
Like a young Jove with calm uneager face,
And fell into a swooning love of him.
Now on the moth-time of that evening dim
He would return that way, as well she knew,
To Corinth from the shore; for freshly blew
The eastern soft wind, and his galley now
Grated the quaystones with her brazen prow

[16] sprinkled.
[17] full of knowledge.
[18] without blame.
[19] the sea-nymph who was mother of Achilles.
[20] palatial.
[21] belonging to Vulcan, blacksmith of the gods.

In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle
Fresh anchored; whither he had been awhile
To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there
Waits with high marble doors for blood and incense rare.
Jove heard his vows, and bettered his desire;
For by some freakful chance he made retire
From his companions, and set forth to walk,
Perhaps grown wearied of their Corinth talk:
Over the solitary hills he fared,
Thoughtless at first, but ere eve's star appeared
His phantasy was lost, where reason fades,
In the calmed twilight of Platonic shades.
Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near—
Close to her passing, in indifference drear,
His silent sandals swept the mossy green;
So neighbored to him, and yet so unseen
She stood: he passed, shut up in mysteries,
His mind wrapped like his mantle, while her eyes
Followed his steps, and her neck regal white
Turned—syllabling thus, "Ah, Lycius bright,
And will you leave me on the hills alone?
Lycius, look back! and be some pity shown."
He did; not with cold wonder fearingly,
But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice;[22]
For so delicious were the words she sung,
It seemed he had loved them a whole summer long:
And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up,
Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup,
And still the cup was full,—while he, afraid
Lest she should vanish ere his lip had paid
Due adoration, thus began to adore;
Her soft look growing coy, she saw his chain so sure:
"Leave thee alone! Look back! Ah, Goddess, see
Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee!
For pity do not this sad heart belie—
Even as thou vanishest so shall I die.
Stay! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay!
To thy far wishes will thy streams obey:
Stay! though the greenest woods be thy domain,
Alone they can drink up the morning rain:
Though a descended Pleiad, will not one
Of thine harmonious sisters keep in tune
Thy spheres,[23] and as thy silver proxy shine?
So sweetly to these ravished ears of mine
Came thy sweet greeting, that if thou shouldst fade
Thy memory will waste me to a shade:—
For pity do not melt!"—"If I should stay,"
Said Lamia, "here, upon this floor of clay,
And pain my steps upon these flowers too rough,
What canst thou say or do of charm enough
To dull the nice remembrance of my home?
Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam
Over these hills and vales, where no joy is,—
Empty of immortality and bliss!
Thou art a scholar, Lycius, and must know
That finer spirits cannot breathe below
In human climes, and live: Alas! poor youth,
What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe
My essence? What serener palaces,
Where I may all my many senses please,
And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts appease?
It cannot be—Adieu!" So said, she rose
Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose
The amorous promise of her lone complain,
Swooned, murmuring of love, and pale with pain.
The cruel lady, without any show
Of sorrow for her tender favorite's woe,
But rather, if her eyes could brighter be,
With brighter eyes and slow amenity,
Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh
The life she had so tangled in her mesh:
And as he from one trance was wakening
Into another, she began to sing,
Happy in beauty, life, and love, and every thing,
A song of love, too sweet for earthly lyres,
While, like held breath, the stars drew in their panting fires.
And then she whispered in such trembling tone,
As those who, safe together met alone
For the first time through many anguished days,
Use other speech than looks; bidding him raise
His drooping head, and clear his soul of doubt,
For that she was a woman, and without
Any more subtle fluid in her veins
Than throbbing blood, and that the self-same pains
Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his.
And next she wondered how his eyes could miss
Her face so long in Corinth, where, she said,
She dwelt but half retired, and there had led
Days happy as the gold coin could invent
Without the aid of love; yet in content
Till she saw him, as once she passed him by,
Where 'gainst a column he lent thoughtfully
At Venus' temple porch, 'mid baskets heaped
Of amorous herbs and flowers, newly reaped
Late on that eve, as 'twas the night before

[22] Orpheus, who went to the lower world to recover his wife, Eurydice, is thought of as the typical faithful lover.
[23] This refers to the "music of the spheres," described by the ancient astronomers.

The Adonian feast;[24] whereof she saw no more,
But wept alone those days, for why should she adore?
Lycius from death awoke into amaze,
To see her still, and singing so sweet lays:
Then from amaze into delight he fell
To hear her whisper woman's lore so well;
And every word she spake enticed him on
To unperplexed delight and pleasure known.
Let the mad poets say whate'er they please
Of the sweets of Faeries, Peris, Goddesses,
There is not such a treat among them all,
Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall,
As a real woman, lineal indeed
From Pyrrha's[25] pebbles or old Adam's seed.
Thus gentle Lamia judged, and judged aright,
That Lycius could not love in half a fright,
So threw the goddess off, and won his heart
More pleasantly by playing woman's part,
With no more awe than what her beauty gave,
That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save.
Lycius to all made eloquent reply,
Marrying to every word a twinborn sigh;
And last, pointing to Corinth, asked her sweet,
If 'twas too far that night for her soft feet.
The way was short, for Lamia's eagerness
Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease
To a few paces; not at all surmised
By blinded Lycius, so in her comprised.[26]
They passed the city gates, he knew not how,
So noiseless, and he never thought to know.

As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all,
Throughout her palaces imperial,
And all her populous streets and temples lewd,
Muttered, like tempest in the distance brewed,
To the wide-spreaded night above her towers.
Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours,
Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white,
Companioned or alone; while many a light
Flared, here and there, from wealthy festivals,
And threw their moving shadows on the walls,
Or found them clustered in the corniced shade
Of some arched temple door, or dusky colonnade.

Muffling his face, of greeting friends in fear,
Her fingers he pressed hard, as one came near
With curled gray beard, sharp eyes, and smooth bald crown,
Slow-stepped, and robed in philosophic gown:
Lycius shrank closer, as they met and past,
Into his mantle, adding wings to haste,
While hurried Lamia trembled: "Ah," said he,
"Why do you shudder, love, so ruefully?
Why does your tender palm dissolve in dew?"—
"I'm wearied," said fair Lamia: "tell me who
Is that old man? I cannot bring to mind
His features:—Lycius! wherefore did you blind
Yourself from his quick eyes?" Lycius replied,
"'Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide
And good instructor; but to-night he seems
The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams."

While yet he spake they had arrived before
A pillared porch, with lofty portal door,
Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor glow
Reflected in the slabbed steps below,
Mild as a star in water; for so new,
And so unsullied was the marble's hue,
So through the crystal polish, liquid fine,
Ran the dark veins, that none but feet divine
Could e'er have touched there. Sounds Æolian[27]
Breathed from the hinges, as the ample span
Of the wide doors disclosed a place unknown
Some time to any, but those two alone,
And a few Persian mutes, who that same year
Were seen about the markets: none knew where
They could inhabit; the most curious
Were foiled, who watched to trace them to their house:
And but the flitter-winged verse must tell,
For truth's sake, what woe afterwards befel,
'Twould humor many a heart to leave them thus,
Shut from the busy world of more incredulous.

Part II

Love in a hut, with water and a crust,
Is—Love, forgive us!—cinders, ashes, dust;
Love in a palace is perhaps at last
More grievous torment than a hermit's fast:—
That is a doubtful tale from faery land,
Hard for the non-elect to understand.
Had Lycius lived to hand his story down,
He might have given the moral a fresh frown,

[24] the annual celebration of the return of Adonis from the lower world.

[25] an allusion to the story of the repeopling of the world after the flood by Deucalion and Pyrrha, who cast stones behind them which became men.

[26] engrossed.

[27] produced by the wind.

Or clenched it quite: but too short was their bliss
To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice hiss.
Beside, there, nightly, with terrific glare,
Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair,
Hovered and buzzed his wings, with fearful roar,
Above the lintel of their chamber door,
And down the passage cast a glow upon the floor.

For all this came a ruin: side by side
They were enthroned, in the even tide,
Upon a couch, near to a curtaining
Whose airy texture, from a golden string,
Floated into the room, and let appear
Unveiled the summer heaven, blue and clear,
Betwixt two marble shafts:—there they reposed,
Where use had made it sweet, with eyelids closed,
Saving a tithe which love still open kept,
That they might see each other while they almost slept;
When from the slope side of a suburb hill,
Deafening the swallow's twitter, came a thrill
Of trumpets—Lycius started—the sounds fled,
But left a thought, a buzzing in his head.
For the first time, since first he harbored in
That purple-lined palace of sweet sin,
His spirit passed beyond its golden bourn
Into the noisy world almost forsworn.
The lady, ever watchful, penetrant,
Saw this with pain, so arguing a want
Of something more, more than her empery
Of joys; and she began to moan and sigh
Because he mused beyond her, knowing well
That but a moment's thought is passion's passing bell.
"Why do you sigh, fair creature?" whispered he:
"Why do you think?" returned she tenderly:
"You have deserted me;—where am I now?
Not in your heart while care weighs on your brow:
No, no, you have dismissed me; and I go
From your breast houseless: aye, it must be so."
He answered, bending to her open eyes,
Where he was mirrored small in paradise,
"My silver planet, both of eve and morn!
Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn,
While I am striving how to fill my heart
With deeper crimson, and a double smart?
How to entangle, trammel up and snare
Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there
Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose?
Aye, a sweet kiss—you see your mighty woes.
My thoughts! shall I unveil them? Listen then!
What mortal hath a prize, that other men
May be confounded and abashed withal,
But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestical,
And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice
Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice.
Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar,
While through the thronged streets your bridal car
Wheels round its dazzling spokes."—The lady's cheek
Trembled; she nothing said, but, pale and meek,
Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain
Of sorrows at his words; at last with pain
Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung,
To change his purpose. He thereat was stung,
Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim
Her wild and timid nature to his aim:
Besides, for all his love, in self despite,
Against his better self, he took delight
Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new.
His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue
Fierce and sanguineous as 'twas possible
In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell.
Fine was the mitigated fury, like
Apollo's presence when in act to strike
The serpent—Ha, the serpent! certes, she
Was none. She burnt, she loved the tyranny,
And, all subdued, consented to the hour
When to the bridal he should lead his paramour.
Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth,
"Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by my truth,
I have not asked it, ever thinking thee
Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny,
As still I do. Hast any mortal name,
Fit appellation for this dazzling frame?
Or friends or kinsfolk on the cited earth,
To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth?"
"I have no friends," said Lamia, "no, not one;
My presence in wide Corinth hardly known:
My parents' bones are in their dusty urns
Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns,
Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me,
And I neglect the holy rite for thee.
Even as you list invite your many guests;
But if, as now it seems, your vision rests
With any pleasure on me, do not bid
Old Apollonius—from him keep me hid."
Lycius, perplexed at words so blind and blank,
Made close inquiry; from whose touch she shrank,
Feigning a sleep; and he to the dull shade
Of deep sleep in a moment was betrayed.

It was the custom then to bring away
The bride from home at blushing shut of day,
Veiled, in a chariot, heralded along
By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage song,
With other pageants: but this fair unknown
Had not a friend. So being left alone,
(Lycius was gone to summon all his kin)
And knowing surely she could never win
His foolish heart from its mad pompousness,
She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress
The misery in fit magnificence.
She did so, but 'tis doubtful how and whence
Came, and who were her subtle servitors.
About the halls, and to and from the doors,
There was a noise of wings, till in short space
The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-arched grace.
A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone
Supportress of the faery-roof, made moan
Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade.
Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade
Of palm and plantain, met from either side,
High in the midst, in honor of the bride:
Two palms and then two plantains, and so on,
From either side their stems branched one to one
All down the aisled place; and beneath all
There ran a stream of lamps straight on from wall to wall.
So canopied, lay an untasted feast
Teeming with odors. Lamia, regal drest,
Silently paced about, and as she went,
In pale contented sort of discontent,
Missioned her viewless servants to enrich
The fretted splendor of each nook and niche.
Between the tree-stems, marbled plain at first,
Came jasper pannels; then, anon, there burst
Forth creeping imagery of slighter trees,
And with the larger wove in small intricacies.
Approving all, she faded at self-will,
And shut the chamber up, close, hushed and still,
Complete and ready for the revels rude,
When dreadful guests would come to spoil her solitude.

The day appeared, and all the gossip rout.
O senseless Lycius! Madman! wherefore flout
The silent-blessing fate, warm cloistered hours,
And show to common eyes these secret bowers?
The herd approached; each guest, with busy brain,
Arriving at the portal, gazed amain,
And entered marveling: for they knew the street,
Remembered it from childhood all complete
Without a gap, yet ne'er before had seen
That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne;[28]
So in they hurried all, mazed, curious and keen:
Save one, who looked thereon with eye severe,
And with calm-planted steps walked in austere;
'Twas Apollonius: something too he laughed,
As though some knotty problem, that had daft
His patient thought, had now begun to thaw,
And solve and melt:—'twas just as he foresaw.

He met within the murmurous vestibule
His young disciple. "'Tis no common rule,
Lycius," said he, "for uninvited guest
To force himself upon you, and infest
With an unbidden presence the bright throng
Of younger friends; yet must I do this wrong,
And you forgive me." Lycius blushed, and led
The old man through the inner doors broad-spread;
With reconciling words and courteous mien
Turning into sweet milk the sophist's spleen.

Of wealthy lustre was the banquet-room,
Filled with pervading brilliance and perfume:
Before each lucid pannel fuming stood
A censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood,
Each by a sacred tripod held aloft,
Whose slender feet wide-swerved upon the soft
Wool-woofed carpets: fifty wreaths of smoke
From fifty censers their light voyage took
To the high roof, still mimicked as they rose
Along the mirrored walls by twin-clouds odorous.
Twelve sphered tables, by silk seats insphered,
High as the level of a man's breast reared
On libbard's[29] paws, upheld the heavy gold
Of cups and goblets, and the store thrice told
Of Ceres' horn[30] and, in huge vessels, wine
Come from the gloomy tun with merry shine.
Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood,
Each shrining in the midst the image of a God.

When in an antechamber every guest
Had felt the cold full sponge to pleasure pressed,
By minist'ring slaves, upon his hands and feet,
And fragrant oils with ceremony meet
Poured on his hair, they all moved to the feast
In white robes, and themselves in order placed
Around the silken couches, wondering
Whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth could spring.

[28] domain.
[29] leopard's.
[30] the plentiful horn of Ceres, goddess of grain.

Soft went the music the soft air along,
While fluent Greek a voweled undersong
Kept up among the guests, discoursing low
At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow;
But when the happy vintage touched their brains,
Louder they talk, and louder come the strains
Of powerful instruments:—the gorgeous dyes,
The space, the splendor of the draperies,
The roof of awful richness, nectarous cheer,
Beautiful slaves, and Lamia's self, appear,
Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed,
And every soul from human trammels freed,
No more so strange; for merry wine, sweet wine,
Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine.
Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height;
Flushed were their cheeks, and bright eyes double bright:
Garlands of every green, and every scent
From vales deflowered, or forest-trees branch-rent,
In baskets of bright osiered gold were brought
High as the handles heaped, to suit the thought
Of every guest; that each, as he did please,
Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillowed at his ease.

What wreath for Lamia? What for Lycius?
What for the sage, old Apollonius?
Upon her aching forehead be there hung
The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue;[31]
And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him
The thyrsus,[32] that his watching eyes may swim
Into forgetfulness; and, for the sage,
Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage
War on his temples. Do not all charms fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
We know her woof, her texture; she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things.
Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings,
Conquer all mysteries by rule and line,
Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine—
Unweave a rainbow, as it erewhile made
The tender-personed Lamia melt into a shade.

By her glad Lycius sitting, in chief place,
Scarce saw in all the room another face,
Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took
Full brimmed, and opposite sent forth a look
'Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance
From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance,
And pledge him. The bald-head philosopher
Had fixed his eye, without a twinkle or stir
Full on the alarmed beauty of the bride,
Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her sweet pride.
Lycius then pressed her hand, with devout touch,
As pale it lay upon the rosy couch:
'Twas icy, and the cold ran through his veins.
Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains
Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart.
"Lamia, what means this? Wherefore dost thou start?
Know'st thou that man?" Poor Lamia answered not.
He gazed into her eyes, and not a jot
Owned they the lovelorn piteous appeal:
More, more he gazed: his human senses reel:
Some hungry spell that loveliness absorbs;
There was no recognition in those orbs.
"Lamia!" he cried—and no soft-toned reply.
The many heard, and the loud revelry
Grew hush; the stately music no more breathes;
The myrtle sickened in a thousand wreaths.
By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased;
A deadly silence step by step increased,
Until it seemed a horrid presence there,
And not a man but felt the terror in his hair.
"Lamia!" he shrieked; and nothing but the shriek
With its sad echo did the silence break.
"Begone, foul dream!" he cried, gazing again
In the bride's face, where now no azure vein
Wandered on fair-spaced temples; no soft bloom
Misted the cheek; no passion to illume
The deep-recessed vision:—all was blight;
Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white.
"Shut, shut those juggling eyes, thou ruthless man!
Turn them aside, wretch! or the righteous ban
Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images
Here represent their shadowy presences,
May pierce them on the sudden with a thorn
Of painful blindness; leaving thee forlorn,
In trembling dotage to the feeblest fright
Of conscience, for their long offended might,
For all thine impious proud-heart sophistries,
Unlawful magic, and enticing lies.
Corinthians! look upon that grey-beard wretch!
Mark how, possessed, his lashless eyelids stretch
Around his demon eyes! Corinthians, see!

[31] a kind of fern.
[32] a staff surmounted by a pine cone or by ivy leaves with grapes.

My sweet bride withers at their potency."
"Fool!" said the sophist, in an under-tone
Gruff with contempt; which a death-nighing moan
From Lycius answered, as heart-struck and lost,
He sank supine beside the aching ghost.
"Fool! Fool!" repeated he, while his eyes still
Relented not, nor moved; "from every ill
Of life have I preserved thee to this day,
And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey?"
Then Lamia breathed death breath; the sophist's eye,
Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly,
Keen, cruel, perceant, stinging: she, as well
As her weak hand could any meaning tell,
Motioned him to be silent; vainly so,
He looked and looked again a level—No!
"A serpent!" echoed he; no sooner said,
Than with a frightful scream she vanished:
And Lycius' arms were empty of delight,
As were his limbs of life, from that same night.
On the high couch he lay!—his friends came round—
Supported him—no pulse, or breath they found,
And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound.

(1819)

Bright Star! Would I Were Steadfast as Thou Art

This sonnet was composed aboard the ship that was to bear him to Italy—and death. Keats wrote it on a fly-leaf of a volume of Shakespeare's poems. He was leaving England with small hope of recovery or of ever returning. These circumstances lend a particular pathos to the lines.

Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendor hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,[1]
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel forever its soft fall and swell,
Awake forever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

(1820)

From *The Letters*

Keats's correspondence is full of interest to the student of his poetry and biography. His political views, for instance, are barely revealed in his poems, as a result of his conviction that pure poetry should exclude social purposes; but his letters show him to have been considerably concerned with contemporary events, and a radical in his opinions. They reveal, too, the manliness of his character—a quality that Shelley's portrait of him in *Adonais* is likely to make us forget. Such letters as the one to the painter Haydon (cf. *below*) and the one to Shelley (cf. *below*) make clear his unflinching self-criticism and the austerity with which he had devoted himself to his chosen art. The latter epistle, in answer to Shelley's kind invitation to come to stay with him in Italy, although overshadowed by the premonition of death, shows how strong was Keats's soul in the face of every discouragement.

The letters to Brown (cf. *below*), however, are written in the despair of certain death and frustrated love. It is impossible to read them without being harrowed, impotent spectators, as we are, to the poet's anguish. Rarely has a broken heart spoken with such eloquence.

[1] hermit; here, devotee.

To Benjamin Robert Haydon

March 8, 1819

My Dear Haydon,

You must be wondering where I am and what I am about! I am mostly at Hampstead, and about nothing; being in a sort of qui bono[1] temper, not exactly on the road to an epic poem. Nor must you think I have forgotten you. No, I have about every three days been to Abbey's[2] and to the Lawyers. Do let me know how you have been getting on, and in what spirits you are.

You got out gloriously in yesterday's *Examiner*. What a set of little people we live amongst! I went the other day into an ironmonger's shop—without any change in my sensations—men and tin kettles are much the same these days—they do not study like children at five and thirty—but they talk like men of twenty. Conversation is not a search after knowledge, but an endeavor at effect.

In this respect two most opposite men, Wordsworth and Hunt, are the same. A friend of mine observed the other day that if Lord Bacon were to make any remark in a party of the present day, the conversation would stop on the sudden. I am convinced of this, and from this I have come to this resolution—never to write for the sake of writing or making a poem, but from running over with any little knowledge or experience which many years of reflection may perhaps give me; otherwise I will be dumb. What imagination I have I shall enjoy, and greatly, for I have experienced the satisfaction of having great conceptions without the trouble of sonnetteering. I will not spoil my love of gloom by writing an Ode to Darkness!

With respect to my livelihood, I will not write for it,—for I will not run with that most vulgar of all crowds, the literary. Such things I ratify by looking upon myself, and trying myself at lifting mental weights, as it were. I am three and twenty, with little knowledge and midling intellect. It is true that in the height of enthusiasm I have been cheated into some fine passages; but that is not the thing.

I have not been to see you because all my going out has been to town, and that has been a great deal. Write soon.

Yours constantly,

John Keats

[1] doubtless a mistake for *cui bono*, i.e. "What's the use?"

[2] Richard Abbey, guardian of the Keats children during their minority.

To Percy Bysshe Shelley

August 1820

My Dear Shelley,

I am very much gratified that you, in a foreign country, and with a mind almost overoccupied, should write to me in the strain of the letter beside me. If I do not take advantage of your invitation, it will be prevented by a circumstance I have very much at heart to prophesy. There is no doubt that an English winter would put an end to me, and do so in a lingering, hateful manner. Therefore, I must either voyage or journey to Italy, as a soldier marches up to a battery. My nerves at present are the worst part of me, yet they feel soothed that, come what extreme may, I shall not be destined to remain in one spot long enough to take a hatred of any four particular bedposts. I am glad you take any pleasure in my poor poem, which I would willingly take the trouble to unwrite, if possible, did I care so much as I have done about reputation. I received a copy of the *Cenci*, as from yourself, from Hunt. There is only one part of it I am judge of—the poetry and dramatic effect, which by many spirits now-a-days is considered the Mammon. A modern work, it is said, must have a purpose, which may be the God. An artist must serve Mammon; he must have "self-concentration"—selfishness, perhaps. You, I am sure, will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity, and be more of an artist, and load every rift of your subject with ore. The thought of such discipline must fall like cold chains upon you, who perhaps never sat with your wings furled for six months together. And is not this extraordinary talk for the writer of *Endymion*, whose mind was like a pack of scattered cards? I am picked up and sorted to a pip. My imagination is a monastery, and I am its monk. I am in expectation of *Prometheus*[1] every day. Could I have my own wish effected, you would have it still in manuscript, or be but now putting an end to the second act. I remember you advising me not to publish my first blights, on Hampstead Heath. I am returning advice upon your hands. Most of the poems in the volume I send you have been written above two years, and would never have been published but for hope of gain; so you see I am inclined enough to take your advice now . . .

John Keats

[1] Cf. Vol. II, p. 302.

To Charles Brown

November 1, 1820

My Dear Brown,

Yesterday we were let out of Quarantine,[1] during which my health suffered more from bad air and the stifled cabin than it had done the whole voyage. The fresh air revived me a little, and I hope I am well enough this morning to write to you a short calm letter;—if that can be called one, in which I am afraid to speak of what I would fainest dwell upon. As I have gone thus far into it, I must go on a little;—perhaps it may relieve the load of WRETCHEDNESS which presses upon me. The persuasion that I shall see her no more will kill me. I cannot q—[2] My dear Brown, I should have had her when I was in health, and I should have remained well. I can bear to die—I cannot bear to leave her. O, God! God! God! Everything I have in my trunks that reminds me of her goes through me like a spear. The silk lining she put in my traveling cap scalds my head. My imagination is horribly vivid about her—I see her—I hear her. There is nothing in the world of sufficient interest to divert me from her a moment. This was the case when I was in England; I cannot recollect, without shuddering, the time that I was a prisoner at Hunt's, and used to keep my eyes fixed on Hampstead all day. Then there was a good hope of seeing her again—Now!—O that I could be buried near where she lives! I am afraid to write to her—to receive a letter from her—to see her handwriting would break my heart—even to hear of her anyhow, to see her name written, would be more than I can bear. My dear Brown, what am I to do? Where can I look for consolation or ease? If I had any chance of recovery, this passion would kill me. Indeed, through the whole of my illness, both at your house and at Kentish Town, this fever has never ceased wearing me out. When you write to me, which you will do immediately, write to Rome (*poste restante*)[3]—if she is well and happy, put a mark thus +; if——

Remember me to all. I will endeavor to bear my miseries patiently. A person in my state of health should not have such miseries to bear. Write a short note to my sister, saying you have heard from me. Severn is very well. If I were in better health I would urge your coming to Rome. I fear there is no one can give me any comfort. Is there any news of George? O, that something fortunate had ever happened to me or my brothers!—then I might hope,—but despair is forced upon me as a habit. My dear Brown, for my sake, be her advocate for ever. I cannot say a word about Naples; I do not feel at all concerned in the thousand novelties around me. I am afraid to write to her—I should like her to know that I do not forget her. Oh, Brown, I have coals of fire in my breast. It surprises me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery. Was I born for this end? God bless her, and her mother, and my sister, and George, and his wife, and you, and all!

Your ever affectionate friend,

John Keats

Thursday, November 2, 1820—I was a day too early for the Courier. He sets out now. I have been more calm to-day, though in a half dread of not continuing so. I said nothing of my health; I know nothing of it; you will hear Severn's account, from Haslam. I must leave off. You bring my thoughts too near to Fanny. God bless you!

To Charles Brown

November 30, 1820

My Dear Brown,

'Tis the most difficult thing in the world to me to write a letter. My stomach continues so bad, that I feel it worse on opening any book,—yet I am much better than I was in quarantine. Then I am afraid to encounter the pro-ing and con-ing of anything interesting to me in England. I have an habitual feeling of my real life having passed, and that I am leading a posthumous existence. God knows how it would have been—but it appears to me—however, I will not speak of that subject. I must have been at Bedhampton nearly at the time you were writing to me from Chichester—how unfortunate—and to pass on the river too! There was my star predominant! I cannot answer anything in your letter, which followed me from Naples to Rome, because I am afraid to look it over again. I am so weak (in mind) that I cannot bear the sight of any handwriting of a friend I love so much as I do you. Yet I ride the little horse, and, at my worst, even in quarantine,

[1] The boat on which Keats was bound for Italy in search of health was held for ten days in quarantine at Naples.

[2] Brown makes the following note: "He could not go on with this sentence nor even write the word 'quit,'—as I suppose."

[3] to be held till called for.

summoned up more puns, in a sort of desperation, in one week than in any year of my life. There is one thought enough to kill me; I have been well, healthy, alert, &c., walking with her, and now—the knowledge of contrast, feeling for light and shade, all that information (primitive sense) necessary for a poem, are great enemies to the recovery of the stomach. There, you rogue, I put you to the torture; but you must bring your philosophy to bear, as I do mine, really, or how should I be able to live? Dr. Clark is very attentive to me; he says, there is very little the matter with my lungs, but my stomach, he says, is very bad. I am well disappointed in hearing good news from George, for it runs in my head we shall all die young. I have not written to Reynolds yet, which he must think very neglectful; being anxious to send him a good account of my health, I have delayed it from week to week. If I recover, I will do all in my power to correct the mistakes made during sickness; and if I should not, all my faults will be forgiven. Severn is very well, though he leads so dull a life with me. Remember me to all friends, and tell Haslam I should not have left London without taking leave of him, but from being so low in body and mind. Write to George as soon as you receive this, and tell him how I am, as far as you can guess; and also a note to my sister—who walks about my imagination like a ghost—she is so like Tom.[1] I can scarcely bid you good-bye, even in a letter. I always made an awkward bow.

God bless you!

JOHN KEATS

Walter Savage Landor

(1775-1864)

Landor's long life covered a period of rich and varied productivity in English literature. He was born only five years after Wordsworth; was in his forties when Byron, Shelley, and Keats were writing their great poetry; outlived them and his aged contemporary Wordsworth; and lived to witness many of the best creations of Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Swinburne, Macaulay, Carlyle, Ruskin, and Newman. He still had years of mental alertness ahead of him when Darwin's cataclysmic theory was given to the world. Thus his career traverses the entire Romantic Movement. But he was never wholly of it. By preference, he had closer affinities to the classicism of the eighteenth century. Though he did become partisan in political matters, espoused the rights of peoples to liberty and justice, and thus shared the warm sympathies of Shelley's generation, he was never aggressively a liberal. He was too much enamored of form, too indifferent to popular success, and too scrupulous an artist to accept in full the liberating principles of the romantics. Like the composer Mendelssohn, he was a classicist living and writing in a romantic era. He thus remains a transitional figure between the eighteenth-century love of order and neatness and the nineteenth-century imaginative warmth; and his works, in consequence, possess a peculiarly ingratiating tone of mellowness and refined taste.

He was born at Warwick in 1775, the son of a well-known physician, and was educated at Rugby and later at Trinity College, Cambridge. There was a curious disparity between Landor the restrained artist and Landor the man. The former could truthfully say, "I strove with none," but the latter fought with everyone. At school his strong partisanship for the French and American republics was soon widely known. A fit of temper which resulted in his shooting into a neighbor's shutter caused his suspension from Cambridge. His political views estranged him from his father, and for a time he lived in Wales, reading and writing verse. All his life Landor was pleased to delude himself with an idealization of himself as a lover of retirement. Actually his burly figure was but the outward sign of a boyishness of spirit which he never lost. His was a thoroughly imprac-

[1] Keats's younger brother who died in December, 1818.

tical and generous disposition. His tenderness to children, animals, and even flowers is one of the most recurrent notes in his biography. A less pleasant one is his incessant wrangling over lawsuits, for which he nursed something like an eccentric affection.

In 1805 his father's death brought Landor a large fortune, which gave him freedom to live as he pleased. Three years later he enlisted as a volunteer in Spain to aid the uprising against Napoleon. Back in England, he purchased Llanthony Abbey, and showed small discretion in choosing the woman he now took to wife, for his marriage with her was but a long series of interminable quarrels and misunderstandings. In 1814 he went to Italy to live, chiefly in a villa at Fiesole, the scene of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Twenty years later he made another visit to England, but returned to Florence. There he was a close friend of the Brownings, and there, nearly ninety years of age, he died in 1864.

In 1793 he published a volume of poems, and in 1798 his Oriental tale on the Moorish invasion of Spain, *Gebir*. The latter, though entirely in the extravagant spirit common to the early days of romanticism, was, as ever with Landor, chastened in style. His *Count Julian* (1812) inaugurated a series of poetic tragedies from his pen. Thus far he had given small indication in his writings of his profound love for Greek and Roman literature and history. He now translated *Gebir* into Latin, wrote a volume of Latin verse, and published an essay urging the use of that language for literary composition.

From 1824 to 1846 he issued five volumes of his masterpiece, the *Imaginary Conversations*, the fruit of his wide reading and interest in the past. These form some one hundred and fifty fragments of historical drama—psychological dialogues between historical persons, they might be called, and forecasts of Browning's virile "monologues." Taking a set of dramatic or historically significant characters, Landor presents in each *Conversation* a situation in which these men and women reveal themselves and their times. He was not concerned, however, in individualizing their styles of speech or in achieving historical objectivity. Frankly he put his sentiments or his interpretatons of history into their mouths. But the drama is often intense, and always intellectually stimulating. The variety and range of his subjects are admirable. Among the host of characters we find: Diogenes and Plato, Aesop and Rhodope, Lucullus and Caesar, Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, Bossuet and the Duchess de Fontanges, Rousseau and Malesherbes, General Lacy and Cura Merino, and Marcus Tullius and Quinctus Cicero. The most ambitious work Landor wrote in this style was *The Pentameron* (cf. *below*), a five-day series of discussions between Petrarch and Boccaccio. The same method is employed in the letters of *Pericles and Aspasia* (1836), which mirror Athenian life in its days of glory (cf. *below*.) The prose of these pieces ranks Landor high among stylists. He was master of that music which is authentic to great prose, a music noble, sensitive to all degrees of emotion, and often inspired.

In 1847 appeared the *Hellenics*, a translation into English of the heroic idyls which he had originally written in Latin. These are among the most genuinely classical poems in our language. They seem distant from the neoclassicism of Pope and all its witty elegance. Such a poem as *Iphigenia and Agamemnon* (cf. *below*) captures far more of the Hellenic spirit than any Augustan could think of realizing, as a comparison with our selection from the play of Euripides (cf. *below*) on the same subject will prove.

The same union of restrained sentiment and chiseled form is to be found in such lyrics as *Rose Aylmer*, *One Year Ago*, and the famous epigram, "I strove with none" (cf. *below*), which appeared in other collections of his verse. The whimsicality of Landor's pose as the retired scholar is thoroughly delightful in *Yes, I Write Verses* (cf. *below*).

Landor's *Works* were edited by T. E. Welby (1927). A convenient selection of the poems was edited by S. Colvin (1890) and of the poems by E. de Selincourt (1928). S. Colvin's biography is standard (1881). Interesting studies of Landor will be found in L. Stephen's *Hours in a Library* (1892) and G. Saintsbury's *Essays in English Literature, Second Series* (1895).

EURIPIDES (480-406 B. C.)

Of the great Greek tragic dramatists, Euripides is the most modern in tone. More than his predecessors, Aeschylus and Sophocles, he was interested in presenting his stories and characters in a realistic manner. What makes him particularly close to us is his attention to the psychological values of the incidents in his various dramas. Eighteen of his ninety-two plays survive, the best of them being *Medea, Iphigenia in Aulis* (cf. *below*), *Hippolytus, The Suppliants, Electra,* and *The Trojan Women.* William Morris's (cf. *below*) *Life and Death of Jason* is much indebted to *Medea.*

We make no pretense of representing Euripides by the two brief fragments which follow. We include them chiefly to make possible a comparison between them and Landor's *Iphigenia and Agamemnon* (cf. *below*). But Euripides's humanity can be read even in this small compass.

The story of *Iphigenia in Aulis* tells of Agamemnon's pledge to Diana that he would sacrifice to her his dearest possession, his daughter Iphigenia, so that the goddess would grant a favorable wind to allow the ships of the expedition against Troy to sail from Aulis.

From IPHIGENIA IN AULIS

IPHIGENIA. Had I, my father, the persuasive voice
Of Orpheus, and his skill to charm the rocks
To follow me, and soothe whome'er I please
With winning words, I would make trial of it;
But I have nothing to present thee now
Save tears, my only eloquence; and those
I can present thee. On thy knees I hang,
A suppliant wreath, this body, which she bore
To thee. Ah! kill me not in youth's fresh prime.
Sweet is the light of heaven; compel me not
What is beneath to view. I was the first
To call thee father, me thou first didst call
Thy child; I was the first that on thy knees
Fondly caressed thee, and from thee received
The fond caress; this was thy speech to me:
"Shall I, my child, e'er see thee in some house
Of splendor, happy in thy husband, live?
And flourish, as becomes my dignity?"
My speech to thee was, leaning 'gainst thy cheek,
Which with my hand I now caress; "And what
Shall I then do for thee? Shall I receive
My father when grown old, and in my house
Cheer him with each fond office, to repay
The careful nurture which he gave my youth?"
These words are on my memory deep impressed;
Thou hast forgot them, and wilt kill thy child.
By Pelops[1] I entreat thee, by thy sire
Atreus, by this my mother, who before
Suffered for me the pangs of childbirth, now
These pangs again to suffer, do not kill me.
If Paris be enamored of his bride,
His Helen, what concerns it me? and how
Comes he to my destruction? Look upon me,
Give me a smile, give me a kiss, my father,
That, if my words persuade thee not, in death
I may have this memorial of thy love.

. . . . .

Hear then what to my mind
Deliberate thought presents. It is decreed
For me to die: this then I wish, to die
With glory, all reluctance banished far.
My mother, weigh this well, what I speak
Is honor's dictate. All the powers of Greece
Have now their eyes on me; on me depends
The sailing of the fleet, the fall of Troy,
And not to suffer, should anew attempt
Be dared, the rude Barbarians from blest Greece
To bear in future times her dames by force,
This ruin bursting on them for the loss
Of Helena, whom Paris bore away.
By dying all these things shall I achieve,
And blest, for that I have delivered Greece,
Shall be my fame. To be fond of life
Becomes not me; not for thyself alone,
But to all Greece a blessing, didst thou bear me.
Shall thousands, when their country's injured, lift
Their shields, shall thousands grasp the oar, and dare,
Advancing bravely 'gainst the foe, to die
For Greece? And shall my life, my single life,
Obstruct all this? Would this be just? What word
Can we reply? Nay more; it is not right
That he with all the Grecians should contend
In fight, should die, and for a woman. No;
More than a thousand women is one man
Worthy to see the light of life. If me
The chaste Diana wills t'accept, shall I,
A mortal, dare oppose her heavenly will?
Vain the attempt: for Greece I give my life.
Slay me, demolish Troy: for these shall be
Long time my monuments, my children these,
My nuptials, and my glory. It is meet
That Greece should o'er Barbarians bear the sway,
Not that Barbarians lord it over Greece:
Nature hath formed them slaves, the Grecians free.

[1] grandfather of Agamemnon.

Iphigeneia and Agamemnon

Iphigeneia, when she heard her doom
At Aulis, and when all beside the King
Had gone away, took his right hand, and said,
"O father! I am young and very happy.
I do not think the pious Calchas[1] heard
Distinctly what the goddess spake. Old age
Obscures the senses. If my nurse, who knew
My voice so well, sometimes misunderstood
While I was resting on her knee both arms
And hitting it to make her mind my words,
And looking in her face, and she in mine,
Might he not also hear one word amiss,
Spoken from so far off, even from Olympus?"
The father placed his cheek upon her head,
And tears dropped down it, but the king of men
Replied not. Then the maiden spake once more.
"O father! sayst thou nothing? Hear'st thou not
Me, whom thou ever hast, until this hour,
Listened to fondly, and awakened me
To hear my voice amid the voice of birds,
When it was inarticulate as theirs,
And the down deadened it within the nest?"
He moved her gently from him, silent still,
And this, and this alone, brought tears from her,
Although she saw fate nearer: then with sighs,
"I thought to have laid down my hair before
Benignant Artemis,[2] and not have dimmed
Her polished altar with my virgin blood;
I thought to have selected the white flowers
To please the Nymphs, and to have asked of each
By name, and with no sorrowful regret,
Whether, since both my parents willed the change,
I might at Hymen's[3] feet bend my clipped brow;
And (after those who mind us girls the most)
Adore our own Athena, that she would
Regard me mildly with her azure eyes.
But father! to see you no more, and see
Your love, O father! go ere I am gone—"
Gently he moved her off, and drew her back,
Bending his lofty head far over hers,
And the dark depths of nature heaved and burst.
He turned away; not far, but silent still.
She now first shuddered; for in him, so nigh,
So long a silence seemed the approach of death,
And like it. Once again she raised her voice.
"O father! if the ships are now detained,
And all your vows move not the Gods above,
When the Knife strikes me there will be one prayer
The less to them: and purer can there be
Any, or more fervent than the daughter's prayer
For her dear father's safety and success?"
A groan that shook him shook not his resolve.
An aged man now entered, and without
One word, stepped slowly on, and took the wrist
Of the pale maiden. She looked up and saw
The fillet of the priest and calm cold eyes.
Then turned she where her parent stood and cried
"O father! grieve no more: the ships can sail."

(pub. 1846)

[1] the priest who delivered the oracle that Iphigenia must be sacrificed.

[2] the goddess of virginity to whom Iphigenia expects to sacrifice at marriage. But Artemis is now demanding her as a sacrifice.

[3] the god of marriage.

Rose Aylmer

Ah what avails the sceptred race,
Ah what the form divine!
What every virtue, every grace!
Rose Aylmer, all were thine.
Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes
May weep, but never see,
A night of memories and of sighs
I consecrate to thee.

(pub. 1846)

One Year Ago

One year ago my path was green,
My footstep light, my brow serene;
Alas! and could it have been so
One year ago?

There is a love that is to last
When the hot days of youth are past:
Such love did a sweet maid bestow
One year ago.

I took a leaflet from her braid
And gave it to another maid.
Love! broken should have been thy bow
One year ago.

(pub. 1846)

Yes; I Write Verses

Yes; I write verses now and then,
But blunt and flaccid is my pen,
No longer talkt of by young men
As rather clever:
In the last quarter are my eyes,
You see it by their form and size;
Is it not time then to be wise?
Or now or never.
Fairest that ever sprang from Eve!
While Time allows the short reprieve,
Just look at me! would you believe
'Twas once a lover?
I cannot clear the five-bar gate
But, trying first its timber's state,
Climb stiffly up, take breath, and wait
To trundle over.
Thro' gallopade I cannot swing
The entangling blooms of Beauty's spring:
I cannot say the tender thing,
Be't true or false,
And am beginning to opine
Those girls are only half-divine
Whose waists yon wicked boys entwine
In giddy waltz.
I fear that arm above that shoulder,
I wish them wiser, graver, older,
Sedater, and no harm if colder
And panting less.
Ah! people were not half so wild
In former days, when starchly mild,
Upon her high-heel'd Essex smiled
The Brave Queen Bess.

(pub. 1846)

To Robert Browning

There is delight in singing, tho' none hear
Beside the singer; and there is delight
In praising, tho' the praiser sit alone
And see the prais'd far off him, far above.
Shakespeare is not our poet, but the world's,
Therefore on him no speech! and brief for thee,
Browning! Since Chaucer was alive and hale,
No man hath walkt along our roads with step
So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue
So varied in discourse. But warmer climes[1]
Give brighter plumage, stronger wing: the breeze
Of Alpine heights thou playest with, borne on
Beyond Sorrento and Amalfi, where
The Siren waits thee, singing song for song.

(pub. 1846)

Introduction to *The Last Fruit Off an Old Tree*

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

(1853)

Pericles to Aspasia[1]

It is right and orderly that he who has partaken so largely in the prosperity of the Athenians should close the procession of their calamities. The fever that has depopulated our city returned upon me last night, and Hippocrates and Acron tell me that my end is near.

When we agreed, O Aspasia! in the beginning of our loves, to communicate our thoughts by writing, even while we were both in Athens, and when we had many reasons for it, we little fore saw the more powerful one that has rendered it necessary of late. We never can meet again: the laws forbid it, and love itself enforces them. Let wisdom be heard by you as imperturbably, and affection as authoritatively, as ever; and remember that the sorrow of Pericles can arise but from the bosom of Aspasia. There is only one word of tenderness we could say, which we have not said oftentimes before; and there is no consolation in it. The happy never say, and never hear said, farewell.

[1] the brilliant mistress of Pericles, who helped him much during the years in which he was the leading figure in Athenian history.

[1] Both Browning and Landor spent many years in Italy.

Reviewing the course of my life, it appears to me at one moment as if we met but yesterday; at another as if centuries had passed within it; for within it have existed the greater part of those who, since the origin of the world, have been the luminaries of the human race. Damon called me from my music to look at Aristides[2] on his way to exile; and my father pressed the wrist by which he was leading me along, and whispered in my ear: "Walk quickly by; glance cautiously; it is there Miltiades[3] is in prison." In my boyhood Pindar[4] took me up in his arms, when he brought to our house the dirge he had composed for the funeral of my grandfather; in my adolescence I offered the rites of hospitality to Empedocles;[5] not long afterward I embraced the neck of Æschylus,[6] about to abandon his country. With Sophocles[7] I have argued on eloquence; with Euripides[8] on polity and ethics; I have discoursed, as became an inquirer, with Protagoras[9] and Democritus,[10] with Anaxagoras[11] and Meton.[12] From Herodotus[13] I have listened to the most instructive history, conveyed in a language the most copious and the most harmonious; a man worthy to carry away the collected suffrages of universal Greece; a man worthy to throw open the temples of Egypt, and to celebrate the exploits of Cyrus. And from Thucydides,[14] who alone can succeed to him, how recently did my Aspasia hear with me the energetic praises of his just supremacy!

As if the festival of life were incomplete, and wanted one great ornament to crown it, Phidias[15] placed before us, in ivory and gold, the tutelary Deity of this land, and the Zeus of Homer and Olympus.

To have lived with such men, to have enjoyed their familiarity and esteem, overpays all labors and anxieties. I were unworthy of the friendships I have commemorated, were I forgetful of the latest. Sacred it ought to be, formed as it was under the portico of Death, my friendship with the most sagacious, the most scientific, the most beneficent of philosophers, Acron and Hippocrates.[16] If mortal could war against Pestilence and Destiny, they had been victorious. I leave them in the field: unfortunate he who finds them among the fallen!

And now, at the close of my day, when every light is dim and every guest departed, let me own that these wane before me, remembering, as I do in the pride and fullness of my heart, that Athens confided her glory, and Aspasia her happiness, to me.

Have I been a faithful guardian? do I resign them to the custody of the gods undiminished and unimpaired? Welcome then, welcome, my last hour! After enjoying for so great a number of years, in my public and my private life, what I believe has never been the lot of any other, I now extend my hand to the urn, and take without reluctance or hesitation what is the lot of all.

(1836)

From *The Pentameron*[1]

An acquaintance with the biographical material presented on pages 111-112, 220-224, and 238-239 of Vol. I will provide a background for these superb pages of Landor.

The Dreams of Boccaccio and Petrarch

. . . Boccaccio. In vain had I determined not only to mend in future, but to correct the past; in vain had I prayed most fervently for grace to accomplish it, with a final aspiration to Fiammetta that she would unite with your beloved Laura, and that, gentle and beatified spirits as they are, they would breathe together their purer prayers on mine. See what follows.

Petrarca. Sigh not at it. Before we can see all

[2] Athenian statesman and general (d. 468 B.C.?).
[3] Athenian general and statesman, victor at Marathon (early fifth century B.C.).
[4] Cf. Vol. II, p. 14. [5] Greek philosopher (500-430 B.C.?).
[6] Cf. Vol. II, p. 287. [7] Athenian dramatist (496?-406 B.C.).
[8] Athenian dramatist (480-406 B.C.).
[9] Greek philosopher (481?-411 B.C.).
[10] Greek philosopher (460?-362? B.C.).
[11] Greek philosopher (500?-428 B.C.)
[12] Greek astronomer and mathematician (fifth century B.C.).
[13] Greek historian (484?-425 B.C.).
[14] Greek historian (471?-400? B.C.).
[15] Greek sculptor (500?-432? B.C.).
[16] Greek physicians of the fifth century B.C.
[1] This title is made in imitation of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. It means "the five days."

that follows from their intercession, we must join them again. But let me hear anything in which they are concerned.

Boccaccio. I prayed; and my breast, after some few tears, grew calmer. Yet sleep did not ensue until the break of morning, when the dropping of soft rain on the leaves of the fig-tree at the window, and the chirping of a little bird to tell another there was shelter under them, brought me repose and slumber. Scarcely had I closed my eyes, if indeed time can be reckoned any more in sleep than in heaven, when my Fiammetta seemed to have led me into the meadow. You will see it below you: turn away that branch—gently! gently! do not break it, for the little bird sat there. . . .

"Thy prayers have been heard, O Giovanni," said she.

I sprang to embrace her.

"Do not spill the water! Ah! you have spilt a part of it."

I then observed in her hand a crystal vase. A few drops were sparkling on the sides and running down the rim; a few were trickling from the base and from the hand that held it.

"I must go down to the brook," said she, "and fill it again as it was filled before."

What a moment of agony was this to me! Could I be certain how long might be her absence? She went; I was following; she made a sign for me to turn back. I disobeyed her only an instant; yet my sense of disobedience, increasing my feebleness and confusion, made me lose sight of her. In the next moment she was again at my side with the cup quite full. I stood motionless: I feared my breath might shake the water over. I looked her in the face for her commands, and to see it,—to see it so calm, so beneficent, so beautiful. I was forgetting what I had prayed for, when she lowered her head, tasted of the cup, and gave it me. I drank, and suddenly sprang forth before me many groves and palaces and gardens, and their statues and their avenues, and their labyrinths of alaternus[2] and bay, and alcoves of citron, and watchful loop-holes in the retirements of impenetrable pomegranate. Farther off, just below where the fountain slipped away from its marble hall and guardian gods, arose from their beds of moss and drosera and darkest grass the sisterhood of oleanders, fond of tantalizing with their bosomed flowers and their moist and pouting blossoms the little shy rivulet, and of covering its face with all the colors of the dawn.

My dream expanded and moved forward. I trod again the dust of Posilipo,[3] soft as the feathers in the wings of Sleep. I emerged on Baia;[4] I crossed her innumerable arches; I loitered in the breezy sunshine of her mole; I trusted the faithful seclusion of her caverns, the keepers of so many secrets; and I reposed on the buoyancy of her tepid sea. Then Naples, and her theatres and her churches, her grottoes and dells and forts and promontories, rushed forward in confusion, now among soft whispers, now among sweetest sounds, and subsided, and sank, and disappeared. Yet a memory seemed to come fresh from every one; each had time enough for its tale, for its pleasure, for its reflection, for its pang. As I mounted with silent steps the narrow staircase of the old palace, how distinctly did I feel against the palm of my hand the coldness of that smooth stone-work, and the greater of the cramps of iron in it!

"Ah me! is this forgetting?" cried I anxiously to Fiammetta.

"We must recall these scenes before us," she replied; "such is the punishment of them. Let us hope and believe that the apparition, and the compunction which must follow it, will be accepted as the full penalty, and that both will pass away almost together."

I feared to lose anything attendant on her presence: I feared to approach her forehead with my lips: I feared to touch the lily on its long wavy leaf in her hair, which filled my whole heart with fragrance. Venerating, adoring, I bowed my head at last to kiss her snow-white robe, and trembled at my presumption. And yet the effulgence of her countenance vivified while it chastened me. I loved her—I must not say *more* than ever—*better* than ever; it was Fiammetta who had inhabited the skies. As my hand opened toward her,

"Beware!" said she, faintly smiling; "beware, Giovanni. Take only the crystal; take it, and drink again."

"Must all be then forgotten?" said I sorrowfully.

"Remember your prayer and mine, Giovanni! Shall both have been granted—O how much worse than in vain!"

I drank instantly; I drank largely. How cool my bosom grew; how could it grow so cool before her! But it was not to remain in its quiescency; its trials were not yet over. I will not, Francesco! no, I may not commemorate the incidents she related me, nor which of us said, "I blush

[2] an evergreen shrub.

[3] a ridge southwest of Naples famous for its ancient grotto.

[4] a seaport west of Naples.

for having loved *first*"; nor which of us replied, "Say *least*, say *least*, and blush again."

The charm of the words (for I felt not the encumbrance of the body nor the acuteness of the spirit) seemed to possess me wholly. Although the water gave me strength and comfort, and somewhat of celestial pleasure, many tears fell around the border of the vase as she held it up before me, exhorting me to take courage, and inviting me with more than exhortation to accomplish my deliverance. She came nearer, more tenderly, more earnestly; she held the dewy globe with both hands, leaning forward, and sighed and shook her head, drooping at my pusillanimity. It was only when a ringlet had touched the rim, and perhaps the water (for a sunbeam on the surface could never have given it such a golden hue), that I took courage, clasped it, and exhausted it. Sweet as was the water, sweet as was the serenity it gave me—alas! that also which it moved away from me was sweet!

"This time you can trust me alone," said she, and parted my hair, and kissed my brow. Again she went toward the brook: again my agitation, my weakness, my doubt, came over me: nor could I see her while she raised the water, nor knew I whence she drew it. When she returned, she was close to me at once: she smiled: her smile pierced me to the bones: it seemed an angel's. She sprinkled the pure water on me; she looked most fondly; she took my hand; she suffered me to press hers to my bosom; but, whether by design I cannot tell, she let fall a few drops of the chilly element between.

"And now, O my beloved!" said she, "we have consigned to the bosom of God our earthly joys and sorrows. The joys cannot return, let not the sorrows. These alone would trouble my repose among the blessed."

"Trouble thy repose! Fiammetta! Give me the chalice!" cried I—"not a drop will I leave in it, not a drop."

"Take it!" said that soft voice. "O now most dear Giovanni! I know thou hast strength enough; and there is but little—at the bottom lies our first kiss."

"Mine! didst thou say, beloved one? and is that left thee still?"

"Mine," said she, pensively; and as she abased her head, the broad leaf of the lily hid her brow and her eyes; the light of heaven shone through the flower.

"O Fiammetta! Fiammetta!" cried I in agony, "God is the God of mercy, God is the God of love—can I, can I ever?" I struck the chalice against my head, unmindful that I held it; the water covered my face and my feet. I started up, not yet awake, and I heard the name of Fiammetta in the curtains.

PETRARCA. Love, O Giovanni, and life itself, are but dreams at best. I do think

Never so gloriously was Sleep attended
As with the pageant of that heavenly maid.

But to dwell on such subjects is sinful. The recollection of them, with all their vanities, brings tears into my eyes.

BOCCACCIO. And into mine too,—they were so very charming. . . .

PETRARCA. I have had as many dreams as most men. We are all made up of them, as the webs of the spider are particles of her own vitality. But how infinitely less do we profit by them! I will relate to you, before we separate, one among the multitude of mine, as coming the nearest to the poetry of yours, and as having been not totally useless to me. Often have I reflected on it,—sometimes with pensiveness, with sadness never.

BOCCACCIO. Then, Francesco, if you had with you as copious a choice of dreams as clustered on the elm-trees where the Sibyl led Æneas,[5] this, in preference to the whole swarm of them, is the queen dream for me.

PETRARCA. When I was younger I was fond of wandering in solitary places, and never was afraid of slumbering in woods and grottoes. . . . Allegory, which you named with sonnets and canzonets, had few attractions for me, believing it to be the delight in general of idle, frivolous, inexcursive minds, in whose mansions there is neither hall nor portal to receive the loftier of the passions. A stranger to the affections, she holds a low station among the handmaidens of Poetry, being fit for little but an apparition in a mask. I had reflected for some time on this subject, when, wearied with the length of my walk over the mountains, and finding a soft old molehill covered with gray grass by the wayside, I laid my head upon it, and slept. I cannot tell how long it was before a species of dream or vision came over me.

Two beautiful youths appeared beside me. Each was winged; but the wings were hanging down, and seemed ill adapted to flight. One of them, whose voice was the softest I ever heard, looking

[5] Cf. Virgil's *Aeneid*, book VI.

at me frequently, said to the other, "He is under my guardianship for the present; do not awaken him with that feather."

Methought, hearing the whisper, I saw something like the feather on an arrow, and then the arrow itself,—the whole of it, even to the point, although he carried it in such a manner that it was difficult at first to discover more than a palm's length of it; the rest of the shaft, and the whole of the barb, was behind his ankles.

"This feather never awakens any one," replied he, rather petulantly; "but it brings more of confident security, and more of cherished dreams, than you without me are capable of imparting."

"Be it so!" answered the gentler; "none is less inclined to quarrel or dispute than I am. Many whom you have wounded grievously call upon me for succor. But so little am I disposed to thwart you, it is seldom I venture to do more for them than to whisper a few words of comfort in passing. How many reproaches on these occasions have been cast upon me for indifference and infidelity! Nearly as many, and nearly in the same terms, as upon you!"

"Odd enough that we, O Sleep! should be thought so alike!" said Love contemptuously. "Yonder is he who bears a nearer resemblance to you; the dullest have observed it."

I fancied I turned my eyes to where he was pointing, and saw at a distance the figure he designated. Meanwhile the contention went on uninterruptedly. Sleep was slow in asserting his power or his benefits; Love recapitulated them, but only that he might assert his own above them. Suddenly he called on me to decide, and to choose my patron. Under the influence first of the one, then of the other, I sprang from repose to rapture, I alighted from rapture on repose,—and knew not which was sweetest. Love was very angry with me, and declared he would cross me throughout the whole of my existence. Whatever I might on other occasions have thought of his veracity, I now felt too surely the conviction that he would keep his word. At last, before the close of the altercation, the third Genius had advanced and stood near us. I cannot tell how I knew him, but I knew him to be the Genius of Death. Breathless as I was at beholding him, I soon became familiar with his features. First they seemed only calm, presently they grew contemplative, and lastly beautiful; those of the Graces themselves are less regular, less harmonious, less composed. Love glanced at him unsteadily, with a countenance in which there was somewhat of anxiety, somewhat of disdain, and cried, "Go away! go away! nothing that thou touchest lives!"

"Say rather, child!" replied the advancing form, and advancing grew loftier and statelier, "say rather that nothing of beautiful or of glorious lives its own true life until my wing hath passed over it."

Love pouted, and rumpled and bent down with his forefinger the stiff short feathers on his arrowhead; but replied not. Although he frowned worse than ever, and at me, I dreaded him less and less and scarcely looked toward him. The milder and calmer Genius, the third, in proportion as I took courage to contemplate him, regarded me with more and more complacency. He held neither flower nor arrow as the others did; but throwing back the clusters of dark curls that overshadowed his countenance, he presented to me his hand, openly and benignly. I shrank on looking at him so near, and yet I sighed to love him. He smiled, not without an expression of pity, at perceiving my diffidence, my timidity: for I remembered how soft was the hand of Sleep, how warm and entrancing was Love's. By degrees I became ashamed of my ingratitude; and turning my face away, I held out my arms, and I felt my neck within his. Composure strewed and allayed all the throbbings of my bosom; the coolness of freshest morning breathed around, the heavens seemed to open above me; while the beautiful cheek of my deliverer rested on my head. I would now have looked for those others; but knowing my intention by my gesture, he said consolatorily,

"Sleep is on his way to the Earth, where many are calling him; but it is not to these he hastens; for every call only makes him fly farther off. Sedately and gravely as he looks, he is nearly as capricious and volatile as the more arrogant and ferocious one."

"And Love!" said I, "whither is he departed? If not too late, I would propitiate and appease him."

"He who cannot follow me, he who cannot overtake and pass me," said the Genius, "is unworthy of the name, the most glorious in earth or heaven. Look up! Love is yonder, and ready to receive thee."

I looked: the earth was under me: I saw only the clear blue sky, and something brighter above it. . . .

(1837)

Charles Lamb

(1775-1834)

Whatever diversity of opinion may exist concerning the merits of great English authors, there is probably none concerning the worth of Charles Lamb. To know him is to love him. English prose has had essayists as witty, essayists of greater depth or wider scope, but not one for whom readers have shown a warmer affection. He is perhaps the perfect familiar essayist. For the familiar essay has been called rather fittingly "the prose lyric"; and if self-revelation be a chief virtue in that form, Lamb has assuredly succeeded better than any other. Like Montaigne (cf. Vol. I, p. 353), to whom he is in this respect closest of Englishmen, it is himself that he portrays, no matter what his topic. The Charles Lamb revealed in the *Essays* is one of the most engaging of men, a man of sunlit soul. Yet few human beings have had to lead a life more tragic, and fewer have lived with heroism more unostentatious.

He was born in London on February 10, 1775, the son of John Lamb, clerk to a barrister of the Inner Temple, where the Lambs had lodgings. Through the influence of his father's employer, to whose library Charles had access, the boy was sent to study at Christ's Hospital. There he met Coleridge, who remained his lifelong friend. But Lamb's rich knowledge of books was largely self-acquired, for at the age of fifteen his formal education was terminated because of the family's lack of funds. He secured employment as a clerk at South Sea House, where his brother also worked, and after a few months he took a better position at East India House. In the offices of the latter he served for thirty-three years (1792-1825). At the age of fifty he was retired on a comfortable pension which enabled him to spend his last nine years in the leisure he had earned.

Thus Lamb's cultivation of the rare things in literature and nearly all the immortal creations of his pen were the productions of only those few hours when he was free from the account books of East India House. That he should have accomplished so much in this fashion is remarkable enough. But that he should have accomplished it against a background of overwhelming odds is almost astonishing. In his family there was an hereditary tendency toward insanity. At the age of twenty he wrote to Coleridge: "The six weeks that finished last year and began this, your very humble servant spent very agreeably in a mad-house, at Hoxton. I am got somewhat rational now, and don't bite anyone. But mad I was. . . . Coleridge! it may convince you of my regard for you when I tell you my head ran on you in my madness, as much almost as on another person, who I am inclined to think was the more immediate cause of my temporary insanity." (This other person is probably that Alice W——n referred to in *Dream Children*—cf. *below*.) Although always facing the possibility, Lamb never had a recurrence of this malady. But not long after his brief lapse, he came home one day to find that his sister Mary in a fit of insanity had killed their mother and wounded their father. "My poor dear, dearest sister, in a fit of insanity," he told Coleridge, "has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only time enough to catch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a mad-house from whence I fear she must be moved to an hospital." By assuming full responsibility for her, Lamb was able to prevent his sister's being confined to an asylum for life. This was a sacrifice that made marriage impossible for him, although he did once make an unaccepted proposal of matrimony to an actress. On many occasions Mary Lamb's insanity returned, but the loving care of her brother lengthened her intervals of intellectual balance. The two learned to recognize the symptoms of the disease, and at such times as they appeared Lamb would take her to the asylum for treatment. The inquisitiveness of neighbors and their own sensitiveness made them constantly change their residence. Such a life might have been calcu-

lated to crush a man's genius rather than urge him to do creative work. But his studies and his writings were a source of strength to him. It would be inaccurate to call them an escape. For he spun out his personality in a series of superb essays in which there is never a hint of complaint or grievance against his destiny.

It would be inaccurate, too, to think of his existence as deprived of joy or compensation. Mary, in her lucid periods, was a wonderful companion to her brother, shared his interests, and collaborated on some of his work. He won the respect and friendship, moreover, of the greatest men of his time: Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, Godwin, and De Quincey, among others. On Wednesday nights his friends would gather at the Lamb home to share their dinner and "the vast jug of porter often replenished from the foaming pots which the best tap of Fleet Street supplies." Even before he had attained literary recognition his circle of friends was made, for they recognized in him a man of rare taste in books.

By temperament Lamb was an antiquary. And his love of old things and the past usually fastened upon the less familiar. He preferred the bypaths rather than the highroads of literature, the quaint and curious to the typical. Thus, he read Sterne and Smollett rather than Richardson and Fielding among the novelists. His favorite books were Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and Browne's *Religio Medici* (cf. Vol. I, p. 404), and from them he learned something of the whimsical music of his own prose. The Elizabethan dramatists who had been Shakespeare's fellows, neglected by the Augustans, were rediscovered by him, and to him we are vastly indebted for our appreciation of Marlowe, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, and the rest. In 1808 he published his volume of *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets Contemporary with Shakespeare*, a selection of great scenes from Elizabethan drama with enthusiastic commentaries, which fostered a new interest in these forgotten masters.

It took him a number of years to plumb his aptitude for the essay. He began as a poet with four sonnets in an early volume of Coleridge's poetry (1796). In 1798 he published a prose romance, *Rosamund Gray*, and in 1802 a tragedy, *John Woodvil*, which was never produced. His farce, *Mr. H.*, was hissed off the stage on its first performance in 1806, and there is a characteristic story that no one in the audience hissed louder than the author. In 1807 he published the perennial *Tales from Shakespeare*, written for children, in collaboration with his sister. He was forty-five when, in 1820, he found his true medium in the first of a series of essays signed "Elia," published in the *London Magazine*. In 1823 he made a collection of twenty-five of them and issued them as *The Essays of Elia*. *The Last Essays of Elia* appeared ten years later. These two volumes, together with the volumes of his wonderful letters, form the most irresistible body of self-revelatory prose in English.

Lamb was the only romanticist of his generation who preferred the city to the country. For him the sights and sounds of London were an enchantment far more compelling than those of the countryside which enraptured his friend Coleridge. He was one of the first men to sense the romance and poetry of the town. "London," he wrote in a letter, "whose dirtiest drab-frequented alley, and her lowest bowing tradesman I would not exchange for Skiddaw, Helvellyn, James, Walter and the parson into the bargain! [a dig at Wordsworth's *The Brothers*] . . . O! her lamps at night! her rich goldsmiths, print-shops, toy-shops, mercers, hardwaremen, pastry-cooks! St. Paul's Churchyard, the Strand! Exeter Change! Charing Cross, with the man *upon* a black horse! Those are thy gods, O London!" And the glamour of London irradiates the *Essays*.

Indeed, the whole tissue of Lamb's life is woven into his prose: his childhood, his days at Christ's Hospital, his hours at India House, his daily experiences with Mary (immortalized in the *Essays* as Bridget), his daydreams and idle hopes, his beloved books, and his friends. There too may be found his love of fun and jokes, his cultivated prejudices, his enthusiasms, and his dislikes. And all these are communicated to us by a distinctive style, deliberately compounded of the reflective, the quaint, and the jocular, which gives us the man.

The Works of Charles and Mary Lamb were edited in seven volumes by E. V. Lucas (new edition, 1912). A companion edition is *The Life, Letters, and Writings of Charles Lamb* in six volumes, edited by P. Fitzgerald (1924). A convenient edition of *The Works in Prose and Verse of Charles and Mary Lamb* is the two-volume collection of T. Hutchinson (1908). Further letters were issued by W. C. Hazlitt (1900). An excellent biography is E. V. Lucas's (1921). A. Ainger's shorter biography (1882) is also recommended. A fine portrayal of Lamb will be found in William Hazlitt's essay, *Of Persons One Would Wish to Have Seen,* and an admirable study of him is among Walter Pater's *Appreciations* (1889).

Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago

In Mr. Lamb's *Works,* published a year or two since, I find a magnificent eulogy on my old school,[1] such as it was, or now appears to him to have been, between the years 1782 and 1789. It happens, very oddly, that my own standing at Christ's was nearly corresponding with his; and, with all gratitude to him for his enthusiasm for the cloisters, I think he has contrived to bring together whatever can be said in praise of them, dropping all the other side of the argument most ingeniously.

I remember L. at school; and can well recollect that he had some peculiar advantages, which I and others of his schoolfellows had not. His friends lived in town, and were near at hand; and he had the privilege of going to see them, almost as often as he wished, through some invidious distinction, which was denied to us. The present worthy subtreasurer to the Inner Temple[2] can explain how that happened. He had his tea and hot rolls in a morning, while we were battening upon our quarter of a penny loaf—our *crug*—moistened with attenuated small beer, in wooden piggins,[3] smacking of the pitched leathern jack it was poured from. Our Monday's milk porritch, blue and tasteless, and the pease soup of Saturday, coarse and choking, were enriched for him with a slice of "extraordinary bread and butter," from the hot-loaf of the Temple. The Wednesday's mess of millet, somewhat less repugnant—(we had three banyan[4] to four meat days in the week)—was endeared to his palate with a lump of double-refined, and a smack of ginger (to make it go down the more glibly) or the fragrant cinnamon. In lieu of our *half-pickled* Sundays, or *quite fresh* boiled beef on Thursdays (strong as *caro equina*[5]), with detestable marigolds floating in the pail to poison the broth—our scanty mutton crags on Fridays—and rather more savory, but grudging, portions of the same flesh, rotten-roasted or rare, on the Tuesdays (the only dish which excited our appetites, and disappointed our stomachs, in almost equal proportion)—he had his hot plate of roast veal, or the more tempting griskin[6] (exotics unknown to our palates), cooked in the paternal kitchen (a great thing), and brought him daily by his maid or aunt! I remember the good old relative (in whom love forbade pride) squatting down upon some odd stone in a by-nook of the cloisters, disclosing the viands (of higher regale than those cates which the ravens ministered to the Tishbite[7]); and the contending passions of L. at the unfolding. There was love for the bringer; shame for the thing brought, and the manner of its bringing; sympathy for those who were too many to share in it; and, at top of all, hunger (eldest, strongest of the passions!) predominant, breaking down the stony fences of shame, and awkwardness, and a troubling overconsciousness.

I was a poor friendless boy. My parents, and those who should care for me, were far away. Those few acquaintances of theirs, which they could reckon upon being kind to me in the great city, after a little forced notice, which they had the grace to take of me on my first arrival in town, soon grew tired of my holiday visits. They seemed to them to recur too often, though I thought them few enough; and, one after another, they all failed me, and I felt myself alone among six hundred playmates.

[1] Lamb is writing under the pseudonym of "Elia" and is pretending to talk about Lamb as another person who was at his school, Christ's Hospital, at the same time.

[2] one of the law courts where students receive their legal training.

[3] small pails.

[4] the days on which sailors received no allowance of meat.

[5] horse flesh.

[6] pork loin.

[7] Elisha, the Hebrew prophet of the ninth century B.C., who was fed by ravens.

O the cruelty of separating a poor lad from his early homestead! The yearnings which I used to have towards it in those unfledged years! How, in my dreams, would my native town (far in the west) come back, with its church, and trees, and faces! How I would wake weeping, and in the anguish of my heart exclaim upon sweet Calne in Wiltshire!

To this late hour of my life, I trace impressions left by the recollection of those friendless holidays. The long warm days of summer never return but they bring with them a gloom from the haunting memory of those *whole-day-leaves*, when, by some strange arrangement, we were turned out, for the live-long day, upon our own hands, whether we had friends to go to, or none. I remember those bathing excursions to the New River, which L. recalls with such relish, better, I think, than he can—for he was a home-seeking lad, and did not much care for such water-pastimes.—How merrily we would sally forth into the fields; and strip under the first warmth of the sun; and wanton like young dace in the streams; getting us appetites for noon, which those of us that were penniless (our scanty morning crust long since exhausted) had not the means of allaying—while the cattle, and the birds, and the fishes, were at feed about us, and we had nothing to satisfy our cravings—the very beauty of the day, and the exercise of the pastime, and the sense of liberty, setting a keener edge upon them!—How faint and languid, finally we would return, towards nightfall, to our desired morsel, half-rejoicing, half-reluctant, that the hours of our uneasy liberty had expired!

It was worse in the days of winter, to go prowling about the streets objectless—shivering at cold windows of print-shops, to extract a little amusement; or haply, as a last resort, in the hope of a little novelty, to pay a fifty-times repeated visit (where our individual faces should be as well known to the warden as those of his own charges) to the Lions in the Tower[8]—to whose levée, by courtesy immemorial, we had a prescriptive title to admission.

L.'s governor[9] (so we called the patron who presented us to the foundation) lived in a manner under his paternal roof. Any complaint which he had to make was sure to being attended to. This was understood at Christ's, and was an effectual screen to him against the severity of masters, or worse tyranny of the monitors. The oppressions of these young brutes are heart-sickening to call to recollection. I have been called out of my bed, and *waked for the purpose*, in the coldest winter nights—and this not once, but night after night—in my shirt, to receive the discipline of a leathern thong, with eleven other sufferers, because it pleased my callow overseer, when there has been any talking heard after we were gone to bed, to make the six last beds in the dormitory, where the youngest children of us slept, answerable for an offence they neither dared to commit, nor had the power to hinder.—The same execrable tyranny drove the younger part of us from the fires, when our feet were perishing with snow; and under the cruellest penalties, forbade the indulgence of a drink of water, when we lay in sleepless summer nights, fevered with the season, and the day's sports.

There was one H——,[10] who, I learned, in after days, was seen expiating some maturer offence in the hulks.[11] (Do I flatter myself in fancying that this might be the planter of that name, who suffered —— at Nevis, I think, or St. Kitts,[12] —— some few years since? My friend Tobin was the benevolent instrument of bringing him to the gallows.) This petty Nero actually branded a boy, who had offended him, with a red-hot iron; and nearly starved forty of us, with exacting contributions, to the one half of our bread, to pamper a young ass, which, incredible as it may seem, with the connivance of the nurse's daughter (a young flame of his) he had contrived to smuggle in, and keep upon the leads of the *ward*, as they called our dormitories. This game went on for better than a week, till the foolish beast, not able to fare well but he must cry roast meat—happier than Caligula's minion,[13] could he have kept his own counsel—but, foolisher, alas! than any of his species in the fables—waxing fat, and kicking, in the fulness of bread, one unlucky minute would needs proclaim his good fortune to the world below; and, laying out his simple throat, blew such a ram's horn blast, as (toppling down the walls of his own Jericho[14]) set concealment any longer at defiance.

[8] Lions were kept in the Tower of London.

[9] Samuel Salt, the employer in whose home Lamb's family lived.

[10] Hodges (name supplied by Lamb).

[11] prison ship.

[12] islands in the West Indies.

[13] the Roman Emperor Caligula (37-41 A.D.) became insane and appointed a horse as his chief consul.

[14] According to the Biblical account, Joshua, leader of the Israelites, caused the walls of Jericho to fall by blowing on a trumpet; cf. *Joshua*, 6:20.

The client was dismissed, with certain attentions, to Smithfield; but I never understood that the patron underwent any censure on the occasion. This was in the stewardship of L.'s admired Perry.

Under the same *facile* administration, can L. have forgotten the cool impunity with which the nurses used to carry away openly, in open platters, for their own tables, one out of two of every hot joint, which the careful matron had been seeing scrupulously weighed out for our dinners? These things were daily practised in that magnificent apartment, which L. (grown connoisseur since, we presume) praises so highly for the grand paintings "by Verrio, and others," with which it is "hung round and adorned." But the sight of sleek, well-fed blue-coat boys in pictures was, at that time, I believe, little consolatory to him, or us, the living ones, who saw the better part of our provisions carried away before our faces by harpies; and ourselves reduced (with the Trojan[15] in the hall of Dido)

"To feed our mind with idle portraiture."

L. has recorded the repugnance of the school to *gags*, or the fat of fresh beef boiled; and sets it down to some superstition. But these unctuous morsels are never grateful to young palates (children are universally fat-haters) and in strong, coarse, boiled meats, *unsalted*, are detestable. A *gag-eater* in our time was equivalent to a *ghoul*, and held in equal detestation. —— suffered under the imputation.

"——'Twas said,
He ate strange flesh."

He was observed, after dinner, carefully to gather up the remnants left at his table (not many, nor very choice fragments, you may credit me)—and, in an especial manner, these disreputable morsels, which he would convey away, and secretly stow in the settle that stood at his bed-side. None saw when he ate them. It was rumored that he privately devoured them in the night. He was watched, but no traces of such midnight practices were discoverable. Some reported, that, on leave-days, he had been seen to carry out of the bounds a large blue check handkerchief, full of something. This then must be the accursed thing. Conjecture next was at work to imagine how he could dispose of it. Some said he sold it to the beggars. This belief generally prevailed. He went about moping. None spake to him. No one would play with him. He was excommunicated; put out of the pale of the school. He was too powerful a boy to be beaten, but he underwent every mode of that negative punishment, which is more grievous than many stripes. Still he persevered. At length he was observed by two of his school-fellows, who were determined to get at the secret, and had traced him one leave-day for that purpose, to enter a large worn-out building, such as there exist specimens of in Chancery Lane, which are let out to various scales of pauperism with open door, and a common staircase. After him they silently slunk in, and followed by stealth up four flights, and saw him tap at a poor wicket, which was opened by an aged woman, meanly clad. Suspicion was now ripened into certainty. The informers had secured their victim. They had him in their toils. Accusation was formally preferred, and retribution most signal was looked for. Mr. Hathaway, the then steward (for this happened a little after my time), with that patient sagacity which tempered all his conduct, determined to investigate the matter, before he proceeded to sentence. The result was, that the supposed mendicants, the receivers or purchasers of the mysterious scraps, turned out to be the parents of ——, an honest couple come to decay,—whom this seasonable supply had, in all probability, saved from mendicancy; and that this young stork, at the expense of his own good name, had all this while been only feeding the old birds!—The governors on this occasion, much to their honor, voted a present relief to the family of ——, and presented him with a silver medal. The lesson which the steward read upon RASH JUDGEMENT, on the occasion of publicly delivering the medal to ——, I believe, would not be lost upon his auditory.—I had left school then, but I well remember ——. He was a tall, shambling youth, with a cast in his eye, not at all calculated to conciliate hostile prejudices. I have since seen him carrying a baker's basket. I think I heard he did not do quite so well by himself, as he had done by the old folks.

I was a hypochondriac lad; and the sight of a boy in fetters, upon the day of my first putting on the blue clothes, was not exactly fitted to assuage the natural terrors of initiation. I was of tender years, barely turned of seven; and had only read of such things in books, or seen them but in dreams. I was told he had *run away*. This was the punishment for the first offence.—As a novice I was soon after taken to see the dungeons. These were little

[15] Aeneas; cf. Virgil's *Aeneid*, books I-IV.

square, Bedlam cells,[16] where a boy could just lie at his length upon straw and a blanket—a mattress, I think, was afterwards substituted—with a peep of light, let in askance, from a prison-orifice at top, barely enough to read by. Here the poor boy was locked in by himself all day, without sight of any but the porter who brought him his bread and water—who *might not speak to him*;—or of the beadle, who came twice a week to call him out to receive his periodical chastisement, which was almost welcome, because it separated him for a brief interval from solitude:—and here he was shut up by himself *of nights*, out of the reach of any sound, to suffer whatever horrors the weak nerves, and superstition incident to his time of life, might subject him to. This was the penalty for the second offence.—Wouldst thou like, reader, to see what became of him in the next degree?

The culprit, who had been a third time an offender, and whose expulsion was at this time deemed irreversible, was brought forth, as at some solemn *auto da fe*,[17] arrayed in uncouth and most appalling attire—all trace of his late "watchet weeds"[18] carefully effaced, he was exposed in a jacket, resembling those which London lamplighters formerly delighted in, with a cap of the same. The effect of this divestiture was such as the ingenious devisers of it could have anticipated. With his pale and frighted features, it was as if some of those disfigurements in Dante had seized upon him. In this disguisement he was brought into the hall (*L.'s favorite state-room*), where awaited him the whole number of his schoolfellows, whose joint lessons and sports he was thenceforth to share no more; the awful presence of the steward, to be seen for the last time; of the executioner beadle, clad in his state robe for the occasion; and of two faces more, of direr import, because never but in these extremities visible. These were governors; two of whom, by choice, or charter, were always accustomed to officiate at these *Ultima Supplicia*[19]; not to mitigate (so at least we understood it), but to enforce the uttermost stripe. Old Bamber Gascoigne, and Peter Aubert, I remember, were colleagues on one occasion, when the beadle turning rather pale, a glass of brandy was ordered to prepare him for the mysteries. The scourging was, after the old Roman fashion, long and stately. The lictor accompanied the criminal quite round the hall. We were generally too faint with attending to the previous disgusting circumstances, to make accurate report with our eyes of the degree of corporal suffering inflicted. Report, of course, gave out the back knotty and livid. After scourging, he was made over, in his *San Benito*,[20] to his friends, if he had any (but commonly such poor runagates were friendless), or to his parish officer, who, to enhance the effect of the scene, had his station allotted to him on the outside of the hall gate.

These solemn pageantries were not played off so often as to spoil the general mirth of the community. We had plenty of exercise and recreation *after* school hours; and, for myself, I must confess, that I was never happier, than *in* them. The Upper and Lower Grammar Schools were held in the same room; and an imaginary line only divided their bounds. Their character was as different as that of the inhabitants on the two sides of the Pyrenees. The Rev. James Boyer was the Upper Master: but the Rev. Matthew Field presided over that portion of the apartment, of which I had the good fortune to be a member. We lived a life as careless as birds. We talked and did just what we pleased, and nobody molested us. We carried an accidence, or a grammar, for form; but, for any trouble it gave us, we might take two years in getting through the verbs deponent, and another two in forgetting all that we had learned about them. There was now and then the formality of saying a lesson, but if you had not learned it, a brush across the shoulders (just enough to disturb a fly) was the sole remonstrance. Field never used the rod; and in truth he wielded the cane with no great good will—holding it "like a dancer." It looked in his hands rather like an emblem than an instrument of authority; and an emblem, too, he was ashamed of. He was a good easy man, that did not care to ruffle his own peace, nor perhaps set any great consideration upon the value of juvenile time. He came among us, now and then, but often stayed away whole days from us; and when he came, it made no difference to us—he had his private room to retire to, the short time he stayed, to be out of the sound of our noise. Our mirth and uproar went on. We had classics of our own, without being beholden to "insolent Greece or haughty Rome," that passed current among us—Peter Wilkins—the Adventures of the Hon. Capt. Robert Boyle—the For-

[16] the asylum for the insane in London, a corruption of the name "Bethlehem."

[17] the burning of heretics at the stake.

[18] blue uniforms.

[19] extreme punishments.

[20] garments like those woven by the monks of St. Benedict and worn by victims of an *auto da fe*.

tunate Blue-Coat Boy—and the like. Or we cultivated a turn for mechanic or scientific operation; making little sundials of paper; or weaving those ingenious parentheses, called *cat-cardles*; or making dry peas to dance upon the end of a tin pipe; or studying the art military over that laudable game "French and English," and a hundred other such devices to pass away the time—mixing the useful with the agreeable—as would have made the souls of Rousseau[21] and John Locke[22] chuckle to have seen us.

Matthew Field belonged to that class of modest divines who affect to mix in equal proportion the *gentleman*, the *scholar*, and the *Christian*; but, I know not how, the first ingredient is generally found to be the predominating dose in the composition. He was engaged in gay parties, or with his courtly bow at some episcopal levée, when he should have been attending upon us. He had for many years the classical charge of a hundred children, during the four or five first years of their education; and his very highest form seldom proceeded further than two or three of the introductory fables of Phædrus.[23] How things were suffered to go on thus, I cannot guess. Boyer, who was the proper person to have remedied these abuses, always affected, perhaps felt, a delicacy in interfering in a province not strictly his own. I have not been without my suspicions, that he was not altogether displeased at the contrast we presented to his end of the school. We were a sort of Helots[24] to his young Spartans. He would sometimes, with ironic deference, send to borrow a rod of the Under Master, and then, with Sardonic grin, observe to one of his upper boys, "how neat and fresh the twigs looked." While his pale students were battering their brains over Xenophon and Plato, with a silence as deep as that enjoined by the Samite,[25] we were enjoying ourselves at our ease in our little Goshen. We saw a little into the secrets of his discipline, and the prospect did but the more reconcile us to our lot. His thunders rolled innocuous for us; his storms came near, but never touched us; contrary to Gideon's miracle,[26] while all around were drenched, our fleece was dry. His boys turned out the better scholars; we, I suspect, have the advantage in temper. His pupils cannot speak of him without something of terror allaying their gratitude; the remembrance of Field comes back with all the soothing images of indolence, and summer slumbers, and work like play, and innocent idleness, and Elysian exemptions, and life itself a "playing holiday."

Though sufficiently removed from the jurisdiction of Boyer, we were near enough (as I have said) to understand a little of his system. We occasionally heard sounds of the *Ululantes*,[27] and caught glances of Tartarus.[28] B. was a rabid pedant. His English style was cramped to barbarism. His Easter anthems (for his duty obliged him to those periodical flights) were grating as scrannel pipes.[29] —He would laugh, ay, and heartily, but then it must be at Flaccus's quibble about *Rex*[30]——or at the *tristis severitas in vultu*,[31] or *inspicere in patinas*,[32] of Terence—thin jests, which at their first broaching could hardly have had *vis*[33] enough to move a Roman muscle. —He had two wigs, both pedantic, but of different omen. The one serene, smiling, fresh powdered, betokening a mild day. The other, an old discolored, unkempt, angry caxon, denoting frequent and bloody execution. Woe to the school, when he made his morning appearance in his *passy*, or *passionate wig*. No comet expounded surer.—J. B. had a heavy hand. I have known him double his knotty fist at a poor trembling child (the maternal milk hardly dry upon its lips) with a "Sirrah, do you presume to set your wits at me?"—Nothing was more common than to see him make a head-long entry into the schoolroom, from his inner recess, or library, and, with turbulent eye, singling out a lad, roar out, "Od's my life, Sirrah" (his favorite adjuration), "I have a great mind to whip you,"—then, with as sudden a retracting impulse, fling back into his lair—and, after a cooling lapse of some minutes (during which all but the culprit had totally forgotten the context) drive headlong out again, piecing out his imperfect sense, as if it had been

[21] Cf. Vol. II, p. 42.

[22] also an exponent of a natural system of education.

[23] Roman writer of fables (first century A.D.).

[24] the servile class in Sparta.

[25] Pythagoras, the Greek philosopher of the sixth century B.C., enjoined upon his pupils silence about their own conclusions until they had listened to his lectures for five years.

[26] Cf. *Judges*, 6:36-38.

[27] the howling of the damned souls in Dante's *Inferno*.

[28] hell.

[29] harsh sounding pipes; cf. *Lycidas*, line 124, Vol. I, p. 430.

[30] Horace, *Satires*, I, 7, 35.

[31] sad severity of countenance. Terence, *Andria*, V, ii, 16.

[32] to look into the platter. Terrence, *Adelphi*, III, iii, 74.

[33] power.

some Devil's Litany, with the expletory yell—"*and I* WILL *too.*"—In his gentler moods, when the *rabidus furor*[34] was assuaged, he had resort to an ingenious method, peculiar, for what I have heard, to himself, of whipping the boy, and reading the Debates, at the same time; a paragraph, and a lash between; which in those times, when parliamentary oratory was most at a height and flourishing in these realms, was not calculated to impress the patient with a veneration for the diffuser graces of rhetoric.

Once, and but once, the uplifted rod was known to fall ineffectual from his hand—when droll squinting W—— having been caught putting the inside of the master's desk to a use for which the architect had clearly not designed it, to justify himself, with great simplicity averred, that *he did not know that the thing had been forewarned.* This exquisite irrecognition of any law antecedent to the *oral* or *declaratory* struck so irresistibly upon the fancy of all who heard it (the pedagogue himself not excepted) that remission was unavoidable.

L. has given credit to B.'s great merits as an instructor. Coleridge, in his literary life, has pronounced a more intelligible and ample encomium on them. The author of the Country Spectator doubts not to compare him with the ablest teachers of antiquity. Perhaps we cannot dismiss him better than with the pious ejaculation of C.—when he heard that his old master was on his death-bed—"Poor J. B.!—may all his faults be forgiven; and may he be wafted to bliss by little cherub boys, all head and wings, with no *bottoms* to reproach his sublunary infirmities."

Under him were many good and sound scholars bred.—First Grecian[35] of my time was Lancelot Pepys Stevens, kindest of boys and men, since Co-grammar-master (and inseparable companion) with Dr. T——e.[36] What an edifying spectacle did this brace of friends present to those who remembered the anti-socialities of their predecessors!—You never met the one by chance in the street without a wonder, which was quickly dissipated by the almost immediate sub-appearance of the other. Generally arm in arm, these kindly coadjutors lightened for each other the toilsome duties of their profession, and when, in advanced age, one found it convenient to retire, the other was not long in discovering that it suited him to lay down the fasces also. Oh, it is pleasant, as it is rare, to find the same arm linked in yours at forty, which at thirteen helped it to turn over the *Cicero De Amicitia*,[37] or some tale of Antique Friendship, which the young heart even then was burning to anticipate—Co-Grecian with S. was Th——,[38] who has since executed with ability various diplomatic functions at the Northern courts. Th—— was a tall, dark, saturnine youth, sparing of speech, with raven locks.—Thomas Fanshaw Middleton followed him (now Bishop of Calcutta) a scholar and a gentleman in his teens. He has the reputation of an excellent critic; and is author (besides the Country Spectator) of a Treatise on the Greek Article, against Sharpe.—M. is said to bear his mitre high in India, where the *regni novitas*[39] (I dare say) sufficiently justifies the bearing. A humility quite as primitive as that of Jewel[40] or Hooker[41] might not be exactly fitted to impress the minds of those Anglo-Asiatic diocesans[44] with a reverence for home institutions, and the church which those fathers watered. The manners of M. at school, though firm, were mild, and unassuming. —Next to M. (if not senior to him) was Richards, author of the Aboriginal Britons, the most spirited of the Oxford Prize Poems: a pale, studious Grecian.—Then followed poor S——,[45] ill-fated M——![46] of these the Muse is silent,

> Finding some of Edward's race
> Unhappy, pass their annals by.

Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the day-spring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee—the dark pillar not yet turned—Samuel Taylor Coleridge[47]—Logician, Metaphysician, Bard!—How have I seen the casual passer through the Cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the *speech* and the *garb* of the young Mirandula[48]), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jambli-

[34] raging madness.
[35] a scholar recommended to Cambridge University.
[36] Trollope, successor of Boyer as head master.
[37] Cicero's treatise *On Friendship.*
[38] Thornton.
[39] newness of the rule.
[40] John Jewel (1522-1571), Bishop of Salisbury.
[41] Richard Hooker (1553-1600), author of *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity.*
[44] members of the Anglican church in India.
[45] Scott died in Bedlam. (Lamb.)
[46] Maunde, dismissed from school. (Lamb.)
[47] Cf. Vol. II, p. 159.
[48] Giovanni Pico delle Mirandola (1463-1494), Italian scholar.

chus,[49] or Plotinus[50] (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar[51]—while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity-boy*! Many were the "wit-combats" (to dally awhile with the words of old Fuller[52]) between him and C. V. Le G——.[53] "which two I behold like a Spanish great gallion, and an English man-of-war; Master Coleridge, like the former, was built far higher in learning, solid, but slow in his performances. C. V. L., with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention."

Nor shalt thou, their compeer, be quickly forgotten, Allen, with the cordial smile, and still more cordial laugh, with which thou wert wont to make the old Cloisters shake, in thy cognition of some poignant jest of theirs; or the anticipation of some more material, and peradventure, practical one, of thine own. Extinct are those smiles, with that beautiful countenance, with which (for thou wert the *Nireus formosus*[54] of the school), in the days of thy maturer waggery, thou didst disarm the wrath of infuriated town-damsel, who, incensed by provoking pinch, turning tigress-like round, suddenly converted by thy angel-look, exchanged the half-formed terrible "bl——," for a gentler greeting—*"bless thy handsome face!"*

Next follow two, who ought to be now alive, and the friends of Elia—the junior Le G—— and F——[55]; who impelled, the former by a roving temper, the latter by too quick a sense of neglect—ill capable of enduring the slights poor Sizars[56] are sometimes subject to in our seats of learning—exchanged their Alma Mater for the camp; perishing, one by climate, and one on the plains of Salamanca[57]:—Le G—— sanguine, volatile, sweet-natured; F—— dogged, faithful, anticipative of insult, warm-hearted, with something of the old Roman height about him.

Fine, frank-hearted Fr——[58] the present master of Hertford, with Marmaduke T——,[59] mildest of Missionaries—and both my good friends still—close the catalogue of Grecians in my time.

(1820)

Dream Children: A Reverie

Alice W——n of this essay has been identified as a girl, Anna Simmons, whom Lamb had come to know well when visiting his grandmother in Hertfordshire. The man she eventually married was named Bartram.

Children love to listen to stories about their elders, when *they* were children; to stretch their imagination to the conception of a traditionary great-uncle or grandame, whom they never saw. It was in this spirit that my little ones crept about me the other evening to hear about their great-grandmother Field, who lived in a great house in Norfolk (a hundred times bigger than that in which they and papa lived) which had been the scene—so at least it was generally believed in that part of the country—of the tragic incidents which they had lately become familiar with from the ballad of the Children in the Wood. Certain it is that the whole story of the children and their cruel uncle was to be seen fairly carved out in wood upon the chimneypiece of the great hall, the whole story down to the Robin Redbreasts, till a foolish rich person pulled it down to set up a marble one of modern invention in its stead, with no story upon it. Here Alice put out one of her dear mother's looks, too tender to be called upbraiding. Then I went on to say how religious and how good their great-grandmother Field was, how beloved and respected by everybody, though she was not indeed

[49] neoplatonic philosopher of the fourth century.
[50] neoplatonic philosopher of the third century.
[51] Cf. Vol. II, p. 14.
[52] Th mas Fuller (1608-1661), English preacher and author. The passage given below is a paraphrase of his discussion of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson.
[53] Charles Valentine Le Grice (1773-1858), a clergyman who wrote reminiscences of Coleridge and Lamb.
[54] Handsome Nireus, the most beautiful Greek in the Trojan War.
[55] Favell.
[56] students who receive an allowance toward their college expenses.
[57] a battle in Spain fought July 22, 1812.
[58] Frederick William Franklin.
[59] Marmaduke Thompson.

the mistress of this great house, but had only the charge of it (and yet in some respects she might be said to be the mistress of it, too) committed to her by the owner, who preferred living in a newer and more fashionable mansion which he had purchased somewhere in the adjoining county; but still she lived in it in a manner as if it had been her own, and kept up the dignity of the great house in a sort while she lived, which afterwards came to decay, and was nearly pulled down, and all its old ornaments stripped and carried away to the owner's other house, where they were set up, and looked as awkward as if someone were to carry away the old tombs they had seen lately at the Abbey, and stick them up in Lady C.'s tawdry gilt drawing-room. Here John smiled, as much as to say, "That would be foolish indeed." And then I told how, when she came to die, her funeral was attended by a concourse of all the poor, and some of the gentry, too, of the neighborhood for many miles round, to show their respect for her memory, because she had been such a good and religious woman; so good indeed that she knew all the Psaltery by heart, aye, and a great part of the Testament besides. Here little Alice spread her hands. Then I told what a tall, upright, graceful person their great-grandmother Field once was; and how in her youth she was esteemed the best dancer—here Alice's little right foot played an involuntary movement, till upon my looking grave, it desisted—the best dancer, I was saying, in the county, till a cruel disease, called a cancer, came, and bowed her down with pain; but it could never bend her good spirits, or make them stoop, but they were still upright, because she was so good and religious. Then I told how she was used to sleep by herself in a lone chamber of the great lone house; and how she believed that an apparition of two infants was to be seen at midnight gliding up and down the great staircase near where she slept, but she said "those innocents would do her no harm"; and how frightened I used to be, though in those days I had my maid to sleep with me, because I was never half so good or religious as she—and yet I never saw the infants. Here John expanded all his eyebrows and tried to look courageous. Then I told how good she was to all her grand-children, having us to the great house in the holidays, where I in particular used to spend many hours by myself, in gazing upon the old busts of the Twelve Cæsars, that had been Emperors of Rome, till the old marble heads would seem to live again, or I to be turned into marble with them; how I never could be tired with roaming about that huge mansion, with its vast empty rooms, with their worn-out hangings, fluttering tapestry, and carved oaken panels, with the gilding almost rubbed out—sometimes in the spacious old-fashioned gardens, which I had almost to myself, unless when now and then a solitary gardening man would cross me—and how the nectarines and peaches hung upon the walls, without my ever offering to pluck them because they were forbidden fruit, unless now and then—and because I had more pleasure in strolling about among the old melancholy-looking yew trees, or the firs, and picking up the red berries, and the fir apples, which were good for nothing but to look at—or in lying about upon the fresh grass, with all the fine garden smells around me—or basking in the orangery, till I could almost fancy myself ripening, too, along with the oranges and the limes in that grateful warmth—or in watching the dace that darted to and fro in the fishpond, at the bottom of the garden, with here and there a great sulky pike hanging midway down the water in silent state, as if it mocked at their impertinent friskings—I had more pleasure in these busy-idle diversions than in all the sweet flavors of peaches, nectarines, oranges, and such like common baits of children. Here John slyly deposited back upon the plate a bunch of grapes, which, not unobserved by Alice, he had meditated dividing with her, and both seemed willing to relinquish them for the present as irrelevant. Then in somewhat a more heightened tone I told how, though their great-grandmother Field loved all her grand-children, yet in an especial manner she might be said to love their uncle, John L——, because he was so handsome and spirited a youth, and a king to the rest of us; and, instead of moping about in solitary corners, like some of us, he would mount the most mettlesome horse he could get when but an imp no bigger than themselves, and make it carry him half over the county in a morning, and join the hunters when there were any out—and yet he loved the old great house and gardens, too, but had too much spirit to be always pent up within their boundaries—and how their uncle grew up to a man's estate as brave as he was handsome, to the admiration of everybody, but of their great-grandmother Field most especially; and how he used to carry me upon his back when I was a lame-footed boy—for he was a good bit older than me—many a mile when I could not walk for pain—and how in after life he became lame-footed, too, and I did not al-

ways (I fear) make allowances enough for him when he was impatient, and in pain, nor remember sufficiently how considerate he had been to me when I was lame-footed; and how when he died, though he had not been dead an hour, it seemed as if he had died a great while ago, such a distance there is betwixt life and death; and how I bore his death as I thought pretty well at first, but afterwards it haunted and haunted me; and though I did not cry or take it to heart as some do, and as I think he would have done if I had died, yet I missed him all day long, and knew not till then how much I had loved him. I missed his kindness, and I missed his crossness, and wished him to be alive again, to be quarreling with him (for we quarreled sometimes), rather than not have him again, and was as uneasy without him as he their poor uncle must have been when the doctor took off his limb. Here the children fell a-crying, and asked if their little mourning which they had on was not for uncle John, and they looked up, and prayed me not to go on about their uncle, but to tell them some stories about their pretty dead mother. Then I told how for seven long years, in hope sometimes, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W—n; and, as much as children could understand, I explained to them what coyness, and difficulty, and denial meant in maidens—when suddenly, turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of re-presentment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: "We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice called Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe[1] millions of ages before we have existence, and a name"—and immediately awaking, I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor armchair, where I had fallen asleep, with the faithful Bridget unchanged by my side—but John L. (or James Elia) was gone forever.

(1822)

A Dissertation upon Roast Pig

Mankind, says a Chinese manuscript, which my friend M. was obliging enough to read and explain to me, for the first seventy thousand ages ate their meat raw, clawing or biting it from the living animal, just as they do in Abyssinia to this day. This period is not obscurely hinted at by their great Confucius in the second chapter of his Mundane Mutations,[1] where he designates a kind of golden age by the term Cho-fang, literally the Cook's Holiday. The manuscript goes on to say, that the art of roasting, or rather broiling (which I take to be the elder brother) was accidentally discovered in the manner following. The swineherd, Ho-ti, having gone out into the woods one morning, as his manner was, to collect mast for his hogs, left his cottage in the care of his eldest son Bo-bo, a great lubberly boy, who being fond of playing with fire, as youngsters of his age commonly are, let some sparks escape into a bundle of straw, which kindling quickly, spread the conflagration over every part of their poor mansion, till it was reduced to ashes. Together with the cottage (a sorry antediluvian make-shift of a building, you may think it), what was of much more importance, a fine litter of new-farrowed pigs, no less than nine in number, perished. China pigs have been esteemed a luxury all over the East from the remotest periods that we read of. Bo-bo was in utmost consternation, as you may think, not so much for the sake of the tenement, which his father and he could easily build up again with a few dry branches, and the labor of an hour or two, at any time, as for the loss of the pigs. While he was thinking what he should say to his father, and wringing his hands over the smoking remnants of one of those untimely sufferers, an odor assailed his nostrils, unlike any scent which he had before experienced. What could it proceed from?—not from the burnt cottage—he had smelt that smell before—indeed this was by no means the first accident of the kind which had occurred through the negligence of this unlucky young fire brand. Much less did it resemble that of any known herb, weed, or flower. A premonitory

[1] Lamb is, of course, only having fun by citing this fictitious authority.

[1] the river of forgetfulness in the lower world.

moistening at the same time overflowed his nether lip. He knew not what to think. He next stooped down to feel the pig, if there were any signs of life in it. He burnt his fingers, and to cool them he applied them in his booby fashion to his mouth. Some of the crumbs of the scorched skin had come away with his fingers, and for the first time in his life (in the world's life indeed, for before him no man had known it) he tasted—*crackling*! Again he felt and fumbled at the pig. It did not burn him so much now, still he licked his fingers from a sort of habit. The truth at length broke into his slow understanding, that it was the pig that smelt so, and the pig that tasted so delicious; and, surrendering himself up to the newborn pleasure, he fell to tearing up whole handfuls of the scorched skin with the flesh next it, and was cramming it down his throat in his beastly fashion, when his sire entered amid the smoking rafters, armed with retributory cudgel, and finding how affairs stood, began to rain blows upon the young rogue's shoulders, as thick as hailstones, which Bo-bo heeded not any more than if they had been flies. The tickling pleasure, which he experienced in his lower regions, had rendered him quite callous to any inconveniences he might feel in those remote quarters. His father might lay on, but he could not beat him from his pig, till he had fairly made an end of it, when, becoming a little more sensible of his situation, something like the following dialogue ensued.

"You graceless whelp, what have you got there devouring? Is it not enough that you have burnt me down three houses with your dog's tricks, and be hanged to you, but you must be eating fire, and I know not what—what have you got there, I say?"

"O, father, the pig, the pig, do come and taste how nice the burnt pig eats."

The ears of Ho-ti tingled with horror. He cursed his son, and he cursed himself that ever he should beget a son that should eat burnt pig.

Bo-bo, whose scent was wonderfully sharpened since morning, soon raked out another pig, and fairly rending it asunder, thrust the lesser half by main force into the fists of Ho-ti, still shouting out "Eat, eat, eat the burnt pig, father, only taste—O Lord,"—with such-like barbarous ejaculations, cramming all the while as if he would choke.

Ho-ti trembled every joint while he grasped the abominable thing, wavering whether he should not put his son to death for an unnatural young monster, when the crackling scorching his fingers, as it had done his son's, and applying the same remedy to them, he in his turn tasted some of its flavor, which, make what sour mouths he would for a pretence, proved not altogether displeasing to him. In conclusion (for the manuscript here is a little tedious) both father and son fairly sat down to the mess, and never left off till they had despatched all that remained of the litter.

Bo-bo was strictly enjoined not to let the secret escape, for the neighbors would certainly have stoned them for a couple of abominable wretches, who could think of improving upon the good meat which God had sent them. Nevertheless, strange stories got about. It was observed that Ho-ti's cottage was burnt down now more frequently than ever. Nothing but fires from this time forward. Some would break out in broad day, others in the night-time. As often as the sow farrowed, so sure was the house of Ho-ti to be in a blaze; and Ho-ti himself, which was the more remarkable, instead of chastising his son, seemed to grow more indulgent to him than ever. At length they were watched, the terrible mystery discovered, and father and son summoned to take their trial at Pekin, then an inconsiderable assize town. Evidence was given, the obnoxious food itself produced in court, and verdict about to be pronounced, when the foreman of the jury begged that some of the burnt pig, of which the culprits stood accused, might be handed into the box. He handled it, and they all handled it, and burning their fingers, as Bo-bo and his father had done before them, and nature prompting to each of them the same remedy against the face of all the facts, and the clearest charge which judge had ever given,—to the surprise of the whole court, townsfolk, strangers, reporters, and all present—without leaving the box, or any manner of consultation whatever, they brought in a simultaneous verdict of Not Guilty.

The judge, who was a shrewd fellow, winked at the manifest iniquity of the decision; and, when the court was dismissed, went privily, and bought up all the pigs that could be had for love or money. In a few days his Lordship's town house was observed to be on fire. The thing took wing, and now there was nothing to be seen but fires in every direction. Fuel and pigs grew enormously dear all over the district. The insurance offices one and all shut up shop. People built slighter and slighter every day, until it was feared that the very science of architecture would in no long time be lost to the world. Thus this custom of firing houses continued, till in process of time, says my

manuscript, a sage arose, like our Locke, who made a discovery, that the flesh of swine, or indeed of any other animal, might be cooked (*burnt*, as they called it) without the necessity of consuming a whole house to dress it. Then first began the rude form of a gridiron. Roasting by the string, or spit, came in a century or two later, I forget in whose dynasty. By such slow degrees, concludes the manuscript, do the most useful, and seemingly the most obvious arts, make their way among mankind.——

Without placing too implicit faith in the account above given, it must be agreed, that if a worthy pretext for so dangerous an experiment as setting houses on fire (especially in these days) could be assigned in favor of any culinary object, that pretext and excuse might be found in ROAST PIG.

Of all the delicacies in the whole *mundus edibilis*,[2] I will maintain it to be the most delicate—*princeps obsoniorum*.[3]

I speak not of your grown porkers—things between pig and pork—those hobbledehoys—but a young and tender suckling—under a moon old—guiltless as yet of the sty—with no original speck of the *amor immunditiæ*,[4] the hereditary failing of the first parent, yet manifest—his voice as yet not broken, but something between a childish treble, and a grumble—the mild forerunner or *præludium*, of a grunt.

He must be roasted. I am not ignorant that our ancestors ate them seethed, or boiled—but what a sacrifice of the exterior tegument!

There is no flavor comparable, I will contend, to that of the crisp, tawny, well-watched, not over-roasted, *crackling*, as it is well called—the very teeth are invited to their share of the pleasure at this banquet in overcoming the coy, brittle resistance—with the adhesive oleaginous—O call it not fat—but an indefinable sweetness growing up to it—the tender blossoming of fat—fat cropped in the bud—taken in the shoot—in the first innocence—the cream and quintessence of the child-pig's yet pure food—the lean, no lean, but a kind of animal manna—or, rather, fat, and lean, (if it must be so) so blended and running into each other, that both together make but one ambrosian result, or common substance.

Behold him, while he is doing—it seemeth rather a refreshing warmth, than a scorching heat, that he is so passive to. How equably he twirleth round the string!—Now he is just done. To see the extreme sensibility of that tender age, he hath wept out his pretty eyes—radiant jellies—shooting stars.—

See him in the dish, his second cradle, how meek he lieth!—wouldst thou have had this innocent grow up to the grossness and indocility which too often accompany maturer swinehood? Ten to one he would have proved a glutton, a sloven, an obstinate, disagreeable animal—wallowing in all manner of filthy conversation—from these sins he is happily snatched away—

> Ere sin could blight, or sorrow fade,
> Death came with timely care—

his memory is odoriferous—no clown curseth, while his stomach half rejecteth, the rank bacon—no coal-heaver bolteth him in reeking sausages—he hath a fair sepulchre in the grateful stomach of the judicious epicure—and for such a tomb might be content to die.

He is the best of Sapors. Pine-apple is great. She is indeed almost too transcendent—a delight, if not sinful, yet so like to sinning, that really a tender-conscienced person would do well to pause—too ravishing for mortal taste, she woundeth and excoriateth the lips that approach her—like lovers' kisses, she biteth—she is a pleasure bordering on pain from the fierceness and insanity of her relish—but she stoppeth at the palate—she meddleth not with the appetite—and the coarsest hunger might barter her consistently for a mutton chop.

Pig—let me speak his praise—is no less provocative of the appetite, than he is satisfactory to the criticalness of the censorious palate. The strong man may batten on him, and weakling refuseth not his mild juices.

Unlike to mankind's mixed characters, a bundle of virtues and vices, inexplicably intertwisted, and not to be unravelled without hazard, he is—good throughout. No part of him is better or worse than another. He helpeth, as far as his little means extend, all around. He is the least envious of banquets. He is all neighbors' fare.

I am one of those, who freely and ungrudgingly impart a share of the good things of this life which fall to their lot (few as mine are in this kind) to a friend. I protest I take as great an interest in my friend's pleasures, his relishes, and proper satisfactions, as in mine own. "Presents," I often say, "endear Absents." Hares, pheasants, partridges, snipes, barn-door chickens (those "tame villatic fowl"), capons, plovers, brawn, barrels of oysters, I dispense as freely as I receive them. I love to

[2] the world of eatables.
[3] the prince of viands.
[4] love of the unclean.

taste them as it were, upon the tongue of my friend. But a stop must be put somewhere. One would not, like Lear, "give everything." I make my stand upon pig. Methinks it is an ingratitude to the Giver of all good flavors, to extra-domiciliate, or send out of the house, slightingly (under pretext of friendship, or I know not what), a blessing so particularly adapted, predestined, I may say, to my individual palate.—It argues an insensibility.

I remember a touch of conscience in this kind at school. My good old aunt, who never parted from me at the end of a holiday without stuffing a sweetmeat, or some nice thing, into my pocket, had dismissed me one evening with a smoking plum-cake, fresh from the oven. In my way to school (it was over London Bridge) a grey-headed old beggar saluted me (I have no doubt at this time of day that he was a counterfeit). I had no pence to console him with, and in the vanity of self-denial, and the very cox-combry of charity, school-boy like, I made him a present of—the whole cake! I walked on a little, buoyed up, as one is on such occasions, with a sweet soothing of self-satisfaction; but before I had got to the end of the bridge, my better feelings returned, and I burst into tears, thinking how ungrateful I had been to my good aunt, to go and give her good gift away to a stranger, that I had never seen before, and who might be a bad man for aught I knew; and then I thought of the pleasure my aunt would be taking in thinking that I—I myself, and not another—would eat her nice cake—and what should I say to her the next time I saw her—how naughty I was to part with her pretty present!—and the odor of that spicy cake came back upon my recollection, and the pleasure, and the curiosity I had taken in seeing her make it, and her joy when she sent it to the oven, and how disappointed she would feel that I had never had a bit of it in my mouth at last—and I blamed my impertinent spirit of alms-giving, and out-of-place hypocrisy, of goodness, and above all I wished never to see the face again of that insidious, good-for-nothing old grey impostor.

Our ancestors were nice in their method of sacrificing these tender victims. We read of pigs whipt to death with something of a shock, as we hear of any other obsolete custom. The age of discipline is gone by, or it would be curious to inquire (in a philosophical light merely) what effect this process might have towards intenerating[5] and dulcifying a substance, naturally so mild and dulcet as the flesh of young pigs. It looks like refining a violet. Yet we should be cautious, while we condemn the inhumanity, how we censure the wisdom of the practice. It might impart a gusto.—

I remember an hypothesis, argued upon by the young students, when I was at St. Omer's,[6] and maintained with much learning and pleasantry on both sides, "Whether, supposing that the flavor of a pig who obtained his death by whipping (*per flagellationem extremam*) superadded a pleasure upon the palate of a man more intense than any possible suffering we can conceive in the animal, is man justified in using that method of putting the animal to death?" I forget the decision.

His sauce should be considered. Decidedly, a few bread crumbs, done up with his liver and brains, and a dash of mild sage. But, banish, dear Mrs. Cook, I beseech you, the whole onion tribe. Barbecue your whole hogs to your palate, steep them in shalots, stuff them out with plantations of the rank and guilty garlic; you cannot poison them, or make them stronger than they are—but consider, he is a weakling—a flower. (1822)

Old China

I have an almost feminine partiality for old china. When I go to see any great house, I inquire for the china-closet, and next for the picture-gallery. I cannot defend the order of preference but by saying that we have all some taste or other, of too ancient a date to admit of our remembering distinctly that it was an acquired one. I can call to mind the first play, and the first exhibition, that I was taken to; but I am not conscious of a time when china jars and saucers were introduced into my imagination.

I had no repugnance then—why should I now have?—to those little, lawless, azure-tinctured grotesques that, under the notion of men and women, float about, uncircumscribed by any element, in that world before perspective—a china teacup.

I like to see my old friends—whom distance cannot diminish—figuring up in the air (so they appear to our optics), yet on *terra firma* still—for so we must in courtesy interpret that speck of deeper

[5] making tender.
[6] a Roman Catholic college in France for English boys.

blue, which the decorous artist, to prevent absurdity, had made to spring up beneath their sandals.

I love the men with women's faces, and the women, if possible, with still more womanish expressions.

Here is a young and courtly Mandarin, handing tea to a lady from a salver—two miles off. See how distance seems to set off respect! And here the same lady, or another—for likeness is identity on teacups—is stepping into a little fairy boat, moored on the hither side of this calm garden river, with a dainty mincing foot, which in a right angle of incidence (as angles go in our world) must infallibly land her in the midst of a flowery mead—a furlong off on the other side of the same strange stream!

Farther on—if far or near can be predicated of their world—see horses, trees, pagodas, dancing the hays.

Here—a cow and rabbit couchant, and coextensive—so objects show, seen through the lucid atmosphere of fine Cathay.[1]

I was pointing out to my cousin last evening, over our Hyson (which we are old-fashioned enough to drink unmixed still of an afternoon), some of these *speciosa miracula*[2] upon a set of extraordinary old blue china (a recent purchase) which we were now for the first time using; and could not help remarking how favorable circumstances had been to us of late years, that we could afford to please the eye sometimes with trifles of this sort—when a passing sentiment seemed to overshade the brows of my companion. I am quick at detecting these summer clouds in Bridget.

"I wish the good old times would come again," she said, "when we were not quite so rich. I do not mean that I want to be poor; but there was a middle state"—so she was pleased to ramble on—"in which I am sure we were a great deal happier. A purchase is but a purchase, now that you have money enough and to spare. Formerly it used to be a triumph. When we coveted a cheap luxury (and O! how much ado I had to get you to consent in those times!)—we were used to have a debate two or three days before, and to weigh the *for* and *against*, and think what we might spare it out of, and what saving we could hit upon, that should be an equivalent. A thing was worth buying then, when we felt the money that we paid for it.

"Do you remember the brown suit which you made to hang upon you till all your friends cried shame upon you, it grew so threadbare—and all because of that folio Beaumont and Fletcher,[3] which you dragged home late at night from Barker's in Covent Garden? Do you remember how we eyed it for weeks before we could make up our minds to the purchase, and had not come to a determination till it was near ten o'clock of the Saturday night, when you set off from Islington, fearing you should be too late—and when the old bookseller with some grumbling opened his shop, and by the twinkling taper (for he was setting bedward) lighted out the relic from his dusty treasures—and when you lugged it home, wishing it were twice as cumbersome—and when you presented it to me—and when we were exploring the perfectness of it (*collating*, you called it)—and while I was repairing some of the loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be left till daybreak—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? Or can those neat black clothes which you wear now, and are so careful to keep brushed, since we have become rich and finical—give you half the honest vanity with which you flaunted it about in that overworn suit—your old corbeau—for four or five weeks longer than you should have done, to pacify your conscience for the mighty sum of fifteen—or sixteen shillings was it?—a great affair we thought it then—which you had lavished on the old folio. Now you can afford to buy any book that pleases you, but I do not see that you ever bring me home any nice old purchases now.

"When you came home with twenty apologies for laying out a less number of shillings upon that print after Lionardo,[4] which we christened the 'Lady Blanch'; when you looked at the purchase, and thought of the money—and thought of the money, and looked again at the picture—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? Now you have nothing to do but to walk into Colnaghi's, and buy a wilderness of Lionardos. Yet do you?

"Then, do you remember our pleasant walks to Enfield, and Potter's Bar, and Waltham, when we had a holiday—holidays and all other fun are gone now we are rich—and the little hand-basket in which I used to deposit our day's fare of savory cold lamb and salad—and how you would pry about at noontide for some decent house, where we might go in and produce our store—only paying for the ale that you must call for—and speculate upon the looks of the landlady, and whether she was likely to allow us a tablecloth—and wish

[1] China. [2] extraordinary scenes.

[3] English dramatists of the early seventeenth century.

[4] Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), Italian painter.

for such another honest hostess as Izaak Walton[5] has described many a one on the pleasant banks of the Lea, when he went a-fishing—and sometimes they would prove obliging enough, and sometimes they would look grudgingly upon us—but we had cheerful looks still for one another, and would eat our plain food savorily, scarcely grudging Piscator[6] his Trout Hall? Now—when we go out a day's pleasuring, which is seldom, moreover, we *ride* part of the way, and go into a fine inn, and order the best of dinners, never debating the expense—which, after all, never has half the relish of those chance country snaps, when we were at the mercy of uncertain usage, and a precarious welcome.

"You are too proud to see a play anywhere now but in the pit. Do you remember where it was we used to sit, when we saw the *Battle of Hexham*, and the *Surrender of Calais*, and Bannister and Mrs. Bland in the *Children in the Wood*—when we squeezed out our shillings apiece to sit three or four times in a season in the one-shilling gallery—where you felt all the time that you ought not to have brought me—and more strongly I felt obligation to you for having brought me—and the pleasure was the better for a little shame—and when the curtain drew up, what cared we for our place in the house, or what mattered it where we were sitting, when our thoughts were with Rosalind in Arden,[7] or with Viola at the Court of Illyria? You used to say that the gallery was the best place of all for enjoying a play socially—that the relish of such exhibitions must be in proportion to the infrequency of going—that the company we met there, not being in general readers of plays, were obliged to attend the more, and did attend, to what was going on, on the stage—because a word lost would have been a chasm, which it was impossible for them to fill up. With such reflections we consoled our pride then—and I appeal to you whether, as a woman, I met generally with less attention and accommodation than I have done since in more expensive situations in the house? The getting in, indeed, and the crowding up those inconvenient staircases, was bad enough—but there was still a law of civility to woman recognized to quite as great an extent as we ever found in the other passages—and how a little difficulty overcome heightened the snug seat and the play, afterwards! Now we can only pay our money and walk in. You cannot see, you say, in the galleries now. I am sure we saw, and heard, too, well enough then—but sight, and all, I think, is gone with our poverty.

"There was pleasure in eating strawberries, before they became quite common—in the first dish of peas, while they were yet dear—to have them for a nice supper, a treat. What treat can we have now? If we were to treat ourselves now—that is, to have dainties a little above our means, it would be selfish and wicked. It is the very little more that we allow ourselves beyond what the actual poor can get at that makes what I call a treat—when two people, living together as we have done, now and then indulge themselves in a cheap luxury, which both like; while each apologizes, and is willing to take both halves of the blame to his single share. I see no harm in people making much of themselves, in that sense of the word. It may give them a hint how to make much of others. But now—what I mean by the word—we never *do* make much of ourselves. None but the poor can do it. I do not mean the veriest poor of all, but persons as we were, just above poverty.

"I know what you were going to say, that it is mighty pleasant at the end of the year to make all meet—and much ado we used to have every thirty-first night of December to account for our exceedings—many a long face did you make over your puzzled accounts, and in contriving to make it out how we had spent so much—or that we had not spent so much—or that it was impossible we should spend so much next year—and still we found our slender capital decreasing—but then—betwixt ways, and projects, and compromises of one sort or another, and talk of curtailing this charge, and doing without that for the future—and the hope that youth brings, and laughing spirits (in which you were never poor till now), we pocketed up our loss, and in conclusion, with 'lusty brimmers' (as you used to quote it out of *hearty cheerful Mr. Cotton*,[8] as you called him), we used to welcome in the 'coming guest.' Now we have no reckoning at all at the end of the old year—no flattering promises about the new year doing better for us."

Bridget is so sparing of her speech on most occasions that when she gets into a rhetorical vein, I

[5] Cf. Vol. I, p. 401.

[6] the fisherman in Walton's *Compleat Angler*, and his favorite inn, Trout Hall.

[7] references to Shakespeare's *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*.

[8] Charles Cotton (1630-1687), English poet and translator.

am careful how I interrupt it. I could not help, however, smiling at the phantom of wealth which her dear imagination had conjured up out of a clear income of poor —— hundred pounds a year. "It is true we were happier when we were poorer, but we were also younger, my cousin. I am afraid we must put up with the excess, for if we were to shake the superflux into the sea, we should not much mend ourselves. That we had much to struggle with, as we grew up together, we have reason to be most thankful. It strengthened and knit our compact closer. We could never have been what we have been to each other if we had always had the sufficiency which you now complain of. The resisting power—those natural dilations of the youthful spirit, which circumstances cannot straiten —with us are long since passed away. Competence to age is supplementary youth, a sorry supplement indeed, but I fear the best that is to be had. We must ride where we formerly walked; live better and lie softer—and shall be wise to do so—than we had means to do in those good old days you speak of. Yet could those days return—could you and I once more walk our thirty miles a day—could Bannister and Mrs. Bland again be young, and you and I be young to see them—could the good old one-shilling gallery days return—they are dreams, my cousin, now—but could you and I at this moment, instead of this quiet argument, by our well-carpeted fireside, sitting on this luxurious sofa—be once more struggling up those inconvenient staircases, pushed about and squeezed, and elbowed by the poorest rabble of poor gallery scramblers—could I once more hear those anxious shrieks of yours—and the delicious *Thank God, we are safe*, which always followed when the topmost stair, conquered, let in the first light of the whole cheerful theater down beneath us—I know not the fathom line that ever touched a descent so deep as I would be willing to bury more wealth in than Crœsus[9] had, or the great Jew R—— is supposed to have, to purchase it. And now do just look at that merry little Chinese waiter holding an umbrella, big enough for a bed-tester, over the head of that pretty insipid half Madonna-ish chit of a lady in that very blue summer-house." (1823)

Poor Relations

This delightful piece shows the intimate relation of the essay to the seventeenth-century Characters written under the influence of Theophrastus (cf. Vol. I, pp. 413-14).

A poor Relation—is the most irrelevant thing in nature,—a piece of impertinent correspondency,—an odious approximation,—a haunting conscience, —a preposterous shadow, lengthening in the noontide of our prosperity,—an unwelcome remembrancer,—a perpetually recurring mortification,—a drain on your purse,—a more intolerable dun upon your pride,—a drawback upon success,—a rebuke to your rising,—a stain in your blood,—a blot on your 'scutcheon,—a rent in your garment,—a death's head at your banquet.—Agathocles' pot,[1]—a Mordecai in your gate,[2]—a Lazarus[3] at your door,—a lion in your path,—a frog in your chamber,—a fly in your ointment,—a mote in your eye,—a triumph to your enemy, an apology to your friends,—the one thing not needful,—the hail in harvest,[4]—the ounce of sour in a pound of sweet.

He is known by his knock. Your heart telleth you "That is Mr. ——." A rap, between familiarity and respect; that demands, and, at the same time, seems to despair of, entertainment. He entereth smiling and—embarrassed. He holdeth out his hand to you to shake, and—draweth it back again. He casually looketh in about dinner-time—when the table is full. He offereth to go away, seeing you have company, but is induced to stay. He filleth a chair, and your visitor's two children are accommodated at a side table. He never cometh upon open days, when your wife says with some complacency, "My dear, perhaps Mr. —— will drop in to-day." He remembereth birthdays—and professeth he is fortunate to have stumbled upon one. He declareth against fish, the turbot being small—yet suffereth himself to be importuned into a slice against his

[1] Agathocles, tyrant of Sicily (361-289 B.C.), disliked the sight of a pot, since it reminded him that he was the son of a potter.

[2] Mordecai waited at the gate of King Ahasuerus to learn what was happening to his relative Esther. Cf. *Esther*, 3:1-2; 5:11-13.

[3] the beggar who placed himself at the door of a rich man to beg for crumbs from his table. Cf. *Luke*, 16:20.

[9] a king of ancient Lydia traditional for his wealth.

[4] These comparisons are all taken from the Bible.

first resolution. He sticketh by the port,[5]—yet will be prevailed upon to empty the remainder glass of claret, if a stranger press it upon him. He is a puzzle to the servants, who are fearful of being too obsequious, or not civil enough, to him. The guests think "they have seen him before." Everyone speculateth upon his condition; and the most part take him to be—a tide waiter.[6] He calleth you by your Christian name, to imply that his other is the same with your own. He is too familiar by half, yet you wish he had less diffidence. With half the familiarity he might pass for a casual dependent; with more boldness he would be in no danger of being taken for what he is. He is too humble for a friend, yet taketh on him more state than befits a client. He is a worse guest than a country tenant, inasmuch as he bringeth up no rent—yet 'tis odds, from his garb and demeanor, that your guests take him for one. He is asked to make one at the whist table; refuseth on the score of poverty, and—resents being left out. When the company break up he proffereth to go for a coach—and lets the servant go. He recollects your grandfather; and will thrust in some mean and quite unimportant anecdote of—the family. He knew it when it was not quite so flourishing as "he is blest in seeing it now." He reviveth past situations to institute what he calleth —favorable comparisons. With a reflecting sort of congratulation, he will inquire the price of your furniture: and insults you with a special commendation of your window-curtains. He is of opinion that the urn is the more elegant shape, but, after all, there was something more comfortable about the old tea-kettle—which you must remember. He dare say you must find a great convenience in having a carriage of your own, and appealeth to your lady if it is not so. Inquireth if you have had your arms done on vellum yet; and did not know, till lately, that such-and-such had been the crest of the family. His memory is unseasonable; his compliments perverse; his talk a trouble; his stay pertinacious; and when he goeth away, you dismiss his chair into a corner, as precipitately as possible, and feel fairly rid of two nuisances.

There is a worse evil under the sun, and that is—a female Poor Relation. You may do something with the other; you may pass him off tolerably well; but your indigent she-relative is hopeless. "He is an old humorist,"[7] you may say, "and affects to go thread-bare. His circumstances are better than folks would take them to be. You are fond of having a Character at your table, and truly he is one." But in the indications of female poverty there can be no disguise. No woman dresses below herself from caprice. The truth must out without shuffling. "She is plainly related to the L——s; or what does she at their house?" She is, in all probability, your wife's cousin. Nine times out of ten, at least, this is the case. Her garb is something between a gentlewoman and a beggar, yet the former evidently predominates. She is most provokingly humble, and ostentatiously sensible to her inferiority. He may require to be repressed sometimes—*aliquando suffl*a*minandus erat*[8]—but there is no raising her. You send her soup at dinner, and she begs to be helped —after the gentlemen. Mr. —— requests the honor of taking wine with her; she hesitates between Port and Madeira, and chooses the former—because he does. She calls the servant *Sir*; and insists on not troubling him to hold her plate. The housekeeper patronizes her. The children's governess takes upon her to correct her, when she has mistaken the piano for harpsichord.

Richard Amlet, Esq., in the play,[9] is a noticeable instance of the disadvantages to which this chimerical notion of *affinity constituting a claim to an acquaintance*, may subject the spirit of a gentleman. A little foolish blood is all that is betwixt him and a lady with a great estate. His stars are perpetually crossed by the malignant maternity of an old woman, who persists in calling him "her son Dick." But she has wherewithal in the end to recompense his indignities, and float him again upon the brilliant surface, under which it had been her seeming business and pleasure all along to sink him. All men, besides, are not of Dick's temperament. I knew an Amlet in real life, who wanting Dick's buoyancy, sank indeed. Poor W——[10] was of my own standing at Christ's, a fine classic, and a youth of promise. If he had a blemish, it was too much pride; but its quality was inoffensive; it was not of that sort which hardens the heart, and serves to keep inferiors at a distance; it only sought to ward off derogation from itself. It was the principle of self-respect carried as far as it could go, without infringing upon that respect, which he would have everyone else equally maintain for himself. He would have you to think alike with him on this topic. Many a quarrel have I had with him,

[5] insists that he will drink nothing but port wine.
[6] a custom official who waits for the arrival of ships.
[7] an eccentric person.
[8] sometimes he had to be repressed.
[9] *The Confederacy* by Sir John Vanbrugh (1666-1726).
[10] Lamb's friend, Favell; cf. *Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago*, Vol. II, p. 378.

when we were rather older boys, and our tallness made us more obnoxious to observation in the blue clothes, because I would not thread the alleys and blind ways of the town with him to elude notice, when we have been out together on a holiday in the streets of this sneering and prying metropolis. W—— went, sore with these notions, to Oxford, where the dignity and sweetness of a scholar's life, meeting with the alloy of a humble introduction, wrought in him a passionate devotion to the place, with a profound aversion to the society. The servitor's gown (worse than his school array) clung to him with Nessian venom.[11] He thought himself ridiculous in a garb, under which Latimer[12] must have walked erect; and in which Hooker,[13] in his young days, possibly flaunted in a vein of no discommendable vanity. In the depths of college shades, or in his lonely chamber, the poor student shrunk from observation. He found shelter among books, which insult not; and studies, that ask no questions of a youth's finances. He was lord of his library, and seldom cared for looking out beyond his domains. The healing influence of studious pursuits was upon him, to soothe and to abstract. He was almost a healthy man; when the waywardness of his fate broke out against him with a second and worse malignity. The father of W—— had hitherto exercised the humble profession of house-painter at N——, near Oxford. A supposed interest with some of the heads of colleges had now induced him to take up his abode in that city, with the hope of being employed upon some public works which were talked of. From that moment I read in the countenance of the young man, the determination which at length tore him from academical pursuits for ever. To a person unacquainted with our Universities, the distance between the gownsmen and the townsmen, as they are called—the trading part of the latter especially—is carried to an excess that would appear harsh and incredible. The temperament of W——'s father was diametrically the reverse of his own. Old W—— was a little, busy, cringing tradesman, who, with his son upon his arm, would stand bowing and scraping, cap in hand, to anything that wore the semblance of a gown—insensible to the winks and opener remonstrances of the young man, to whose chamberfellow, or equal in standing, perhaps, he was thus obsequiously and gratuitously ducking. Such a state of things could not last. W—— must change the air of Oxford or be suffocated. He chose the former; and let the sturdy moralist, who strains the point of the filial duties as high as they can bear, censure the dereliction; he cannot estimate the struggle. I stood with W——, the last afternoon I ever saw him, under the eaves of his paternal dwelling. It was in the fine lane leading from the High Street to the back of —— college, where W—— kept his rooms. He seemed thoughtful, and more reconciled. I ventured to rally him—finding him in a better mood—upon a representation of the Artist Evangelist,[14] which the old man, whose affairs were beginning to flourish, had caused to be set up in a splendid sort of frame over his really handsome shop, either as a token of prosperity, or badge of gratitude to his saint. W—— looked up at the Luke, and, like Satan, "knew his mounted sign—and fled."[15] A letter on his father's table the next morning, announced that he had accepted a commission in a regiment about to embark for Portugal. He was among the first who perished before the walls of St. Sebastian.[16]

I do not know how, upon a subject which I began with treating half seriously, I should have fallen upon a recital so eminently painful; but this theme of poor relationship is replete with so much matter for tragic as well as comic associations, that it is difficult to keep the account distinct without blending. The earliest impressions which I received on this matter, are certainly not attended with anything painful, or very humiliating, in the recalling. At my father's table (no very splendid one) was to be found, every Saturday, the mysterious figure of an aged gentleman, clothed in neat black, of a sad yet comely appearance. His deportment was of the essence of gravity; his words few or none; and I was not to make a noise in his presence. I had little inclination to have done so—for my cue was to admire in silence. A particular elbow chair was appropriated to him, which was in no case to be violated. A peculiar sort of sweet pudding, which appeared on no other occasion, distinguished the days of his coming. I used to think him a prodigiously rich man. All I could make out of him was, that

[11] Hercules, who had slain the Centaur, Nessus, with a poisoned arrow lost his own life by wearing a shirt dipped in the blood of Nessus.

[12] Hugh Latimer (1488-1555), preacher and reformer.

[13] Richard Hooker (1553-1600), noted English clergyman.

[14] St. Luke, who by tradition was a painter.

[15] Cf. *Paradise Lost*, IV, 1013.

[16] a city on the north coast of Spain, taken by Wellington in 1813.

he and my father had been schoolfellows a world ago at Lincoln, and that he came from the Mint. The Mint I knew to be a place where all the money was coined—and I thought he was the owner of all that money. Awful ideas of the Tower twined themselves about his presence. He seemed above human infirmities and passions. A sort of melancholy grandeur invested him. From some inexplicable doom I fancied him obliged to go about in an eternal suit of mourning; a captive—a stately being, let out of the Tower on Saturdays. Often have I wondered at the temerity of my father, who, in spite of an habitual general respect which we all in common manifested towards him, would venture now and then to stand up against him in some argument, touching their youthful days. The houses of the ancient city of Lincoln are divided (as most of my readers know) between the dwellers on the hill, and in the valley. This marked distinction formed an obvious division between the boys who lived above (however brought together in a common school) and the boys whose paternal residence was on the plain; a sufficient cause of hostility in the code of these young Grotiuses.[17] My father had been a leading Mountaineer; and would still maintain the general superiority, in skill and hardihood, of the *Above Boys* (his own faction) over the *Below Boys* (so were they called), of which party his contemporary had been a chieftain. Many and hot were the skirmishes on this topic—the only one upon which the old gentleman was ever brought out—and bad blood bred; even sometimes almost to the recommencement (so I expected) of actual hostilities. But my father, who scorned to insist upon advantages, generally contrived to turn the conversation upon some adroit by-commendation of the old Minster;[18] in the general preference of which, before all other cathedrals in the island, the dweller on the hill, and the plain-born, could meet on a conciliating level, and lay down their less important differences. Once only I saw the old gentleman really ruffled, and I remembered with anguish the thought that came over me: "Perhaps he will never come here again." He had been pressed to take another plate of the viand, which I have already mentioned as the indispensable concomitant of his visits. He had refused with a resistance amounting to rigor, when my aunt—an old Lincolnian, but who had something of this in common with my cousin Bridget, that she would sometimes press civility out of season—uttered the following memorable application—"Do take another slice, Mr. Billet, for you do not get pudding every day." The old gentleman said nothing at the time —but he took occasion in the course of the evening, when some argument had intervened between them, to utter with an emphasis which chilled the company, and which chills me now as I write it—"Woman, you are superannuated." John Billet did not survive long, after the digesting of this affront; but he survived long enough to assure me that peace was actually restored! and, if I remember aright, another pudding was discreetly substituted in the place of that which had occasioned the offence. He died at the Mint (anno 1781) where he had long held, what he accounted, a comfortable independence; and with five pounds, fourteen shillings, and a penny, which were found in his escritoire after his decease, left the world, blessing God that he had enough to bury him, and that he had never been obliged to any man for a six-pence. This was—a Poor Relation. (1823)

The Convalescent

A pretty severe fit of indisposition which, under the name of a nervous fever, has made a prisoner of me for some weeks past, and is but slowly leaving me, has reduced me to an incapacity of reflecting upon any topic foreign to itself. Expect no healthy conclusions from me this month, reader; I can offer you only sick men's dreams.

And truly the whole state of sickness is such; for what else is it but a magnificent dream for a man to lie a-bed, and draw day-light curtains about him; and, shutting out the sun, to induce a total oblivion of all the works which are going on under it? To become insensible to all the operations of life, except the beatings of one feeble pulse?

If there be a regal solitude, it is a sick-bed. How the patient lords it there! what caprices he acts without control! how king-like he sways his pillow—tumbling, and tossing, and shifting, and low-

[17] law students, followers of Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), the great Dutch authority on international law.

[18] the cathedral at Lincoln.

ering, and thumping, and flatting, and molding it, to the ever-varying requisitions of his throbbing temples.

He changes *sides* oftener than a politician. Now he lies full length, then half-length, obliquely, transversely, head and feet quite across the bed; and none accuses him of tergiversation.[1] Within the four curtains he is absolute. They are his Mare Clausum.[2]

How sickness enlarges the dimensions of a man's self to himself! he is his own exclusive object. Supreme selfishness is inculcated upon him as his only duty. 'Tis the Two Tables of the Law[3] to him. He has nothing to think of but how to get well. What passes out of doors, or within them, so he hear not the jarring of them, affects him not.

A little while ago he was greatly concerned in the event of a law-suit, which was to be the making or the marring of his dearest friend. He was to be seen trudging about upon this man's errand to fifty quarters of the town at once, jogging this witness, refreshing that solicitor. The cause was to come on yesterday. He is absolutely as indifferent to the decision as if it were a question to be tried at Pekin. Peradventure from some whispering, going on about the house, not intended for his hearing, he picks up enough to make him understand, that things were cross-grained in the Court yesterday, and his friend is ruined. But the word "friend," and the word "ruin," disturb him no more than so much jargon. He is not to think of any thing but how to get better.

What a world of foreign cares are merged in that absorbing consideration!

He has put on the strong armor of sickness, he is wrapped in the callous hide of suffering; he keeps his sympathy, like some curious vintage, under trusty lock and key, for his own use only.

He lies pitying himself, honing and moaning to himself; he yearneth over himself; his bowels are even melted within him, to think what he suffers; he is not ashamed to weep over himself.

He is for ever plotting how to do some good to himself; studying little stratagems and artificial alleviations.

He makes the most of himself; dividing himself, by an allowable fiction, into as many distinct individuals, as he hath sore and sorrowing members. Sometimes he meditates—as of a thing apart from him—upon his poor aching head, and that dull pain which, dozing or waking, lay in it all the past night like a log, or palpable substance of pain, not to be removed without opening the very scull, as it seemed, to take it thence. Or he pities his long, clammy, attenuated fingers. He compassionates himself all over; and his bed is a very discipline of humanity, and tender heart.

He is his own sympathiser; and instinctively feels that none can so well perform that office for him. He cares for few spectators to his tragedy. Only that punctual face of the old nurse pleases him, that announces his broths, and his cordials. He likes it because it is so unmoved, and because he can pour forth his feverish ejaculations before it as unreservedly as to his bed-post.

To the world's business he is dead. He understands not what the callings and occupations of mortals are; only he has a glimmering conceit of some such thing, when the doctor makes his daily call: and even in the lines on that busy face he reads no multiplicity of patients, but solely conceives of himself as *the sick man*. To what other uneasy couch the good man is hastening, when he slips out of his chamber, folding up his thin douceur[4] so carefully for fear of rustling—is no speculation which he can at present entertain. He thinks only of the regular return of the same phenomenon at the same hour to-morrow.

Household rumors touch him not. Some faint murmur, indicative of life going on within the house, soothes him, while he knows not distinctly what it is. He is not to know any thing, not to think of any thing. Servants gliding up or down the distant staircase, treading as upon velvet, gently keep his ear awake, so long as he troubles not himself further than with some feeble guess at their errands. Exacter knowledge would be a burthen to him: he can just endure the pressure of conjecture. He opens his eye faintly at the dull stroke of the muffled knocker, and closes it again without asking "who was it?" He is flattered by a general notion that inquiries are making after him, but he cares not to know the name of the inquirer. In the general stillness, and awful hush of the house, he lies in state, and feels his sovereignty.

To be sick is to enjoy monarchal prerogatives. Compare the silent tread, and quiet ministry, almost by the eye only, with which he is served—with the careless demeanor, the unceremonious

[1] shifting sides, deserting a cause.

[2] Closed Sea, a sea subject to the jurisdiction of one nation.

[3] like the two Tables on which the Ten Commandments are pictured.

[4] fee.

goings in and out (slapping of doors, or leaving them open) of the very same attendants, when he is getting a little better—and you will confess, that from the bed of sickness (throne let me rather call it) to the elbow-chair of convalescence, is a fall from dignity, amounting to a deposition.

How convalescence shrinks a man back to his pristine stature! Where is now the space, which he occupied so lately, in his own, in the family's eye? The scene of his regalities, his sick room, which was his presence-chamber, where he lay and acted his despotic fancies—how is it reduced to a common bed-room! The trimness of the very bed has something petty and unmeaning about it. It is *made* every day. How unlike to that wavy, many-furrowed, oceanic surface, which it presented so short a time since, when to *make* it was a service not to be thought of at oftener than three or four day revolutions, when the patient was with pain and grief to be lifted for a little while out of it, to submit to the encroachments of unwelcome neatness, and decencies which his shaken frame deprecated; then to be lifted into it again, for another three or four days' respite, to flounder it out of shape again, while every fresh furrow was a historical record of some shifting posture, some uneasy turning, some seeking for a little ease; and the shrunken skin scarce told a truer story than the crumpled coverlid.

Hushed are those mysterious sighs—those groans —so much more awful, while we knew not from what caverns of vast hidden suffering they proceeded. The Lernean pangs are quenched. The riddle of sickness is solved; and Philoctetes[5] is become an ordinary personage.

Perhaps some relic of the sick man's dream of greatness survives in the still lingering visitations of the medical attendant. But how is he, too, changed with everything else! Can this be he—this man of news—of chat—of anecdote—of everything but physic—can this be he, who so lately came between the patient and his cruel enemy, as on some solemn embassy from Nature, erecting herself into a high mediating party?—Pshaw! 'tis some old woman.

Farewell with him all that made sickness pompous—the spell that hushed the household—the desert-like stillness, felt throughout its inmost chambers—the mute attendance—the inquiry by looks—the still softer delicacies of self-attention—the sole and single eye of distemper alonely fixed upon itself—world-thoughts excluded—the man a world unto himself—his own theatre—

> What a speck is he dwindled into!

In this flat swamp of convalescence, left by the ebb of sickness, yet far enough from the terra firma of established health, your note, dear Editor, reached me, requesting—an article. In Articulo Mortis,[6] thought I; but it is something hard—and the quibble, wretched as it was, relieved me. The summons, unseasonable as it appeared, seemed to link me on again to the petty businesses of life, which I had lost sight of; a gentle call to activity, however trivial; a wholesome weaning from that preposterous dream of self-absorption—the puffy state of sickness—in which I confess to have lain so long, insensible to the magazines and monarchies of the world alike; to its laws, and to its literature. The hypochondriac flatus is subsiding; the acres, which in imagination I had spread over—for the sick man swells in the sole contemplation of his single sufferings, till he becomes a Tityus[7] to himself—are wasting to a span; and for the giant of self-importance, which I was so lately, you have me once again in my natural pretensions—the lean and meagre figure of your insignificant Essayist. (1825)

[5] Hercules dipped his arrows into the blood of the Lernean hydra which he had killed and thereby made them produce incurable wounds. He bequeathed them to Philoctetes who remained behind the Greek army in Lemnos. Since Troy could not be captured without his arrows he was finally obliged to go there.

[6] at the point of death.

[7] the giant who lies in Hades while a vulture gnaws his loins.

Popular Fallacies

That You Must Love Me and Love My Dog

"Good sir, or madam, as it may be—we most willingly embrace the offer of your friendship. We have long known your excellent qualities. We have wished to have you nearer to us; to hold you within the very innermost fold of our heart. We can have no reserve towards a person of your open and noble nature. The frankness of your humor suits us exactly. We have been long looking for such a friend. Quick—let us disburthen our troubles into each other's bosom—let us make our single joys shine by reduplication.—But *yap, yap, yap!*—what is this confounded cur? he has fastened his tooth, which is none of the bluntest, just in the fleshy part of my leg."

"It is my dog, sir. You must love him for my sake. Here, Test—Test—Test!"

"But he has bitten me."

"Ay, that he is apt to do, till you are better acquainted with him. I have had him three years. He never bites me."

Yap, yap, yap!—"He is at it again."

"Oh, sir, you must not kick him. He does not like to be kicked. I expect my dog to be treated with all the respect due to myself."

"But do you always take him out with you, when you go a friendship-hunting?"

"Invariably. 'Tis the sweetest, prettiest, best-conditioned animal. I call him my *test*—the touchstone by which I try a friend. No one can properly be said to love me, who does not love him."

"Excuse us, dear sir—or madam, aforesaid—if upon further consideration we are obliged to decline the otherwise invaluable offer of your friendship. We do not like dogs."

"Mighty well, sir—you know the conditions—you may have worse offers. Come along, Test."

The above dialogue is not so imaginary, but that, in the intercourse of life, we have had frequent occasions of breaking off an agreeable intimacy by reason of these canine appendages. They do not always come in the shape of dogs; they sometimes wear the more plausible and human character of kinsfolk, near acquaintances, my friend's friend, his partner, his wife, or his children. We could never yet form a friendship—not to speak of more delicate correspondences—however much to our taste, without the intervention of some third anomaly, some impertinent clog affixed to the relation—the understood *dog* in the proverb. The good things of life are not to be had singly, but come to us with a mixture; like a schoolboy's holiday, with a task affixed to the tail of it. What a delightful companion is * * * *, if he did not always bring his tall cousin with him! He seems to grow with him; like some of those double births which we remember to have read of with such wonder and delight in the old "Athenian Oracle," where Swift commenced author by writing Pindaric Odes (what a beginning for him!) upon Sir William Temple. There is the picture of the brother, with the little brother peeping out at his shoulder; a species of fraternity, which we have no name of kin close enough to comprehend. When * * * * comes, poking in his head and shoulders into your room, as if to feel his entry, you think, surely you have now got him to yourself—what a three hours' chat we shall have!—but, ever in the haunch of him, and before his diffident body is well disclosed in your apartment, appears the haunting shadow of the cousin, overpeering his modest kinsman, and sure to over-lay the expected good talk with his insufferable procerity[1] of stature, and uncorresponding dwarfishness of observation. Misfortunes seldom come alone. 'Tis hard when a blessing comes accompanied. Cannot we like Sempronia, without sitting down to chess with her eternal brother? or know Sulpicia, without knowing all the round of her card-playing relations? must my friend's brethren of necessity be mine also? must we be hand and glove with Dick Selby the parson, or Jack Selby the calico-printer, because W. S., who is neither, but a ripe wit and a critic, has the misfortune to claim a common parentage with them? Let him lay down his brothers; and 'tis odds but we will cast him in a pair of ours (we have a superflux) to balance the concession. Let F. H. lay down his garrulous uncle; and Honorius dismiss his vapid wife, and superfluous establishment of six boys: things between boy and manhood—too ripe for play, too raw for conversation—that come in, impudently staring his father's old friend out of countenance; and will neither aid, nor let alone,

[1] tallness.

the conference: that we may once more meet upon equal terms, as we were wont to do in the disengaged state of bachelorhood.

It is well if your friend, or mistress, be content with these canicular probations.[2] Few young ladies but in this sense keep a dog. But while Rutilia hounds at you her tiger aunt; or Ruspina expects you to cherish and fondle her viper sister, whom she has preposterously taken into her bosom, to try stinging conclusions upon your constancy; they must not complain if the house be rather thin of suitors. Scylla must have broken off many excellent matches in her time, if she insisted upon all, that loved her, loving her dogs also.

An excellent story to this moral is told of Merry, of Della Cruscan memory.[3] In tender youth he loved and courted a modest appanage to the Opera —in truth, a dancer—who had won him by the artless contrast between her manners and situation. She seemed to him a native violet, that had been transplanted by some rude accident into that exotic and artificial hotbed. Nor, in truth, was she less genuine and sincere than she appeared to him. He wooed and won this flower. Only for appearance' sake, and for due honor to the bride's relations, she craved that she might have the attendance of her friends and kindred at the approaching solemnity. The request was too amiable not to be conceded; and in this solicitude for conciliating the good-will of mere relations, he found a presage of her superior attentions to himself, when the golden shaft should have "killed the flock of all affections else." The morning came: and at the Star and Garter, Richmond—the place appointed for the breakfasting—accompanied with one English friend, he impatiently awaited what reinforcements the bride should bring to grace the ceremony. A rich muster she had made. They came in six coaches—the whole corps du ballet—French, Italian, men and women. Monsieur de B., the famous *pirouetter* of the day, led his fair spouse, but craggy, from the banks of the Seine. The Prima Donna had sent her excuse. But the first and second Buffa[4] were there; and Signor Sc——, and Signora Ch——, and Madame V——, with a countless cavalcade besides of chorusers, figurantes, at the sight of whom Merry afterwards declared, that "then for the first time it struck him seriously, that he was about to marry—a dancer." But there was no help for it. Besides, it was her day; these were, in fact, her friends and kinsfolk. The assemblage, though whimsical, was all very natural. But when the bride—handing out of the last coach a still more extraordinary figure than the rest—presented to him as her *father*—the gentleman that was to *give her away*—no less a person than Signor Delpini[5] himself—with a sort of pride, as much as to say, See what I have brought to do us honor!—the thought of so extraordinary a paternity quite overcame him; and slipping away under some pretence from the bride and her motley adherents, poor Merry took horse from the back yard to the nearest sea-coast, from which, shipping himself to America, he shortly after consoled himself with a more congenial match in the person of Miss Brunton; relieved from his intended clown father, and a bevy of painted Buffas for bridesmaids. (1826)

[2] trials concerned with dogs.

[3] Robert Merry (1755-1798), poet and dilettante; member of the Della Cruscan Academy in Florence.

[4] jester.

[5] Carlo Antonio Delpini (d. 1828), pantomimist.

That We Should Rise with the Lark

At what precise minute that little airy musician doffs his night gear, and prepares to tune up his unseasonable matins, we are not naturalists enough to determine. But for a mere human gentleman—that has no orchestra business to call him from his warm bed to such preposterous exercises—we take ten, or half after ten (eleven, of course during this Christmas solstice), to be the very earliest hour, at which he can begin to think of abandoning his pillow. To think of it, we say; for to do it in earnest, requires another half-hour's good consideration. Not but there are pretty sun-risings, as we are told, and such like gawds, abroad in the world, in summer time especially, some hours before what we have assigned; which a gentleman may see, as they say, only for getting up. But, having been tempted once or twice, in earlier life, to assist at those ceremonies, we confess our curiosity abated. We are no longer ambitious of being the sun's courtiers, to attend at his morning levees. We hold the good hours of the dawn too sacred to waste them upon such observances; which have in them, besides, something Pagan and Persic.[1] To say truth, we never anticipated our usual hour, or got up with the sun (as 'tis called), to go a journey,

[1] ancient Persians worshiped the sun.

or upon a foolish whole day's pleasuring, but we suffered for it all the long hours after in listlessness and headaches; Nature herself sufficiently declaring her sense of our presumption, in aspiring to regulate our frail waking courses by the measures of that celestial and sleepless traveller. We deny not that there is something sprightly and vigorous, at the outset especially, in these break-of-day excursions. It is flattering to get the start of a lazy world; to conquer death by proxy in his image. But the seeds of sleep and mortality are in us; and we pay usually in strange qualms, before night falls, the penalty of the unnatural inversion. Therefore, while the busy part of mankind are fast huddling on their clothes, are already up and about their occupations, content to have swallowed their sleep by wholesale; we choose to linger a-bed, and digest our dreams. It is the very time to recombine the wandering images, which night in a confused mass presented; to snatch them from forgetfulness; to shape, and mould them. Some people have no good of their dreams. Like fast feeders, they gulp them too grossly to taste them curiously. We love to chew the cud of a foregone vision: to collect the scattered rays of a brighter phantasm, or act over again, with firmer nerves, the sadder nocturnal tragedies; to drag into day-light a struggling and half-vanishing night-mare; to handle and examine the terrors, or the airy solaces. We have too much respect for these spiritual communications, to let them go so lightly. We are not so stupid, or so careless, as that Imperial forgetter of his dreams, that we should need a seer to remind us of the form of them. They seem to us to have as much significance as our waking concerns; or rather to import us more nearly, as more nearly we approach by years to the shadowy world, whither we are hastening. We have shaken hands with the world's business; we have done with it; we have discharged ourself of it. Why should we get up? we have neither suit to solicit, nor affairs to manage. The drama has shut in upon us at the fourth act. We have nothing here to expect, but in a short time a sick bed, and a dismissal. We delight to anticipate death by such shadows as night affords. We are already half acquainted with ghosts. We were never much in the world. Disappointment early struck a dark veil between us and its dazzling illusions. Our spirits showed grey before our hairs. The mighty changes of the world already appear as but the vain stuff out of which dramas are composed. We have asked no more of life than what the mimic images in play-houses present us with. Even those types have waxed fainter. Our clock appears to have struck. We are SUPERANNUATED. In this dearth of mundane satisfaction, we contract politic alliances with shadows. It is good to have friends at court. The abstracted media of dreams seem no ill introduction to that spiritual presence, upon which, in no long time, we expect to be thrown. We are trying to know a little of the usages of that colony; to learn the language, and the faces we shall meet with there, that we may be the less awkward at our first coming among them. We willingly call a phantom our fellow, as knowing we shall soon be of their dark companionship. Therefore, we cherish dreams. We try to spell in them the alphabet of the invisible world; and think we know already, how it shall be with us. Those uncouth shapes, which, while we clung to flesh and blood, affrighted us, have become familiar. We feel attenuated into their meagre essences, and have given the hand of half-way approach to incorporeal being. We once thought life to be something; but it has unaccountably fallen from us before its time. Therefore we choose to dally with visions. The sun has no purposes of ours to light us to. Why should we get up?

(1826)

That We Should Lie Down with the Lamb

We could never quite understand the philosophy of this arrangement, or the wisdom of our ancestors in sending us for instruction to these woolly bedfellows. A sheep, when it is dark, has nothing to do but to shut his silly eyes, and sleep if he can. Man found out long sixes.[1]—Hail, candle-light! without disparagement to sun or moon, the kindliest luminary of the three—if we may not rather style thee their radiant deputy, mild viceroy of the moon!—We love to read, talk, sit silent, eat, drink, sleep, by candle-light. They are every body's sun and moon. This is our peculiar and household planet. Wanting it, what savage unsocial nights must our ancestors have spent, wintering in caves and unillumined fastnesses! They must have lain about and grumbled at one another in the dark. What repartees could have passed, when you must have felt about for a smile, and handled a neighbor's cheek to be sure that he understood it? This accounts for the seriousness of the elder poetry. It

[1] candles weighing a sixth of a pound each.

has a sombre cast (try Hesiod[2] or Ossian[3]), derived from the tradition of those unlantern'd nights. Jokes came in with candles. We wonder how they saw to pick up a pin, if they had any. How did they sup? what a *mélange*[4] of chance carving they must have made of it!—here one had got the leg of a goat, when he wanted a horse's shoulder—there another had dipt his scooped palm in a kid-skin of wild honey, when he meditated right mare's milk. There is neither good eating nor drinking in fresco.[5] Who, even in these civilized times, has never experienced this, when at some economic table he has commenced dining after dusk, and waited for the flavor till the lights came? The senses absolutely give and take reciprocally. Can you tell pork from veal in the dark? or distinguish Sherris from pure Malaga? Take away the candle from the smoking man; by the glimmering of the left ashes, he knows that he is still smoking, but he knows it only by an inference; till the restored light, coming in aid of the olfactories, reveals to both senses the full aroma. Then how he redoubles his puffs! how he burnishes!—There is absolutely no such thing as reading, but by a candle. We have tried the affectation of a book at noon-day in gardens, and in sultry arbors; but it was labor thrown away. Those gay motes in the beam come about you, hovering and teasing, like many coquets, that will have you all to their self, and are jealous of your abstractions. By the midnight taper, the writer digests his meditations. By the same light, we must approach to their perusal, if we would catch the flame, the odor. It is a mockery, all that is reported of the influential Phœbus. No true poem ever owed its birth to the sun's light. They are abstracted works—

'Things that were born, when none but the still night,
And his dumb candle, saw his pinching throes.'

Marry, daylight—daylight might furnish the images, the crude material; but for the fine shapings, the true turning and filing (as mine author hath it), they must be content to hold their inspiration of the candle. The mild internal light, that reveals them, like fires on the domestic hearth, goes out in the sunshine. Night and silence call out the starry fancies. Milton's Morning Hymn in Paradise, we would hold a good wager, was penned at midnight; and Taylor's rich description of a sunrise smells decidedly of the taper. Even ourselves, in these our humbler lucubrations, time our best measured cadences (Prose has her cadences) not unfrequently to the charm of the drowsier watchman, 'blessing the doors,' or the wild sweep of winds at midnight. Even now a loftier speculation than we have yet attempted, courts our endeavors. We would indite something about the Solar System.—*Betty, bring the candles.*

(1826)

Letters

There are no pieces of English prose more delightful than Lamb's letters, unless they be his essays. Certainly they reveal him as a born essayist, for many of the letters are actually chatty essays; if they are written with less conscious art than the compositions of Elia, they are more spontaneous. At any rate, their delicious mixture of sobriety and nonsense, and their frank exhibition of their author's mellow personality have won for them a justly deserved rank among the greatest letters in our language. It is not difficult to understand why they were received with joyous expectation by Manning, Coleridge, and Southey.

To Thomas Manning

24th Sept., 1802, London.

My Dear Manning,—

Since the date of my last letter I have been a traveller. A strong desire seized me of visiting remote regions. My first impulse was to go and see Paris. It was a trivial objection to my aspiring mind, that I did not understand a word of the language, since I certainly intend sometime in my life to see Paris, and equally certainly intend never to learn the language; therefore that could be no objection. However, I am very glad I did not go, because you had left Paris (I see) before I could

[2] Greek poet of the eighth century B.C.
[3] Cf. p. 38 [4] mixture. [5] in the open air.

have set out. I believe Stoddart promising to go with me another year, prevented that plan. My next scheme (for to my restless, ambitious mind London was become a bed of thorns) was to visit the far-famed peak in Derbyshire, where the Devil sits, they say, without breeches. *This* my purer mind rejected as indelicate. And my final resolve was, a tour to the Lakes. I set out with Mary to Keswick, without giving Coleridge any notice, for my time, being precious, did not admit of it. He received us with all the hospitality in the world, and gave up his time to show us all the wonders of the country. He dwells upon a small hill by the side of Keswick, in a comfortable house, quite enveloped on all sides by a net of mountains: great floundering bears and monsters they seemed, all couchant and asleep. We got in in the evening, travelling in a post-chaise from Penrith, in the midst of a gorgeous sunshine, which transmuted all the mountains into colors, purple, &c., &c. We thought we had got into fairyland. But that went off (as it never came again; while we stayed we had no more fine sunsets;) and we entered Coleridge's comfortable study just in the dusk, when the mountains were all dark with clouds upon their heads. Such an impression I never received from objects of sight before, nor do I suppose I can ever again. Glorious creatures, fine old fellows, Skiddaw, &c., I never shall forget ye, how ye lay about that night, like an intrenchment; gone to bed, as it seemed, for the night, but promising that ye were to be seen in the morning. Coleridge had got a blazing fire in his study; which is a large, antique, ill-shaped room, with an old-fashioned organ, never played upon, big enough for a church, shelves of scattered folios, an Æolian harp, and an old sofa, half bed, &c. And all looking out upon the last fading view of Skiddaw, and his broad-breasted brethren: what a night! Here we stayed three full weeks, in which time I visited Wordsworth's cottage, where we stayed a day or two with the Clarksons, (good people, and most hospitable, at whose house we tarried one day and night,) and saw Lloyd. The Wordsworths were gone to Calais. They have since been in London, and past much time with us: he is now gone into Yorkshire to be married. So we have seen Keswick, Grasmere, Ambleside, Ulswater, (where the Clarksons live,) and a place at the other end of Ulswater; I forget the name: to which we travelled on a very sultry day, over the middle of Helvellyn. We have clambered up to the top of Skiddaw, and I have waded up the bed of Lodore. In fine, I have satisfied myself that there is such a thing as that which tourists call *romantic*, which I very much suspected before: they make such a spluttering about it, and toss their splendid epithets around them, till they give as dim a light as at four o'clock next morning the lamps do after an illumination. Mary was excessively tired when she got about half-way up Skiddaw, but we came to a cold rill (than which nothing can be imagined more cold, running over cold stones,) and with the reinforcement of a draught of cold water, she surmounted it most manfully. Oh, its fine black head, and the bleak air atop of it, with a prospect of mountains all about and about, making you giddy; and then Scotland afar off, and the border countries so famous in song and ballad! It was a day that will stand out, like a mountain, I am sure, in my life. But I am returned, (I have now been come home near three weeks: I was a month out,) and you cannot conceive the degradation I felt at first, from being accustomed to wander free as air among mountains, and bathe in rivers without being controlled by anyone, to come home and *work*. I felt very *little*. I had been dreaming I was a very great man. But that is going off, and I find I shall conform in time to that state of life to which it has pleased God to call me. Besides, after all, Fleet Street and the Strand are better places to live in for good and all than amidst Skiddaw. Still, I turn back to those great places where I wandered about, participating in their greatness. After all, I could not *live* in Skiddaw. I could spend a year, two, three years among them, but I must have a prospect of seeing Fleet Street at the end of that time, or I should mope and pine away, I know. Still, Skiddaw is a fine creature. My habits are changing, I think, *i.e.*, from drunk to sober. Whether I shall be happy or not remains to be proved. I shall certainly be more happy in a morning; but whether I shall not sacrifice the fat, and the marrow, and the kidneys, *i.e.*, the night, glorious care-drowning night, that heals all our wrongs, pours wine into our mortifications, changes the scene from indifferent and flat to bright and brilliant! O Manning, if I should have formed a diabolical resolution, by the time you come to England, of not admitting any spirituous liquors into my house, will you be my guest on such shameworthy terms? Is life, with such limitations, worth trying? The truth is, that my liquors bring

a nest of friendly harpies about my house, who consume me. This is a pitiful tale to be read at St. Gothard,[1] but it is just now nearest my heart. Fenwick is a ruined man. He is hiding himself from his creditors, and has sent his wife and children into the country. Fell, my other drunken companion (that has been: *nam hic caestus artemque repono*)[2], is turned editor of a Naval Chronicle. Godwin continues a steady friend, though the same facility does not remain of visiting him often. That . . . has detached Marshall from his house; Marshall, the man who went to sleep when the "Ancient Mariner" was reading; the old, steady, unalterable friend of the Professor. Holcroft is not yet come to town. I expect to see him, and will deliver your message. Things come crowding in to say, and no room for 'em. Some things are too little to be told, *i.e.* to have a preference; some are too big and circumstantial. Thanks for yours, which was most delicious. Would I had been with you, benighted, etc.! I fear my head is turned with wandering. I shall never be the same acquiescent being. Farewell. Write again quickly, for I shall not like to hazard a letter, not knowing where the fates have carried you. Farewell, my dear fellow.

C. Lamb.

To Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Dear Coleridge,—Why will you make your visits which should give pleasure, a matter of regret to your friends? You never come but you take away some folio, that is part of my existence. With a great deal of difficulty I was made to comprehend the extent of my loss. My maid, Becky, brought me a dirty bit of paper, which contained her description of some book which Mr. Coleridge had taken away. It was "Luster's Tables,"[1] which, for some time, I could not make out. "What! has he carried away any of the *tables*, Becky?" "No, it wasn't any tables, but it was a book that he called Luster's Tables." I was obliged to search personally among my shelves, and a huge fissure suddenly disclosed to me the true nature of the damage I had sustained. That book, Coleridge, you should not have taken away, for it is not mine; it is the property of a friend, who does not know its value, nor indeed have I been very sedulous in explaining to him the estimate of it; but was rather contented in giving a sort of corroboration to a hint that he let fall, as to its being suspected to be not genuine, so that in all probability it would have fallen to me as a deodand;[2] not but I am as sure it is Luther's as I am sure that Jack Bunyan wrote the *Pilgrim's Progress*; but it was not for me to pronounce upon the validity of testimony that had been disputed by learneder clerks than I; so I quietly let it occupy the place it had usurped upon my shelves, and should never have thought of issuing an ejectment against it; for why should I be so bigoted as to allow rites of hospitality to none but my own books, children, &c.?—a species of egotism I abhor from my heart. No; let 'em all snug together, Hebrews and Proselytes of the gate; no selfish partiality of mine shall make distinction between them, I charge no warehouse room for my friend's commodities; they are welcome to come and stay as long as they like, without paying rent. I have several such strangers that I treat with more than Arabian courtesy. There's a copy of More's fine poem,[3] which is none of mine, but I cherish it as my own. I am none of those churlish landlords that advertise the goods to be taken away in ten days' time, or then to be sold to pay expenses. So you see I had no right to lend you that book. I may lend you my own books, because it is at my own hazard; but it is not honest to hazard a friend's property; I always make that distinction. I hope you will bring it with you, or send it by Hartley;[4] or he can bring that, and you the *Polemical Discourses*, and come and eat some atoning mutton with us one of these days shortly. We are engaged two or three Sundays deep, but always dine at home on weekdays at half-past four. So come all four—men and books I mean. My third shelf (northern compartment) from the top has two devilish gaps, where you have knocked out its two eye-teeth.

Your wronged friend,

C. Lamb.

[1] a pass in the Alps now famous for its long tunnel.

[2] Here I lay down my gloves and the game. [Said by the boxer who has fought his last fight.]—Virgil, *Æneid*, V, 484.

[1] possibly *The Table Talk* of Martin Luther (1483-1546), the Protestant reformer.

[2] a thing given or forfeited to God.

[3] probably *Psychosoia Platonica* by Henry More, an English writer of the seventeenth century.

[4] Coleridge's son.

William Hazlitt

(1778-1830)

The extent to which books possess an objective reality of their own has rarely been more completely exemplified than in the essays and lectures of Hazlitt. As a man he was singularly prone to alienate other people and difficult to keep as a friend. Yet the Hazlitt whom we know in his writings is entirely sympathetic and likable. In scope, in artistic sensitivity, and in breadth of knowledge he is England's leading essayist. If we must love Lamb more, Hazlitt we can more admire.

He was born on April 10, 1778, at Maidstone, in Kent, the son of a Unitarian minister. The faith of his father was in that day perhaps more involved with advanced liberal thought than was any other faith in England. In 1780 the Hazlitts, then in Ireland, became interested in the welfare of certain American prisoners of war, with the result that they moved next to Massachusetts (1783), in the vicinity of Boston. Unable to secure a permanent post in the new land of freedom, the elder Hazlitt removed his family once more to England in 1786, and settled in Wem, Shropshire.

Hazlitt's father belonged to the party of Godwin, Holcroft, and Benjamin Franklin. Thus Hazlitt was nurtured in an atmosphere of radicalism. Like Shelley, Hazlitt remained constant to the principles of the French Revolution throughout his life, and the conservatism of English politics in his era only intensified that feeling of maladjustment to society toward which his character strongly led him. At the age of thirteen he wrote a letter to a newspaper in protest against the violence done by a mob upon the radical Joseph Priestley. As he outlived Shelley, he must therefore be called the last English writer who was born into the period of the French Revolution and remained its partisan. Early in life he rejected the Hobbesian theory (adopted by Helvétius, Hartley, Malthus, Bentham, and their followers) that man is by nature selfish. His first publication, *An Essay on the Principles of Human Action* (1804), was composed in order "to remove a stumbling-block in the metaphysical doctrine of the innate and necessary selfishness of the human mind." In the same spirit he penned his *Reply to the Essay on Population by the Rev. T. R. Malthus* (1807), his first aggressive defense of the rights of the poor. Liberty, fraternity, and the rights of men remained Hazlitt's watchwords. But he was by no means always the benevolent critic. He attacked vigorously where he disliked, and his hates seem to have been more numerous than his affections. It was not only the Tories, the aristocrats, the world of fashion, or the Roman and Anglican churches which received his abuse. "He is your only good damner," said Keats of him, "and if ever I am damned—damn me if I shouldn't like him to damn me." Though Keats was spared his attack, other romantic poets (Byron, Shelley, Scott, and even Coleridge) were not. His criticisms were, however, never done in the unpardonably unfair spirit of the Tory reviewers, and Keats could with justice name as one of the "three things to rejoice at in this age . . . Hazlitt's depth of taste."

He had been sent to a theological college at Hackney, but left it three years later. Soon after (1798) he made the great discovery of his life, Coleridge. Of this experience he tells us in the beautiful essay, *My First Acquaintance with Poets* (1823). "The light of his genius," he says of Coleridge, "shone into my soul, like the sun's rays glittering in the puddles of the road." Miserable at his inability to master his chosen field, metaphysics, Hazlitt for ten years after leaving college worked zealously at an art in which his brother John was already a success, painting. He went to Paris (1802) to study and copy the masterpieces of the Louvre, but although his original paintings showed some talent, he at last became convinced that he lacked the genius demanded by the fine arts. The time spent

in this study was not wasted, however. For not only was he to produce some valuable art criticism, but he was also to bring to his writing the painter's awareness of line and color. On his return to England, he wrote on many subjects—politics, economics, philosophy, and grammar.

In 1808 he married Sarah Stoddard, and lived with her for a number of years at Winterslow, near Salisbury. But Hazlitt's relations with women were doomed to failure by his Bohemian temperament. He separated from his wife and had an ill-fated, half-mad love affair with Sarah Walker, which with amazing lack of restraint he displayed before the public in his *Liber Amoris* (1823). That book shows how much he was a child of Rousseau, whose *Confessions* it resembles in its frank exhibition of suffering and folly (cf. Vol. II, p. 42). Later he remarried, and his *Notes of a Journey through France and Italy* (1826) are a record of his brief life with the second Mrs. Hazlitt. In the meantime, having delivered some lectures on philosophy, Hazlitt had turned more and more to literature. He began to write dramatic criticism for the *Morning Chronicle*, and delivered his four great groups of lectures: *The Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (1817), *The English Poets* (1818), *The English Comic Writers* (1819), and *The Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth* (1820). By virtue of these alone Hazlitt must be considered the greatest of the romantic critics, since the criticism of Coleridge and Lamb is fragmentary in character. One must go as far back as Dryden's great prefaces to find comment on English literature of such vital and enlightened quality. But political matters never ceased to interest him, and in 1819 he collected a series of writings under the title of *Political Essays*. He later wrote a *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte* (1828-30). As for his art criticism, in addition to the splendid account of paintings in his book on France and Italy, he collaborated with the painter Haydon on articles for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, composed the *Sketches of the Principal Picture Galleries in England* (1824), and wrote many similar essays which were published after his death. His later volume of criticism, *The Spirit of the Age* (1825), shows Hazlitt at his best in his estimate of twenty-five eminent contemporaries.

But it is in his familiar essays written for the *London Magazine*, Hunt's *Examiner*, and various periodicals that Hazlitt is now most often read. These appeared in book form under the titles of *The Round Table* (1817), *Table Talk* (1821-22), and *The Plain Speaker* (1826). After Hazlitt's death his son issued some of his best essays, till then uncollected, in the volumes *Winterslow* and *Sketches and Essays*. In these volumes, Hazlitt proves himself second to none as an essayist. He makes Lamb, for all his kindly warmth and fine taste, seem narrow and withdrawn from life. In sheer versatility Hazlitt has never been matched among essayists, for he is equally at home among people, books, plays, paintings, politics, or economics. To him "gusto" was a prime requisite in all art, and his writing abounds in that quality. Though in his own life oversensitive and ill adjusted to people, he brought emotional energy and enthusiasm to everything he wrote. As Professor C. G. Osgood well says, "Hazlitt changes like the weather—now fair and sunny, or stormy, rough, tranquil, humid, overcast, according to the mood, yet always free as out-of-doors." He was a great talker, and the idiom of speech invests his work with raciness. "No style is good," he once said, "that is not fit to be spoken or read aloud with effect."

As a critic, he exhibits perfectly the romantic point of view toward literature. It is instructive to note the difference between the approach of a typical neoclassicist and Hazlitt. Addison, for example, when he came to write his remarkable papers on *Paradise Lost*, first had to establish a criterion for judgment; taking Aristotelian dogma as a measurement, he then proceeded to gauge Milton's stature by those principles. Hazlitt, on the other hand, is freely impressionistic. He records for us his adventures among great books, and we see them through the glass of his literary personality. The greatness of such criticism is, of course, dependent upon the greatness of the critic. In Hazlitt's case the result is some of the most inspiring opinions and interpretations in our literature.

The standard edition of Hazlitt's *Works* was prepared by A. R. Waller and A. Glover in twelve volumes (1904). Sources for his biography are his grandson W. C. Hazlitt's

Memoirs of William Hazlitt (1867) and *Lamb and Hazlitt* (1900). The best biography is P. P. Howe's (1922). Also to be recommended are studies of Hazlitt found in Thomas De Quincey's *Essays on the Poets and Other English Writers* (1865); P. E. More's *Shelburne Essays*, Second Series (1905); and Sir Leslie Stephen's *Hours in a Library*, Vol. II (1894).

On Going a Journey

One of the pleasantest things in the world is going a journey; but I like to go by myself. I can enjoy society in a room; but out-of-doors, Nature is company enough for me. I am then never less alone than when alone.

The fields his study, Nature was his book.[1]

I cannot see the wit of walking and talking at the same time. When I am in the country, I wish to vegetate like the country. I am not for criticizing hedgerows and black cattle. I go out of town in order to forget the town and all that is in it. There are those who for this purpose go to watering-places, and carry the metropolis with them. I like more elbow-room, and fewer incumbrances. I like solitude, when I give myself up to it, for the sake of solitude; nor do I ask for

a friend in my retreat,
Whom I may whisper, solitude is sweet.[2]

The soul of a journey is liberty, perfect liberty, to think, feel, do just as one pleases. We go a journey chiefly to be free of all impediments and of all inconveniences; to leave ourselves behind, much more to get rid of others. It is because I want a little breathing-space to muse on indifferent matters, where Contemplation

May plume her feathers and let grow her wings,
That in the various bustle of resort
Were all too ruffled, and sometimes impaired,[3]

that I absent myself from the town for a while, without feeling at a loss the moment I am left by myself. Instead of a friend in a post-chaise or in a Tilbury,[4] to exchange good things with and vary the same stale topics over again, for once let me have a truce with impertinence. Give me the clear blue sky over my head, and the green turf beneath my feet, a winding road before me, and a three hours' march to dinner—and then to thinking! It is hard if I cannot start some game on these lone heaths. I laugh, I run, I leap, I sing for joy. From the point of yonder rolling cloud I plunge into my past being, and revel there, as the sunburnt Indian plunges headlong into the wave that wafts him to his native shore. Then long-forgotten things, like "sunken wrack and sumless treasuries," burst upon my eager sight, and I begin to feel, think, and be myself again. Instead of an awkward silence, broken by attempts at wit or dull commonplaces, mine is that undisturbed silence of the heart which alone is perfect eloquence. No one likes puns, alliterations, antitheses, argument, and analysis better than I do; but I sometimes had rather be without them. "Leave, oh, leave me to my repose!" I have just now other business in hand, which would seem idle to you, but is with me "very stuff o' the conscience." Is not this wild rose sweet without a comment? Does not this daisy leap to my heart set in its coat of emerald? Yet if I were to explain to you the circumstance that has so endeared it to me, you would only smile. Had I not better then keep it to myself, and let it serve me to brood over, from here to yonder craggy point, and from thence onward to the far-distant horizon? I should be bad company all that way, and therefore prefer being alone. I have heard it said that you may, when the moody fit comes on, walk or ride on by yourself, and indulge your reveries. But this looks like a breach of manners, as neglect of others, and you are thinking all the time that you ought to rejoin your party. "Out upon such half-faced fellowship," say I. I like to be either entirely to myself, or entirely at the disposal of others; to talk or be silent, to walk or sit still, to be sociable or solitary. I was pleased with an observation of Mr. Cobbett's,[5] that he thought it a bad French custom to drink our wine with our meals, and that an Englishman ought to do only one thing at a time. So I cannot talk and think, or indulge in melancholy musing and lively conversation by fits and starts.

[1] Bloomfield, *The Farmer's Boy, Spring*, 31.
[2] Cowper, *Retirement*, 741-2.
[3] Milton, *Comus*, 378-80.
[4] a two-wheeled carriage without top or cover.
[5] William Cobbett (1762-1835), English political writer.

"Let me have a companion of my way," says Sterne,[6] "were it but to remark how the shadows lengthen as the sun declines." It is beautifully said; but in my opinion this continual comparing of notes interferes with the involuntary impression of things upon the mind, and hurts the sentiment. If you only hint what you feel in a kind of dumb show, it is insipid; if you have to explain it, it is making a toil of a pleasure. You cannot read the book of Nature without being perpetually put to the trouble of translating it for the benefit of others. I am for the synthetical method on a journey in preference to the analytical. I am content to lay in a stock of ideas then, and to examine and anatomize them afterwards. I want to see my vague notions float like the down of the thistle before the breeze, and not to have them entangled in the briars and thorns of controversy. For once, I like to have it all my own way; and this is impossible unless you are alone, or in such company as I do not covet. I have no objection to argue a point with anyone for twenty miles of measured road, but not for pleasure. If you remark the scent of a bean-field crossing the road, perhaps your fellow-traveler has no smell. If you point to a distant object, perhaps he is short-sighted, and has to take out his glass to look at it. There is a feeling in the air, a tone in the color of a cloud which hits your fancy, but the effect of which you are unable to account for. There is then no sympathy, but an uneasy craving after it, and a dissatisfaction which pursues you on the way, and in the end probably produces ill-humor. Now I never quarrel with myself, and take all my own conclusions for granted till I find it necessary to defend them against objections. It is not merely that you may not be of accord on the objects and circumstances that present themselves before you—these may recall a number of objects, and lead to associations too delicate and refined to be possibly communicated to others. Yet these I love to cherish, and sometimes still fondly clutch them, when I can escape from the throng to do so. To give way to our feelings before company seems extravagance or affectation; and on the other hand, to have to unravel this mystery of our being at every turn, and to make others take an equal interest in it—otherwise the end is not answered—is a task to which few are competent. We must "give it an understanding, but no tongue." My old friend C——, however, could do both. He could go on in the most delightful explanatory way over hill and dale, a summer's day, and convert a landscape into a didactic poem or a Pindaric ode. "He talked far above singing." If I could so clothe my ideas in sounding and flowing words, I might perhaps wish to have someone with me to admire the swelling theme; or I could be more content, were it possible for me still to hear his echoing voice in the woods of All-Foxden. They had "that fine madness in them which our first poets had"; and if they could have been caught by some rare instrument, would have breathed such strains as the following:

Here be woods as green
As any, air likewise as fresh and sweet
As when smooth Zephyrus plays on the fleet
Face of the curled stream, with flowers as many
As the young spring gives, and as choice as any;
Here be all new delights, cool streams, and wells,
Arbors o'ergrown with woodbine, caves and dells;
Choose where thou wilt, while I sit by and sing,
Or gather rushes to make many a ring
For thy long fingers; tell thee tales of love—
How the pale Phœbe, hunting in a grove,
First saw the boy Endymion, from whose eyes
She took eternal fire that never dies;
How she conveyed him softly in a sleep,
His temples bound with poppy, to the steep
Head of old Latmos, where she stoops each night,
Gilding the mountains with her brother's light,
To kiss her sweetest.

—*Faithful Shepherdess.*[7]

Had I words and images at command like these, I would attempt to wake the thoughts that lie slumbering on golden ridges in the evening clouds; but at the sight of Nature my fancy, poor as it is, droops and closes up its leaves, like flowers at sunset. I can make nothing out on the spot—I must have time to collect myself.

In general, a good thing spoils out-of-door prospects; it should be reserved for table-talk. L—— is for this reason, I take it, the worst company in the world out-of-doors; because he is the best within. I grant there is one subject on which it is pleasant to talk on a journey; and that is, what one shall have for supper when we get to our inn at night. The open air improves this sort of conversation or friendly altercation, by setting a keener edge on appetite. Every mile of the road heightens the flavor of the viands we expect at the end of it. How

[6] Laurence Sterne (1713-1768), English clergyman and novelist.

[7] by John Fletcher (Act I, Scene 3).

fine it is to enter some old town, walled and turreted, just at the approach of nightfall, or to come to some straggling village, with the lights streaming through the surrounding gloom; and then, after inquiring for the best entertainment that the place affords, to "take one's ease at one's inn"! These eventful moments in our lives' history are too precious, too full of solid, heartfelt happiness, to be frittered and dribbled away in imperfect sympathy. I would have them all to myself, and drain them to the last drop; they will do to talk of or to write about afterwards. What a delicate speculation it is, after drinking whole goblets of tea—

The cups that cheer, but not inebriate,[8]

and letting the fumes ascend into the brain, to sit considering what we shall have for supper—eggs and a rasher, a rabbit smothered in onions, or an excellent veal cutlet! Sancho in such a situation once fixed upon cow-heel; and his choice, though he could not help it, is not to be disparaged. Then, in the intervals of pictured scenery and Shandean contemplation, to catch the preparation and the stir in the kitchen—*Procul, O procul este profani!*[9] These hours are sacred to silence and to musing, to be treasured up in the memory, and to feed the source of smiling thoughts hereafter. I would not waste them in idle talk; or if I must have the integrity of fancy broken in upon, I would rather it were by a stranger than a friend. A stranger takes his hue and character from the time and place; he is a part of the furniture and costume of an inn. If he is a Quaker or from the West Riding of Yorkshire, so much the better. I do not even try to sympathize with him, and he breaks no squares. I associate nothing with my traveling companion but present objects and passing events. In his ignorance of me and my affairs I in a manner forget myself. But a friend reminds one of other things, rips up old grievances, and destroys the abstraction of the scene. He comes in ungraciously between us and our imaginary character. Something is dropped in the course of conversation that gives a hint of your profession and pursuits; or from having someone with you that knows the less sublime portions of your history, it seems that other people do. You are no longer a citizen of the world; but your "unhoused, free condition is put into circumscription and confine." The *incognito* of an inn is one of its striking privileges—"lord of oneself, uncumbered with a name." Oh! it is great to shake off the trammels of the world and of public opinion—to lose our importunate, tormenting, everlasting personal identity in the elements of Nature, and become the creature of the moment, clear of all ties—to hold to the universe only by a dish of sweetbreads, and to owe nothing but the score of the evening—and no longer seeking for applause and meeting with contempt, to be known by no other title than *the gentleman in the parlor!* One may take one's choice of all characters in this romantic state of uncertainty as to one's real pretensions, and become indefinitely respectable and negatively right-worshipful. We baffle prejudice and disappoint conjecture; and from being so to others, begin to be objects of curiosity and wonder even to ourselves. We are no more those hackneyed commonplaces that we appear in the world; an inn restores us to the level of nature, and quits scores with society! I have certainly spent some enviable hours at inns—sometimes when I have been left entirely to myself, and have tried to solve some metaphysical problem, as once at Witham Common, where I found out the proof that likeness is not a case of the association of ideas—at other times, when there have been pictures in the room, as at St. Neot's—I think it was —where I first met with Gribelin's engravings of the Cartoons,[10] into which I entered at once, and at a little inn on the borders of Wales, where there happened to be hanging some of Westall's[11] drawings, which I compared triumphantly—for a theory that I had, not for the admired artist—with the figure of a girl who had ferried me over the Severn, standing up in a boat between me and the twilight—at other times I might mention luxuriating in books, with a peculiar interest in this way, as I remember sitting up half the night to read *Paul and Virginia*,[12] which I picked up at an inn at Bridgewater, after being drenched in the rain all day; and at the same place I got through two volumes of Madame d'Arblay's *Camilla*.[13] It was on the tenth of April, 1798, that I sat down to a volume of the *New Eloise*,[14] at the inn at Llangollen, over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken. The letter I chose was that in which St. Preux describes his feelings as he first caught a glimpse from the

[8] Cowper, *The Task*, IV, 39; cf. Vol. II, p. 25.

[9] Hence, O hence, ye profane.

[10] Simon Gribelin (1661-1733) published the cartoons of Raphael in 1707.

[11] either Richard Westall (1765-1836) or his brother William (1781-1850).

[12] by Bernardin de St. Pierre (1788).

[13] Published in 1796.

[14] Cf. Vol. II, p. 49.

heights of the Jura of the Pays de Vaud, which I had brought with me as a *bonne bouche*[15] to crown the evening with. It was my birthday, and I had for the first time come from a place in the neighborhood to visit this delightful spot. The road to Llangollen turns off between Chirk and Wrexham; and on passing a certain point you come all at once upon the valley, which opens like an amphitheater, broad, barren hills rising in majestic state on either side, with "green, upland swells that echo to the bleat of flocks" below, and the river Dee babbling over its stony bed in the midst of them. The valley at this time "glittered green with sunny showers," and à budding ash tree dipped its tender branches in the chiding stream. How proud, how glad I was to walk along the highroad that overlooks the delicious prospect, repeating the lines which I have just quoted from Mr. Coleridge's poems! But besides the prospect which opened beneath my feet, another also opened to my inward sight, a heavenly vision, on which were written, in letters large as Hope could make them, these four words, LIBERTY, GENIUS, LOVE, VIRTUE; which have since faded into the light of common day, or mock my idle gaze.[16]

The beautiful is vanished, and returns not.

Still I would return some time or other to this enchanted spot; but I would return to it alone. What other self could I find to share that influx of thoughts, of regret, and delight, the fragments of which I could hardly conjure up to myself, so much have they been broken and defaced! I could stand on some tall rock, and overlook the precipice of years that separates me from what I then was. I was at that time going shortly to visit the poet whom I have above named. Where is he now? Not only I myself have changed; the world, which was then new to me, has become old and incorrigible. Yet will I turn to thee in thought, O silvan Dee, in joy, in youth and gladness as thou wert; and thou shalt always be to me the river of Paradise, where I will drink of the waters of life freely!

There is hardly anything that shows the shortsightedness or capriciousness of the imagination more than traveling does. With change of place we change our ideas; nay, our opinions and feelings. We can by an effort indeed transport ourselves to old and long-forgotten scenes, and then the picture of the mind revives again; but we forget those that we have just left. It seems that we can think but of one place at a time. The canvas of the fancy is but of a certain extent, and if we paint one set of objects upon it, they immediately efface every other. We cannot enlarge our conceptions, we only shift our point of view. The landscape bares its bosom to the enraptured eye, we take our fill of it, and seem as if we could form no other image of beauty or grandeur. We pass on, and think no more of it; the horizon that shuts it from our sight also blots it from our memory like a dream. In traveling through a wild, barren country I can form no idea of a woody and cultivated one. It appears to me that all the world must be barren, like what I see of it. In the country we forget the town, and in town we despise the country. "Beyond Hyde Park," says Sir Fopling Flutter,[17] "all is a desert." All that part of the map that we do not see before us is a blank. The world in our conceit of it is not much bigger than a nutshell. It is not one prospect expanded into another, county joined to county, kingdom to kingdom, lands to seas, making an image voluminous and vast; the mind can form no larger idea of space than the eye can take in at a single glance. The rest is a name written on a map, a calculation of arithmetic. For instance, what is the true signification of that immense mass of territory and population known by the name of China to us? An inch of pasteboard on a wooden globe, of no more account than a China orange! Things near us are seen of the size of life; things at a distance are diminished to the size of the understanding. We measure the universe by ourselves, and even comprehend the texture of our own being only piecemeal. In this way, however, we remember an infinity of things and places. The mind is like a mechanical instrument that plays a great variety of tunes, but it must play them in succession. One idea recalls another, but it at the same time excludes all others. In trying to renew old recollections we cannot, as it were, unfold the whole web of our existence; we must pick out the single threads. So, in coming to a place where we have formerly lived and with which we have intimate associations, everyone must have found that the feeling grows more vivid the nearer we approach the spot, from the mere anticipation of the actual impression: we remember circumstances, feelings, persons, faces, names, that we had not thought of for years; but for the time all the rest of the world is forgotten!

[15] choice morsel.

[16] Hazlitt was much disturbed at the loss of political liberty after Napoleon's defeat.

[17] in Etherege's *The Man of Mode*.

To return to the question I have quitted above. —I have no objection to go to see ruins, aqueducts, pictures, in company with a friend or a party, but rather the contrary, for the former reason reversed. They are intelligible matters, and will bear talking about. The sentiment here is not tacit, but communicable and overt. Salisbury Plain is barren of criticism, but Stonehenge[18] will bear a discussion antiquarian, picturesque, and philosophical. In setting out on a party of pleasure the first consideration always is where we shall go to; in taking a solitary ramble the question is what we shall meet with by the way. "The mind is its own place"; nor are we anxious to arrive at the end of our journey. I can myself do the honors indifferently well to works of art and curiosity. I once took a party to Oxford with no mean *éclat*—showed them that seat of the Muses at a distance,

With glistering spires and pinnacles adorned,[19]

descanted on the learned air that breathes from the grassy quadrangles and stone walls of halls and cottages—was at home in the Bodleian;[20] and at Blenheim[21] quite superseded the powdered cicerone[22] that attended us, and that pointed in vain with his wand to commonplace beauties in matchless pictures. As another exception to the above reasoning, I should not feel confident in venturing on a journey in a foreign country without a companion. I should want at intervals to hear the sound of my own language. There is an involuntary antipathy in the mind of an Englishman to foreign manners and notions that requires the assistance of social sympathy to carry it off. As the distance from home increases, this relief, which was at first a luxury, becomes a passion and an appetite. A person would almost feel stifled to find himself in the deserts of Arabia without friends and countrymen; there must be allowed to be something in the view of Athens or old Rome that claims the utterance of speech; and I own that the Pyramids are too mighty for any single contemplation. In such situations, so opposite to all one's ordinary train of ideas, one seems a species by oneself, a limb torn off from society, unless one can meet with instant fellowship and support. Yet I did not feel this want or craving very pressing once, when I first set my foot on the laughing shores of France. Calais was peopled with novelty and delight. The confused, busy murmur of the place was like oil and wine poured into my ears; nor did the mariners' hymn, which was sung from the top of an old crazy vessel in the harbor, as the sun went down, send an alien sound into my soul. I only breathed the air of general humanity. I walked over "the vine-covered hills and gay regions of France," erect and satisfied; for the image of man was not cast down and chained to the foot of arbitrary thrones. I was at no loss for language, for that of all the great schools of painting was open to me. The whole is vanished like a shade. Pictures, heroes, glory, freedom, all are fled; nothing remains but the Bourbons[23] and the French people! —There is undoubtedly a sensation in traveling into foreign parts that is to be had nowhere else; but it is more pleasing at the time than lasting. It is too remote from our habitual associations to be a common topic of discourse or reference, and, like a dream or another state of existence, does not piece into our daily modes of life. It is an animated but a momentary hallucination. It demands an effort to exchange our actual for our ideal identity; and to feel the pulse of our old transports revive very keenly, we must "jump" all our present comforts and connections. Our romantic and itinerant character is not to be domesticated. Dr. Johnson remarked how little foreign travel added to the facilities of conversation in those who had been abroad. In fact, the time we have spent there is both delightful, and, in one sense, instructive; but it appears to be cut out of our substantial, downright existence, and never to join kindly on to it. We are not the same, but another, and perhaps more enviable, individual, all the time we are out of our own country. We are lost to ourselves as well as our friends. So the poet somewhat quaintly sings,

Out of my country and myself I go

Those who wish to forget painful thoughts do well to absent themselves for a while from the ties and objects that recall them; but we can be said only to fulfill our destiny in the place that gave us birth. I should on this account like well enough to spend the whole of my life in traveling abroad, if I could anywhere borrow another life to spend afterwards at home! (1822)

[18] a large group of prehistoric stone pillars on Salisbury Plain.

[19] *Paradise Lost,* III, 550.

[20] the famous university library.

[21] the palace built by the Duke of Marlborough as a gift of the state in recognition of his victory at Blenheim.

[22] guide.

[23] the French ruling family deposed by the Revolution but restored after Waterloo.

On Familiar Style

It is not easy to write a familiar style. Many people mistake a familiar for a vulgar style, and suppose that to write without affectation is to write at random. On the contrary, there is nothing that requires more precision, and, if I may so say, purity of expression, than the style I am speaking of. It utterly rejects not only all the unmeaning pomp, but all low, cant phrases, and loose, unconnected, *slipshod* allusions. It is not to take the first word that offers, but the best word in common use; it is not to throw words together in any combinations we please, but to follow and avail ourselves of the true idiom of the language. To write a genuine familiar or truly English style is to write as any one would speak in common conversation who had a thorough command and choice of words, or who could discourse with ease, force, and perspicuity, setting aside all pedantic and oratorical flourishes. Or to give another illustration, to write naturally is the same thing in regard to common conversation as to read naturally is in regard to common speech. It does not follow that it is an easy thing to give the true accent and inflection to the words you utter, because you do not attempt to rise above the level of ordinary life and colloquial speaking. You do not assume, indeed, the solemnity of the pulpit, or the tone of stage-declamation; neither are you at liberty to gabble on at a venture, without emphasis or discretion, or to resort to vulgar dialect or clownish pronunciation. You must steer a middle course. You are tied down to a given and appropriate articulation, which is determined by the habitual associations between sense and sound, and which you can only hit by entering into the author's meaning, as you must find the proper words and style to express yourself by fixing your thoughts on the subject you have to write about. Any one may mouth out a passage with a theatrical cadence, or get upon stilts to tell his thoughts; but to write or speak with propriety and simplicity is a more difficult task. Thus it is easy to affect a pompous style, to use a word twice as big as the thing you want to express: it is not so easy to pitch upon the very word that exactly fits it. Out of eight or ten words equally common, equally intelligible, with nearly equal pretensions, it is a matter of some nicety and discrimination to pick out the very one, the preferableness of which is scarcely perceptible, but decisive. The reason why I object to Dr. Johnson's style[1] is that there is no discrimination, no selection, no variety in it. He uses none but "tall, opaque words," taken from the "first row of the rubric" —words with the greatest number of syllables, or Latin phrases with merely English terminations. If a fine style depended on this sort of arbitrary pretension, it would be fair to judge of an author's elegance by the measurement of his words and the substitution of foreign circumlocutions (with no precise associations) for the mother-tongue.[2] How simple it is to be dignified without ease, to be pompous without meaning! Surely it is but a mechanical rule for avoiding what is low, to be always pedantic and affected. It is clear you cannot use a vulgar English word, if you never use a common English word at all. A fine tact is shown in adhering to those which are perfectly common, and yet never falling into any expressions which are debased by disgusting circumstances, or which owe their signification and point to technical or professional allusions. A truly natural or familiar style can never be quaint or vulgar, for this reason, that it is of universal force and applicability, and that quaintness and vulgarity arise out of the immediate connection of certain words with coarse and disagreeable or with confined ideas. The last form what we understand by *cant* or *slang* phrases. —To give an example of what is not very clear in the general statement. I should say that the phrase *To cut with a knife*, or *To cut a piece of wood*, is perfectly free from vulgarity, because it is perfectly common; but to *cut an acquaintance* is not quite unexceptionable, because it is not perfectly common or intelligible, and has hardly yet escaped out of the limits of slang phraseology. I should hardly therefore use the word in this sense without putting it in italics as a license of expression, to be received *cum grano salis*.[3] All provincial or bye-phrases come under the same mark of reprobation —all such as the writer transfers to the page from

[1] Cf. Vol. I, p. 745.

[2] "I have heard of such a thing as an author who makes it a rule never to admit a monosyllable into his vapid verse. Yet the charm and sweetness of Marlowe's lines depended often on their being made up almost entirely of monosyllables."—Hazlitt.

[3] with a grain of salt.

his fireside or a particular *coterie*, or that he invents for his own sole use and convenience. I conceive that words are like money, not the worse for being common, but that it is the stamp of custom alone that gives them circulation or value. I am fastidious in this respect, and would almost as soon coin the currency of the realm as counterfeit the King's English. I never invented or gave a new and unauthorised meaning to any word but one single one (the term *impersonal* applied to feelings) and that was in an abstruse metaphysical discussion to express a very difficult distinction. I have been (I know) loudly accused of revelling in vulgarisms and broken English. I cannot speak to that point; but so far I plead guilty to the determined use of acknowledged idioms and common elliptical expressions. I am not sure that the critics in question know the one from the other, that is, can distinguish any medium between formal pedantry and the most barbarous solecism. As an author, I endeavor to employ plain words and popular modes of construction, as, were I a chapman and dealer, I should common weights and measures.

The proper force of words lies not in the words themselves, but in their application. A word may be a fine-sounding word, of an unusual length, and very imposing from its learning and novelty, and yet in the connection in which it is introduced may be quite pointless and irrelevant. It is not pomp or pretension, but the adaptation of the expression to the idea, that clenches a writer's meaning:—as it is not the size or glossiness of the materials, but their being fitted each to its place, that gives strength to the arch; or as the pegs and nails are as necessary to the support of the building as the larger timbers, and more so than the mere showy, unsubstantial ornaments. I hate any thing that occupies more space than it is worth. I hate to see a load of band-boxes go along the street, and I hate to see a parcel of big words without any thing in them. A person who does not deliberately dispose of all his thoughts alike in cumbrous draperies and flimsy disguises may strike out twenty varieties of familiar every-day language, each coming somewhat nearer to the feeling he wants to convey, and at last not hit upon that particular and only one which may be said to be identical with the exact impression in his mind. This would seem to show that Mr. Cobbett[4] is hardly right in saying that the first word that occurs is always the best. It may be a very good one; and yet a better may present itself on reflection or from time to time. It should be suggested naturally, however, and spontaneously, from a fresh and lively conception of the subject. We seldom succeed by trying at improvement, or by merely substituting one word for another that we are not satisfied with, as we cannot recollect the name of a place or person by merely plaguing ourselves about it. We wander farther from the point by persisting in a wrong scent; but it starts up accidentally in the memory when we least expected it, by touching some link in the chain of previous association.

There are those who hoard up and make a cautious display of nothing but rich and rare phraseology—ancient medals, obscure coins, and Spanish pieces of eight. They are very curious to inspect, but I myself would neither offer nor take them in the course of exchange. A sprinkling of archaisms is not amiss, but a tissue of obsolete expressions is more fit *for keep than wear*. I do not say I would not use any phrase that had been brought into fashion before the middle or the end of the last century, but I should be shy of using any that had not been employed by any approved author during the whole of that time. Words, like clothes, get old-fashioned, or mean and ridiculous, when they have been for some time laid aside. Mr. Lamb[5] is the only imitator of old English style I can read with pleasure; and he is so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of his authors that the idea of imitation is almost done away. There is an inward unction, a marrowy vein both in the thought and feeling, an intuition, deep and lively, of his subject, that carries off any quaintness or awkwardness arising from an antiquated style and dress. The matter is completely his own, though the manner is assumed. Perhaps his ideas are altogether so marked and individual as to require their point and pungency to be neutralised by the affectation of a singular but traditional form of conveyance. Tricked out in the prevailing costume, they would probably seem more startling and out of the way. The old English authors, Burton,[6] Fuller, Coryate, Sir Thomas Browne, are a kind of mediators between us and the more eccentric and whimsical modern, reconciling us to his peculiarities. I do not however know how far this is the case or not, till he condescends to write like one of us. I must confess that what I like best of his papers under the signature of Elia (still I do not presume, amidst such

[4] William Cobbett (1726-1835), English political writer.

[5] Cf. Vol. II, p. 376.

[6] seventeenth-century authors whom Lamb imitates.

excellence, to decide what is most excellent) is the account of "Mrs. Battle's Opinions on Whist," which is also the most free from obsolete allusions and turns of expression—

"A well of native English undefiled."

To those acquainted with his admired prototypes, these Essays of the ingenious and highly gifted author have the same sort of charm and relish that Erasmus's Colloquies or a fine piece of modern Latin have to the classical scholar. Certainly, I do not know any borrowed pencil that has more power or felicity of execution than the one of which I have here been speaking.

It is as easy to write a gaudy style without ideas as it is to spread a pallet of showy colors, or to smear in a flaunting transparency. "What do you read?"—"Words, words, words."—"What is the matter?"—*"Nothing,"* it might be answered. The florid style is the reverse of the familiar. The last is employed as an unvarnished medium to convey ideas; the first is resorted to as a spangled veil to conceal the want of them. When there is nothing to be set down but words, it costs little to have them fine. Look through the dictionary, and cull out a *florilegium*,[7] rival the *tulippomania*.[8] *Rouge* high enough, and never mind the natural complexion. The vulgar, who are not in the secret, will admire the look of preternatural health and vigor; and the fashionable, who regard only appearances, will be delighted with the imposition. Keep to your sounding generalities, your tinkling phrases, and all will be well. Swell out an unmeaning truism to a perfect tympany of style. A thought, a distinction is the rock on which all this brittle cargo of verbiage splits at once. Such writers have merely *verbal* imaginations, that retain nothing but words. Or their puny thoughts have dragon-wings, all green and gold. They soar far above the vulgar failing of the *Sermo humi obrepens*[9]—their most ordinary speech is never short of an hyperbole, splendid, imposing, vague, incomprehensible, magniloquent, a cento of sounding common-places. If some of us, whose "ambition is more lowly," pry a little too narrowly into nooks and corners to pick up a number of "unconsidered trifles," they never once direct their eyes or lift their hands to seize on any but the most gorgeous, tarnished, threadbare, patch-work set of phrases, the left-off finery of poetic extravagance, transmitted down through successive generations of barren pretenders. If they criticise actors and actresses, a huddled phantasmagoria of feathers, spangles, floods of light, and oceans of sound float before their morbid sense, which they paint in the style of Ancient Pistol. Not a glimpse can you get of the merits or defects of the performers: they are hidden in a profusion of barbarous epithets and wilful rhodomontade. Our hypercritics are not thinking of these little fantoccini[10] beings—

"That strut and fret their hour upon the stage"[11]—,

but of tall phantoms of words, abstractions, *genera* and *species*, sweeping clauses, periods that unite the Poles, forced alliterations, astounding antitheses—

"And on their pens *Fustian* sits plumed."[12]

If they describe kings and queens, it is an Eastern pageant. The Coronation at either House is nothing to it. We get at four repeated images—a curtain, a throne, a sceptre, and a footstool. These are with them the wardrobe of a lofty imagination; and they turn their servile strains to servile uses. Do we read a description of pictures? It is not a reflection of tones and hues which "nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on," but piles of precious stones, rubies, pearls, emeralds, Golconda's[13] mines, and all the blazonry of art. Such persons are in fact besotted with words, and their brains are turned with the glittering but empty and sterile phantoms of things. Personifications, capital letters, seas of sunbeams, visions of glory, shining inscriptions, the figures of a transparency, Britannia with her shield, or Hope leaning on an anchor, make up their stock-in-trade. They may be considered as *hieroglyphical* writers. Images stand out in their minds isolated and important merely in themselves, without any ground-work of feeling—there is no context in their imaginations. Words affect them in the same way, by the mere sound, that is, by their possible, not by their actual application to the subject in hand. They are fascinated by first appearances, and have no sense of consequences. Nothing more is meant by them than meets the ear: they understand or feel nothing more than meets their eye. The web and texture of the universe, and of the heart of man, is a mystery to them: they have no faculty that strikes a chord

[7] collection of flowers.
[8] a mania for acquiring and growing tulips.
[9] speech that crawls along the ground.
[10] little puppet. [11] Cf. Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, V. v, 25.
[12] Possibly suggested by *Paradise Lost*, IV, 988-989:
"And on his crest
Sat horror plumed."
[13] a city in India formerly famous for its diamonds.

in unison with it. They cannot get beyond the daubings of fancy, the varnish of sentiment. Objects are not linked to feelings, words to things, but images revolve in splendid mockery, words represent themselves in their strange rhapsodies. The categories of such a mind are pride and ignorance—pride in outside show, to which they sacrifice every thing, and ignorance of the true worth and hidden structure both of words and things. With a sovereign contempt for what is familiar and natural, they are the slaves of vulgar affectation—of a routine of high-flown phrases. Scorning to imitate realities, they are unable to invent any thing, to strike out one original idea. They are not copyists of nature, it is true; but they are the poorest of all plagiarists, the plagiarists of words. All is far-fetched, dear-bought, artificial, oriental in subject and allusion; all is mechanical, conventional, vapid, formal, pedantic in style and execution. They startle and confound the understanding of the reader by the remoteness and obscurity of their illustrations; they soothe the ear by the monotony of the same everlasting round of circuitous metaphors. They are the *mock-school* in poetry and prose. They flounder about between fustian in expression and bathos in sentiment. They tantalise the fancy, but never reach the head nor touch the heart. Their Temple of Fame is like a shadowy structure raised by Dulness to Vanity, or like Cowper's description of the Empress of Russia's palace of ice, "as worthless as in show 'twas glittering"—

"It smiled, and it was cold!"[14] (1822)

Thomas De Quincey

(1785-1859)

"In what mood and what shape shall he be brought forward? Shall it be as first we met at the table of Lucullus, whereto he was seduced by the false pretence that he would there meet with one who entertained novel and anarchical opinions regarding the Golden Ass of Apuleius? No one speaks of waiting dinner for him. He will come and depart at his own sweet will, neither burdened with punctualities, nor burdening others by exacting them. The festivities of the afternoon are far on when a commotion is heard in the hall as if some dog or other stray animal had found its way in. The instinct of a friendly guest tells him of the arrival—he opens the door, and fetches in the little stranger. Who can it be? A street-boy of some sort? His costume, in fact, is a boy's duffle great-coat, very threadbare, with a hole in it, and buttoned tight to the chin, where it meets the fragments of a parti-colored belcher handkerchief; on his feet are list-shoes, covered with snow, for it is a stormy winter night; and the trousers—some one suggests that they are inner linen garments blackened with writing-ink, but that Papaverius [i.e. De Quincey] never would have been at the trouble so to disguise them. What can be the theory of such a costume? The simplest thing in the world—it consisted of the fragments of apparel nearest at hand. . . . The first impression that a boy has appeared vanishes instantly. . . . On one occasion when he corrected an erroneous reference to an event as being a century old, by saying that he recollected its occurrence, one felt almost a surprise at the necessary limitation in his age, so old did he appear, with his arched brow loaded with thought, and the countless little wrinkles that engrained his skin, gathering thickly round the curiously expressive and subtle lips. His lips are speedily opened by some casual remark, and presently the flood of talk passes forth from him, free, clear, and continuous—never rising into declamation—never losing a certain mellow earnestness, and all consisting of sentences as exquisitely joined together as if they were destined to challenge the criticism of the remotest posterity. Still the hours stride over each other, and still flows on the stream of gentle rhetoric. . . . It is now far into the night, and slight hints and suggestions are propagated about separa-

[14] Cf. Cowper's *Task*, V, 173-176.

tion and home-going. The topic starts new ideas on the progress of civilization, the effect of habit on men in all ages, and the power of domestic affections. . . . He could testify to the inconvenience of late hours; for, was it not the other night that, coming to what was, or what he believed to be, his own door, he knocked and knocked, but the old woman within either couldn't or wouldn't hear him, so he scrambled over a wall, and having taken his repose in a furrow, was able to testify to the extreme unpleasantness of such a couch.

"Shall I try another sketch of him, when travel-stained and foot-sore, he glided in on us one night like a shadow, the child by the fire gazing on him with round eyes of astonishment, and suggesting that he should get a penny and go home—a proposal which he subjected to some philosophical criticism very far wide of its practical tenor. How far he had wandered since he had last refreshed himself, or even whether he had eaten food that day, were matters on which there was no getting articulate utterance from him. Though his costume was muddy, however, and his communications about the material wants of life very hazy, the ideas which he had stored up during his wandering poured themselves forth as clear and sparkling, both in logic and language, as the purest fountain that springs from a Highland rock. How that wearied, worn, little body was to be refreshed was a difficult problem: soft food disagreed with him—the hard he could not eat. Suggestions pointed at length to the solution of that vegetable unguent to which he had given a sort of lustre, and it might be supposed that there were some fifty cases of acute toothache to be treated in the house that night. How many drops? Drops! nonsense. If the wineglasses of the establishment were not beyond the ordinary normal size, there was no risk—and so the weary is at rest for a time."

In this graphic passage John Hill Burton has given us a portrait of the "Opium Eater." Thomas De Quincey.

De Quincey was born at Manchester on August 17, 1785, the son of a wealthy merchant. Because of tuberculosis his father was forced to live abroad, and the boy did not know him until he came home to die. With him came another stranger, Thomas's brother William, who had been on the Continent with their father—a boy with a "genius for mischief that amounted to inspiration." At the hands of his tyrannical brother, five years his senior, the dreamer Thomas suffered all kinds of agonies. During this period both boys went daily to school at the home of a clergyman, who taught them Latin and Greek so well that upon De Quincey's entry into the Grammar School at Bath, where the family removed in 1796, he was soon considered a wonder in the classics. After two years at this school, a blow intended by the master for another student landed on De Quincey's head and caused him to be placed under medical care for some time. His convalescence (he was now thirteen) was spent in reading Ariosto, Tasso, and *Paradise Lost.*

In the summer of 1800 he visited Eton and made a tour of Ireland in the company of Lord Westport, a young Irish nobleman whom he had met at Bath. On his return, he was sent to the Manchester Grammar School, for which he had no liking. After a year and a half of what was intolerable monotony to him, he ran away to spend a summer walking through North Wales on an allowance of a guinea a week. His father had left him a considerable fortune, but De Quincey tired of depending on the will of his guardians. At the age of seventeen, therefore, he went to London where, waiting for an advance loan from moneylenders, he spent a winter in abject poverty. Roaming the streets by day, he slept on the bare floor of a room to which he was admitted at night. His sole friends were a young streetwalker, whom he met in his prowlings through London, and a ten-year-old servant girl. The hardships of this winter produced in him that severe disease of the stomach to deaden the pain of which he later took opium.

At last he was rescued by friends and sent home. His guardians agreed to allow him £100 a year if he studied at Oxford. He entered Worcester College in 1803. Living by himself, he made but one close friend at Oxford, a German who awoke his interest in German literature. At this time he began to read more solidly in English literature as well.

Long an admirer of the Lake Poets, he now wrote to Wordsworth a letter of appreciation, to which he received a treasured cordial answer. This cemented his devotion to Wordsworth, an allegiance which was to have important consequences upon De Quincey's work. Another crucial experience of these Oxford days was a visit to London in 1804, during which he took his first dose of opium. In 1807 he came to know Coleridge, and, now being of age, De Quincey graciously managed to relieve the poet's financial distresses of the moment by an anonymous gift of £300. With the Coleridge family he visited the Wordsworths at Grasmere and spent two days there. Taken with his young admirer, Wordsworth suggested that De Quincey live in the cottage they were leaving. This he was only too happy to do. In 1809 he established himself there, and in 1816 he married the daughter of a neighboring farmer. He remained at Grasmere until he was thirty-six.

By 1813 his "appalling irritation of the stomach" had made him "a regular and confirmed (no longer an intermitting) opium-eater." Ever increasing the quantity, he was soon taking an unheard-of amount, with consequent physical and mental depression. Thereafter, though he never ceased to take opium, he learned to control the habit so that his mind would not suffer from an overdose. His fortune all spent, he had now to turn to writing for his livelihood. For the *London Magazine* he began the composition of *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821). Its instant success encouraged him to embark on his career as a writer for periodicals. Indeed, De Quincey's high place in English literature was achieved by his authorship of some one hundred and fifty magazine articles, miscellaneous in subject, and covering the fields of literature, philosophy, history, economics, and the purely imaginative. For four years he wrote for the *London Magazine* (publisher of "Elia") and Knight's *Quarterly Magazine*. He began, in 1826, to write for *Blackwood's Magazine*, published in Edinburgh. Spending much time in London, he lived chiefly in his books. His small circle of friends included Lamb, Hazlitt, and Hood. In 1830 he moved his family from Grasmere to Edinburgh, where he enjoyed the friendship of Carlyle. In Scotland he was beset by financial difficulties and was often embroiled in troubles with tradesmen, landlords, and publishers. Despite all these vexations, he continued to write and study. His room was usually to be found cluttered in a hopeless confusion of books and papers. When it was definitely futile to make any order out of them, he would rent other lodgings in which to work. As a result of this practice he once had, simultaneously, four different residences.

His wife died in 1837, and De Quincey later took a cottage at Lasswade, a few miles out of Edinburgh. The last ten years of his life were engaged in the preparation of a Collected Edition of his works, at the request of the publisher, James Hogg. Hogg had plenty of labor in discovering the location of De Quincey's manuscripts and in extricating them from the possession of irate landladies. He had his worries, too, in seeing the edition through the press because of De Quincey's insatiable desire to revise and perfect every line he had written. Luckily De Quincey managed to have finished the last volume just before his death, in 1859.

David Masson classifies De Quincey's copious output under three heads: (I) Descriptive, Biographical, and Historical (*Confessions;* the *Autobiography*; biographical sketches of *Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, Lamb, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Lessing, Herder*; and numerous historical sketches like *The Caesars, The Revolt of the Tartars,* etc.); (II) Speculative, Didactic, and Critical (*Kant, Rhetoric, Style, Theory of Greek Tragedy,* etc.); (III) Imaginative Writings and Prose Poetry (*Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts, Early Memorials of Grasmere, Joan of Arc, The Spanish Military Nun,* parts of the *Confessions, The English Mail-Coach* [cf. *below*] and *Suspiria de Profundis* [cf. *below*]). All these works exhibit De Quincey's passionate curiosity and love of investigation. "It is no mere figure from grammar," remarks Masson, "to say that few men have come into the world, or have gone through it, with a more meagre outfit of the imperative mood." He had little interest in conduct, but an unquenchable zest for amassing information and drawing fine distinctions.

In the realm of criticism De Quincey cannot be rated very high. With the exception of the profound poetic sympathy of the justly famous *On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth* and many illuminating flashes in his other pieces, his judgments too often lack universality; they seem the product of whim and suffer from his tendency to digress. It is in his reminiscences and his fantasies that De Quincey is at his finest. The *Confessions* and the biographical sketches are remarkable for their strange mixture of human fellowship and detachment. As Oliver Elton well says of De Quincey in these works, he was "a kind of changeling, one of the *good people*, who has married a human wife and conforms to the laws of our earth, but at certain recurring hours betrays his origin by some freakish trait or startling message from the world inside the hill."

De Quincey is unique, however, in his imaginative pieces, particularly *The Pleasures of Opium, The Pains of Opium, Suspiria de Profundis,* and *The English Mail-Coach.* These works excel in their imaginative brilliance, the record of dazzling visions produced by his use of opium. (But De Quincey was a dreamer of such visions long before he had ever taken the drug. He records his having had a dream of "terrific grandeur about a favorite nurse" when he was only two; in his seventh year, as he stood in the death-chamber of his sister, "a solemn wind began to blow," and he fell into a trance.) For these fantasies, De Quincey elaborated "a mode of impassioned prose" which partook of some of the best qualities of poetry—music, rhythm, and imaginative diction. In such pieces he admitted no word which a great poet could not have employed. The cadences and the luxurious movement of the prose stir us in precisely the manner in which poetry affects us. This "poetic prose," of which he was the nineteenth-century rediscoverer, greatly influenced Ruskin and Dickens later. Sonorous, lyrical, and melodious, as the idea requires, it is a style which, if sometimes too self-conscious, is superbly eloquent for the conveying of subtleties and overtones.

David Masson re-edited *The Collected Works of Thomas De Quincey* in fourteen volumes (1896-97). A convenient edition of the best of the imaginative pieces is T. Burke's *The Ecstasies of Thomas De Quincey* (1929). An authoritative biography is H. A. Eaton's (1936). Excellent biographical studies are D. Masson's life (1902) and J. Hogg's *De Quincey and His Friends* (1895). A. H. Japp edited his unpublished correspondence in two volumes which include a biography (1877). Fine studies will be found in: G. Saintsbury's *Essays in English Literature* (1896); L. Stephen's *Hours in a Library*, Vol. I (1904); and A. Symons's *Studies in Prose and Verse* (1904).

From *Suspiria de Profundis*[1]

Originally written for *Blackwood's Magazine*, the "Sighs from the Depths" was a series of three pieces in continuation of *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater.* The most celebrated is the third, *Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow*, which, recounting De Quincey's dreams under the influence of opium, is a wonderful example of his poetic prose at its best

Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow

Oftentimes at Oxford I saw Levana in my dreams. I knew her by her Roman symbols. Who is Levana? Reader, that do not pretend to have leisure for very much scholarship, you will not be angry with me for telling you. Levana was the Roman goddess that performed for the newborn infant the earliest office of ennobling kindness—typical by its mode, of that grandeur which belongs to man everywhere, and of that benignity in powers invisible, which even in Pagan worlds sometimes descends to sustain it. At the very moment of birth, just as the infant tasted for the first time the atmosphere of our troubled planet, it was laid on the ground. *That* might bear different interpretations. But immediately, lest so grand a creature

[1] sighs from the depths.

should grovel there for more than one instant, either the paternal hand, as proxy for the goddess Levana, or some near kinsman, as proxy for the father, raised it upright, bade it look erect as the king of all this world, and presented its forehead to the stars, saying, perhaps, in his heart—"Behold what is greater than yourselves!" This symbolic act represented the function of Levana. And that mysterious lady, who never revealed her face (except to me in dreams), but always acted by delegation, had her name from the Latin verb (as still it is the Italian verb) *levare*, to raise aloft.

This is the explanation of Levana. And hence it has arisen that some people have understood by Levana the tutelary power that controls the education of the nursery. She, that would not suffer at his birth even a prefigurative or mimic degradation for her awful ward, far less could be supposed to suffer the real degradation attaching to the non-development of his powers. She therefore watches over human education. Now, the word *edŭco*, with the penultimate short, was derived (by a process often exemplified in the crystallization of languages) from the word *edūco*, with the penultimate long. Whatsoever *edūces* or develops *—educates*. By the education of Levana, therefore, is meant—not the poor machinery that moves by spelling-books and grammars, but that mighty system of central forces hidden in the deep bosom of human life, which by passion, by strife, by temptation, by the energies of resistance, works for ever upon children—resting not day or night, any more than the mighty wheel of day and night themselves, whose moments, like restless spokes, are glimmering for ever as they revolve.

If, then, these are the ministries by which Levana works, how profoundly must she reverence the agencies of grief! But you, reader, think—that children generally are not liable to grief such as mine. There are two senses in the word *generally*—the sense of Euclid[2] where it means *universally* (or in the whole extent of the *genus*), and a foolish sense of this world where it means *usually*. Now I am far from saying that children universally are capable of grief like mine. But there are more than you ever heard of, who die of grief in this island of ours. I will tell you a common case. The rules of Eton[3] require that a boy on the *Foundation* should be there twelve years: he is superannuated at eighteen, consequently he must come at six. Children torn away from mothers and sisters at that age not unfrequently die. I speak of what I know. The complaint is not entered by the registrar as grief; but *that* it is. Grief of that sort, and at that age, has killed more than ever have been counted amongst its martyrs.

Therefore it is that Levana often communes with the powers that shake man's heart: therefore it is that she dotes upon grief. "These ladies," said I softly to myself, on seeing the ministers with whom Levana was conversing, "these are the Sorrows; and they are three in number, as the *Graces* are three, who dress man's life with beauty; the *Parcæ* are three, who weave the dark arras of man's life in their mysterious loom always with colors sad in part, sometimes angry with tragic crimson and black; the *Furies* are three, who visit with retributions called from the other side of the grave offences that walk upon this; and once even the *Muses* were but three, who fit the harp, the trumpet, or the lute, to the great burdens of man's impassioned creations. These are the Sorrows, all three of whom I know." The last words I say *now*; but in Oxford I said—"one of whom I know, and the others too surely I *shall* know." For already, in my fervent youth, I saw (dimly relieved upon the dark background of my dreams) the imperfect lineaments of the awful sisters. These sisters—by what name shall we call them?

If I say simply—"The Sorrows," there will be a chance of mistaking the term; it might be understood of individual sorrow—separate cases of sorrow,—whereas I want a term expressing the mighty abstractions that incarnate themselves in all individual sufferings of man's heart; and I wish to have these abstractions presented as impersonations, that is, as clothed with human attributes of life, and with functions pointing to flesh. Let us call them, therefore, *Our Ladies of Sorrow*. I know them thoroughly, and have walked in all their kingdoms. Three sisters they are, of one mysterious household; and their paths are wide apart; but of their dominion there is no end. Them I saw often conversing with Levana, and sometimes about myself. Do they talk, then? Oh, no! Mighty phantoms like these disdain the infirmities of language. They may utter voices through the organs of man when they dwell in human hearts, but amongst themselves is no voice nor sound—eternal silence reigns in *their* kingdoms. *They* spoke not as they talked with Levana. *They* whispered not. *They* sang not. Though oftentimes methought they *might* have sung; for I upon earth had heard their mysteries oftentimes deciphered by harp and

[2] famous Greek geometrician (c. 300 B.C.).
[3] Eton College.

timbrel, by dulcimer and organ. Like God, whose servants they are, they utter their pleasure, not by sounds that perish, or by words that go astray, but by signs in heaven—by changes on earth—by pulses in secret rivers—heraldries painted on darkness—and hieroglyphics written on the tablets of the brain. *They* wheeled in mazes; *I* spelled the steps. *They* telegraphed from afar; *I* read the signals. *They* conspired together; and on the mirrors of darkness *my* eye traced the plots. *Theirs* were the symbols,—*mine* are the words.

What is it the sisters are? What is it that they do? Let me describe their form, and their presence; if form it were that still fluctuated in its outline; or presence it were that for ever advanced to the front, or for ever receded amongst shades.

The eldest of the three is named *Mater Lachrymarum*, Our Lady of Tears. She it is that night and day raves and moans, calling for vanished faces. She stood in Rama, when a voice was heard of lamentation—Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted.[4] She it was that stood in Bethlehem on the night when Herod's sword swept its nurseries of Innocents,[5] and the little feet were stiffened for ever, which, heard at times as they tottered along floors overhead, woke pulses of love in household hearts that were not unmarked in heaven.

Her eyes are sweet and subtle, wild and sleepy by turns; oftentimes rising to the clouds; oftentimes challenging the heavens. She wears a diadem round her head. And I knew by childish memories that she could go abroad upon the winds, when she heard the sobbing of litanies or the thundering of organs, and when she beheld the mustering of summer clouds. This sister, the elder, it is that carries keys more than papal at her girdle, which open every cottage and every palace. She, to my knowledge, sate all last summer by the bedside of the blind beggar, him that so often and so gladly I talked with, whose pious daughter, eight years old, with the sunny countenance, resisted the temptations of play and village mirth to travel all day long on dusty roads with her afflicted father. For this did God send her a great reward. In the spring-time of the year, and whilst yet her own spring was budding, He recalled her to Himself. But her blind father mourns for ever over *her*; still he dreams at midnight that the little guiding hand is locked within his own; and still he wakens to a darkness that is *now* within a second and a deeper darkness. This *Mater Lachrymarum* also has been sitting all this winter of 1844-5 within the bedchamber of the Czar, bringing before his eyes a daughter (not less pious) that vanished to God not less suddenly, and left behind her a darkness not less profound. By the power of her keys it is that Our Lady of Tears glides a ghostly intruder into the chambers of sleepless men, sleepless women, sleepless children, from Ganges to the Nile, from Nile to Mississippi. And her, because she is the first-born of her house, and has the widest empire, let us honor with the title of "Madonna."

The second sister is called *Mater Suspiriorum*, Our Lady of Sighs. She never scales the clouds, nor walks abroad upon the winds. She wears no diadem. And her eyes, if they were ever seen, would be neither sweet nor subtle; no man could read their story; they would be found filled with perishing dreams, and with wrecks of forgotten delirium. But she raises not her eyes; her head, on which sits a dilapidated turban, droops for ever; for ever fastens on the dust. She weeps not. She groans not. But she sighs inaudibly at intervals. Her sister, Madonna, is oftentimes stormy and frantic; raging in the highest against heaven; and demanding back her darlings. But Our Lady of Sighs never clamors, never defies, dreams not of rebellious aspirations. She is humble to abjectness. Hers is the meekness that belongs to the hopeless. Murmur she may, but it is in her sleep. Whisper she may, but it is to herself in the twilight. Mutter she does at times, but it is in solitary places that are desolate as she is desolate, in ruined cities, and when the sun has gone down to his rest. This sister is the visitor of the Pariah,[6] of the Jew, of the bondsman to the oar in Mediterranean galleys, of the English criminal in Norfolk Island,[7] blotted out from the books of remembrance in sweet far-off England, of the baffled penitent reverting his eye for ever upon a solitary grave, which to him seems the altar overthrown of some past and bloody sacrifice, on which altar no oblations can now be availing, whether towards pardon that he might implore, or towards reparation that he might attempt. Every slave that at noonday looks up to the tropical sun with timid reproach, as he points with one hand to the earth, our general mother,

[4] Cf. *Jeremiah*, 31:15.

[5] For the slaughter of the innocents, see *Matthew*, 2:13-18. Herod hoped to kill the new-born Christ.

[6] outcast; the pariahs are low-caste Hindus in India shunned by the higher castes. The word has become generalized to mean any outcast.

[7] formerly a criminal colony in the South Pacific.

but for *him* a stepmother, as he points with the other hand to the Bible, our general teacher, but against *him* sealed and sequestered;—every woman sitting in darkness, without love to shelter her head, or hope to illumine her solitude, because the heaven-born instincts kindling in her nature germs of holy affections, which God implanted in her womanly bosom, having been stifled by social necessities, now burn sullenly to waste, like sepulchral lamps amongst the ancients;—every nun defrauded of her unreturning May-time by wicked kinsmen, whom God will judge;—every captive in every dungeon;—all that are betrayed, and all that are rejected; outcasts by traditionary law, and children of *hereditary* disgrace—all these walk with Our Lady of Sighs. She also carries a key; but she needs it little. For her kingdom is chiefly amongst the tents of Shem,[8] and the houseless vagrant of every clime. Yet in the very highest ranks of man she finds chapels of her own; and even in glorious England there are some that, to the world, carry their heads as proudly as the reindeer, who yet secretly have received her mark upon their foreheads.

But the third sister, who is also the youngest —— Hush! whisper, whilst we talk of *her*! Her kingdom is not large, or else no flesh should live; but within that kingdom all power is hers. Her head, turreted like that of Cybele,[9] rises almost beyond the reach of sight. She droops not; and her eyes rising so high, *might* be hidden by distance. But being what they are, they cannot be hidden; through the treble veil of crape which she wears, the fierce light of a blazing misery, that rests not for matins or for vespers—for noon of day or noon of night—for ebbing or for flowing tide—may be read from the very ground. She is the defier of God. She also is the mother of lunacies, and the suggestress of suicides. Deep lie the roots of her power; but narrow is the nation that she rules. For she can approach only those in whom a profound nature has been upheaved by central convulsions; in whom the heart trembles and the brain rocks under conspiracies of tempest from without and tempest from within. Madonna moves with uncertain steps, fast or slow, but still with tragic grace. Our Lady of Sighs creeps timidly and stealthily. But this youngest sister moves with incalculable motions, bounding, and with a tiger's leaps. She carries no key; for, though coming rarely amongst men, she storms all doors at which she is permitted to enter at all. And *her* name is *Mater Tenebrarum*—Our Lady of Darkness.

These were the *Semnai Theai*, or Sublime Goddesses—these were the *Eumenides*, or Gracious Ladies (so called by antiquity in shuddering propitiation)—of my Oxford dreams. Madonna spoke. She spoke by her mysterious hand. Touching my head, she beckoned to Our Lady of Sighs; and *what* she spoke, translated out of the signs which (except in dreams) no man reads, was this:

"Lo! here is he, whom in childhood I dedicated to my altars. This is he that once I made my darling. Him I led astray, him I beguiled, and from heaven I stole away his young heart to mine. Through me did he become idolatrous; and through me it was, by languishing desires, that he worshipped the worm, and prayed to the wormy grave. Holy was the grave to him; lovely was its darkness; saintly its corruption. Him, this young idolater, I have seasoned for thee, dear gentle Sister of Sighs! Do thou take him now to *thy* heart, and season him for our dreadful sister. And thou"—turning to the *Mater Tenebrarum*, she said —"wicked sister, that temptest and hatest, do thou take him from *her*. See that thy sceptre lie heavy on his head. Suffer not woman and her tenderness to sit near him in his darkness. Banish the frailties of hope—wither the relentings of love—scorch the fountains of tears: curse him as only thou canst curse. So shall he be accomplished in the furnace—so shall he see the things that ought *not* to be seen —sights that are abominable, and secrets that are unutterable. So shall he read elder truths, sad truths, grand truths, fearful truths. So shall he rise again *before* he dies. And so shall our commission be accomplished which from God we had —to plague his heart until we had unfolded the capacities of his spirit." (1845)

[8] literally, descendants of Shem, particularly the nomadic tribes of Arabia. The word here is applied to outcasts in general. Cf. *Genesis*, 9:26-27.

[9] the Great Mother of the gods, who is represented with a turreted crown.

From *The English Mail-Coach*

THE VISION OF SUDDEN DEATH

This little paper, according to my original intention, formed part of the *Suspiria de Profundis*; from which, for a momentary purpose, I did not scruple to detach it, and to publish it apart, as sufficiently intelligible even when dislocated from its place in a larger whole. To my surprise, however, one or two critics, not carelessly in conversation, but deliberately in print, professed their inability to apprehend the meaning of the whole, or to follow the links of the connexion between its several parts. I am myself as little able to understand where the difficulty lies, or to detect any lurking obscurity, as these critics found themselves to unravel my logic. Possibly I may not be an indifferent and neutral judge in such a case. I will therefore sketch a brief abstract of the little paper according to my original design, and then leave the reader to judge how far this design is kept in sight through the actual execution.

Thirty-seven years ago, or rather more, accident made me, in the dead of night, and of a night memorably solemn, the solitary witness of an appalling scene, which threatened instant death in a shape the most terrific to two young people whom I had no means of assisting, except in so far as I was able to give them a most hurried warning of their danger; but even *that* not until they stood within the very shadow of the catastrophe, being divided from the most frightful of deaths by scarcely more, if more at all, than seventy seconds.

Such was the scene, such in its outline, from which the whole of this paper radiates as a natural expansion. This scene is circumstantially narrated in Section the Second, entitled *The Vision of Sudden Death*.

But a movement of horror, and of spontaneous recoil from this dreadful scene, naturally carried the whole of that scene, raised and idealized, into my dreams, and very soon into a rolling succession of dreams. The actual scene, as looked down upon from the box of the mail, was transformed into a dream, as tumultuous and changing as a musical fugue. This troubled dream is circumstantially reported in Section the Third, entitled *Dream-Fugue on the theme of Sudden Death*. What I had beheld from my seat upon the mail,—the scenical strife of action and passion, of anguish and fear, as I had there witnessed them moving in ghostly silence,—this duel between life and death narrowing itself to a point of such exquisite evanescence as the collision neared: all these elements of the scene blended, under the law of association, with the previous and permanent features of distinction investing the mail itself; which features at that time lay—1st, in velocity unprecedented, 2dly, in the power and beauty of the horses, 3dly, in the official connexion with the government of a great nation, and, 4thly, in the function, almost a consecrated function, of publishing and diffusing through the land the great political events, and especially the great battles, during a conflict of unparalleled grandeur. These honorary distinctions are all described circumstantially in the First or introductory Section (*The Glory of Motion*). The three first were distinctions maintained at all times; but the fourth and grandest belonged exclusively to the war with Napoleon; and this it was which most naturally introduced Waterloo into the dream. Waterloo, I understand, was the particular feature of the *Dream-Fugue* which my censors were least able to account for. Yet surely Waterloo, which, in common with every other great battle, it had been our special privilege to publish over all the land, most naturally entered the dream under the licence of our privilege. If not—if there be anything amiss—let the Dream be responsible. The Dream is a law to itself; and as well quarrel with a rainbow for showing, or for *not* showing, a secondary arch. So far as I know, every element in the shifting movements of the Dream derived itself either primarily from the incidents of the actual scene or from secondary features associated with the mail. For example, the cathedral aisle derived itself from the mimic combination of features which grouped themselves together at the point of approaching collision—viz. an arrow-like section of the road, six hundred yards long, under the solemn lights described, with lofty trees meeting overhead in arches. The guard's horn, again—a humble instrument in itself—was yet glorified as the organ of publication for so many great national events. And the incident of the Dying Trumpeter, who rises from a marble bas-relief, and carries a marble trumpet to his marble lips for the purpose of warning the female infant, was doubtless secretly suggested by my own imperfect effort to seize the guard's horn, and to blow the warning blast. But the Dream knows best; and the Dream, I say again, is the responsible party.—*De Quincey*.

What is to be taken as the predominant opinion of man, reflective and philosophic, upon SUDDEN DEATH? It is remarkable that, in different conditions of society, sudden death has been variously regarded as the consummation of an earthly career most fervently to be desired, or, again, as that consummation which is with most horror to be deprecated. Cæsar the Dictator, at his last dinner-party (*cœna*), on the very evening before his assassination, when the minutes of his earthly career were numbered, being asked what death, in *his* judgment, might be pronounced the most eligible, replied "that which should be most sudden." On the other hand, the divine Litany of our English Church, when breathing forth supplications, as if in some representative character, for the whole human race prostrate before God, places such a death in the very van of horrors: "From lightning and tempest; from plague, pestilence, and famine; from battle and murder, and from SUDDEN DEATH —*Good Lord, deliver us.*" Sudden death is here made to crown the climax in a grand ascent of calamities; it is ranked among the last of curses; and yet by the noblest of Romans it was ranked as the first of blessings. In that difference most readers will see little more than the essential difference between Christianity and Paganism. But this, on consideration, I doubt. The Christian Church may be right in its estimate of sudden death; and it is a natural feeling, though after all it may also be an infirm one, to wish for a quiet dismissal from life, as that which *seems* most reconcilable with meditation, with penitential retrospects, and with the humilities of farewell prayer. There does not, however, occur to me any direct scriptural warrant for this earnest petition of the English Litany, unless under a special construction of the word "sudden." It seems a petition indulged rather and conceded to human infirmity than exacted from human piety. It is not so much a doctrine built upon the eternities of the Christian system as a plausible opinion built upon special varieties of physical temperament. Let that, however, be as it may, two remarks suggest themselves as prudent restraints upon a doctrine which else *may* wander, and *has* wandered, into an uncharitable superstition. The first is this: that many people are likely to exaggerate the horror of a sudden death from the disposition to lay a false stress upon words or acts simply because by an accident they have become *final* words or acts. If a man dies, for instance, by some sudden death when he happens to be intoxicated, such a death is falsely regarded with peculiar horror; as though the intoxication were suddenly exalted into a blasphemy. But *that* is unphilosophic. The man was, or he was not, *habitually* a drunkard. If not, if his intoxication were a solitary accident, there can be no reason for allowing special emphasis to this act simply because through misfortune it became his final act. Nor, on the other hand, if it were no accident, but one of his *habitual* transgressions, will it be the more habitual or the more a transgression because some sudden calamity, surprising him, has caused this habitual transgression to be also a final one. Could the man have had any reason even dimly to foresee his own sudden death, there would have been a new feature in his act of intemperance—a feature of presumption and irreverence, as in one that, having known himself drawing near to the presence of God, should have suited his demeanor to an expectation so awful. But this is no part of the case supposed. And the only new element in the man's act is not any element of special immorality, but simply of special misfortune.

The other remark has reference to the meaning of the word *sudden*. Very possibly Cæsar and the Christian Church do not differ in the way supposed,—that is, do not differ by any difference of doctrine as between Pagan and Christian views of the moral temper appropriate to death; but perhaps they are contemplating different cases. Both contemplate a violent death, a βιαθανατος—death that is βιαιος, or, in other words, death that is brought about, not by internal and spontaneous change, but by active force having its origin from without. In this meaning the two authorities agree. Thus far they are in harmony. But the difference is that the Roman by the word "sudden" means *unlingering*, whereas the Christian Litany by "sudden death" means a death *without warning*, consequently without any available summons to religious preparation. The poor mutineer who kneels down to gather into his heart the bullets from twelve firelocks of his pitying comrades dies by a most sudden death in Cæsar's sense; one shock, one mighty spasm, one (possibly *not* one) groan, and all is over. But, in the sense of the Litany, the mutineer's death is far from sudden: his offence originally, his imprisonment, his trial, the interval between his sentence and its execution, having all furnished him with separate warnings of his fate—having all summoned him to meet it with solemn preparation.

Here at once, in this sharp verbal distinction,

we comprehend the faithful earnestness with which a holy Christian Church pleads on behalf of her poor departing children that God would vouchsafe to them the last great privilege and distinction possible on a death-bed, viz., the opportunity of untroubled preparation for facing this mighty trial. Sudden death, as a mere variety in the modes of dying where death in some shape is inevitable, proposes a question of choice which, equally in the Roman and the Christian sense, will be variously answered according to each man's variety of temperament. Meantime, one aspect of sudden death there is, one modification, upon which no doubt can arise, that of all martyrdoms it is the most agitating—viz., where it surprises a man under circumstances which offer (or which seem to offer) some hurrying, flying, inappreciably minute chance of evading it. Sudden as the danger which it affronts must be any effort by which such an evasion can be accomplished. Even *that*, even the sickening necessity for hurrying in extremity where all hurry seems destined to be vain,—even that anguish is liable to a hideous exasperation in one particular case: viz., where the appeal is made not exclusively to the instinct of self-preservation, but to the conscience, on behalf of some other life besides your own, accidentally thrown upon *your* protection. To fail, to collapse in a service merely your own, might seem comparatively venial; though, in fact, it is far from venial. But to fail in a case where Providence has suddenly thrown into your hands the final interests of another,—a fellow-creature shuddering between the gates of life and death: this, to a man of apprehensive conscience, would mingle the misery of an atrocious criminality with the misery of a bloody calamity. You are called upon, by the case supposed, possibly to die, but to die at the very moment when, by any even partial failure or effeminate collapse of your energies, you will be self-denounced as a murderer. You had but the twinkling of an eye for your effort, and that effort might have been unavailing; but to have risen to the level of such an effort would have rescued you, though not from dying, yet from dying as a traitor to your final and farewell duty.

The situation here contemplated exposes a dreadful ulcer, lurking far down in the depths of human nature. It is not that men generally are summoned to face such awful trials. But potentially, and in shadowy outline, such a trial is moving subterraneously in perhaps all men's natures. Upon the secret mirror of our dreams such a trial is darkly projected, perhaps, to every one of us. That dream, so familiar to childhood, of meeting a lion, and, through languishing prostration in hope and the energies of hope, that constant sequel of lying down before the lion publishes the secret frailty of human nature—reveals its deep-seated falsehood to itself—records its abysmal treachery. Perhaps not one of us escapes that dream; perhaps, as by some sorrowful doom of man, that dream repeats for every one of us, through every generation, the original temptation in Eden. Every one of us, in this dream, has a bait offered to the infirm places of his own individual will; once again a snare is presented for tempting him into captivity to a luxury of ruin; once again, as in aboriginal Paradise, the man falls by his own choice; again, by infinite iteration, the ancient earth groans to Heaven, through her secret caves, over the weakness of her child. "Nature, from her seat, sighing through all her works," again "gives signs of woe that all is lost"; and again the counter-sigh is repeated to the sorrowing heavens for the endless rebellion against God. It is not without probability that in the world of dreams every one of us ratifies for himself the original transgression. In dreams, perhaps under some secret conflict of the midnight sleeper, lighted up to the consciousness at the time, but darkened to the memory as soon as all is finished, each several child of our mysterious race completes for himself the treason of the aboriginal fall.

The incident, so memorable in itself by its features of horror, and so scenical by its grouping for the eye, which furnished the text for this reverie upon *Sudden Death* occurred to myself in the dead of night, as a solitary spectator, when seated on the box of the Manchester and Glasgow mail, in the second or third summer after Waterloo.[1] I find it necessary to relate the circumstances, because they are such as could not have occurred unless under a singular combination of accidents. In those days, the oblique and lateral communications with many rural post-offices were so arranged, either through necessity or through defect of system, as to make it requisite for the main north-western mail (*i.e.*, the *down* mail) on reaching Manchester to halt for a number of hours; how many, I do not remember; six or seven, I think; but the result was that, in the ordinary course, the mail recommenced its journey northwards about midnight. Wearied with the long detention at a gloomy hotel, I walked out about eleven o'clock at night for the sake of fresh air meaning to fall in with the

[1] which was fought in June, 1815.

mail and resume my seat at the post-office. The night, however, being yet dark, as the moon had scarcely risen, and the streets being at that hour empty, so as to offer no opportunities for asking the road, I lost my way, and did not reach the post-office until it was considerably past midnight; but, to my great relief (as it was important for me to be in Westmoreland by the morning), I saw in the huge saucer eyes of the mail, blazing through the gloom, an evidence that my chance was not yet lost. Past the time it was; but, by some rare accident, the mail was not even yet ready to start. I ascended to my seat on the box, where my cloak was still lying as it had lain at the Bridgewater Arms. I had left it there in imitation of a nautical discoverer, who leaves a bit of bunting on the shore of his discovery, by way of warning off the ground the whole human race, and notifying to the Christian and the heathen worlds, with his best compliments, that he has hoisted his pocket-handkerchief once and for ever upon that virgin soil: thenceforward claiming the *jus dominii*[2] to the top of the atmosphere above it, and also the right of driving shafts to the centre of the earth below it; so that all people found after this warning either aloft in upper chambers of the atmosphere, or groping in subterraneous shafts, or squatting audaciously on the surface of the soil, will be treated as trespassers—kicked, that is to say, or decapitated, as circumstances may suggest, by their very faithful servant, the owner of the said pocket-handkerchief. In the present case, it is probable that my cloak might not have been respected, and the *jus gentium*[3] might have been cruelly violated in my person—for, in the dark, people commit deeds of darkness, gas being a great ally of morality; but it so happened that on this night there was no other outside passenger; and thus the crime, which else was but too probable, missed fire for want of a criminal.

Having mounted the box, I took a small quantity of laudanum,[4] having already travelled two hundred and fifty miles—viz., from a point seventy miles beyond London. In the taking of laudanum there was nothing extraordinary. But by accident it drew upon me the special attention of my assessor on the box, the coachman. And in *that* also there was nothing extraordinary. But by accident, and with great delight, it drew my own attention to the fact that this coachman was a monster in point of bulk, and that he had but one eye. In fact, he had been foretold by Virgil as

"Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum."[5]

He answered to the conditions in every one of the items:—1, a monster he was; 2, dreadful; 3, shapeless; 4, huge; 5, who had lost an eye. But why should *that* delight me? Had he been one of the Calendars in the *Arabian Nights*, and had paid down his eye as the price of his criminal curiosity, what right had *I* to exult in his misfortune? I did *not* exult; I delighted in no man's punishment, though it were even merited. But these personal distinctions (Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) identified in an instant an old friend of mine whom I had known in the south for some years as the most masterly of mail-coachmen. He was the man in all Europe that could (if *any* could) have driven six-in-hand full gallop over *Al Sirat*—that dreadful bridge of Mahomet, with no side battlements, and of *extra* room not enough for a razor's edge—leading right across the bottomless gulf. Under this eminent man, whom in Greek I cognominated Cyclops *Diphrélates* (Cyclops the Charioteer), I, and others known to me, studied the diphrelatic art. Excuse, reader, a word too elegant to be pedantic. As a pupil, though I paid extra fees, it is to be lamented that I did not stand high in his esteem. It showed his dogged honesty (though, observe, not his discernment) that he could not see my merits. Let us excuse his absurdity in this particular by remembering his want of an eye. Doubtless *that* made him blind to my merits. In the art of conversation, however, he admitted that I had the whip-hand of him. On the present occasion great joy was at our meeting. But what was Cyclops doing here? Had the medical men recommended northern air, or how? I collected, from such explanations as he volunteered, that he had an interest at stake in some suit-at-law now pending at Lancaster; so that probably he had got himself transferred to this station for the purpose of connecting with his professional pursuits an instant readiness for the calls of his lawsuit.

Meantime, what are we stopping for? Surely we have now waited long enough. Oh, this procrastinating mail, and this procrastinating post-office! Can't they take a lesson upon that subject from *me*? Some people have called *me* procrastinating. Yet you are witness, reader, that I was here

[2] the right of dominion. [3] law of nations.

[4] For an account of De Quincey's taking of laudanum, see his *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*.

[5] A dreadful monster, shapeless, huge, and bereft of an eye.

kept waiting for the post-office. Will the post-office lay its hand on its heart, in its moments of sobriety, and assert that ever it waited for me? What are they about? The guard tells me that there is a large extra accumulation of foreign mails this night, owing to irregularities caused by war, by wind, by weather, in the packet service, which as yet does not benefit at all by steam. For an *extra* hour, it seems, the post-office has been engaged in threshing out the pure wheaten correspondence of Glasgow, and winnowing it from the chaff of all baser intermediate towns. But at last all is finished. Sound your horn, guard! Manchester, good-bye! we've lost an hour by your criminal conduct at the post-office: which, however, though I do not mean to part with a serviceable ground of complaint, and one which really *is* such for the horses, to me secretly is an advantage, since it compels us to look sharply for this lost hour amongst the next eight or nine, and to recover it (if we can) at the rate of one mile extra per hour. Off we are at last, and at eleven miles an hour; and for the moment I detect no changes in the energy or in the skill of Cyclops.

From Manchester to Kendal, which virtually (though not in law) is the capital of Westmoreland, there were at this time seven stages of eleven miles each. The first five of these, counting from Manchester, terminate in Lancaster; which is therefore fifty-five miles north of Manchester, and the same distance exactly from Liverpool. The first three stages terminate in Preston (called, by way of distinction from other towns of that name, *Proud* Preston); at which place it is that the separate roads from Liverpool and from Manchester to the North become confluent.[6] Within these first three stages lay the foundation, the progress, and termination of our night's adventure. During the first stage, I found out that Cyclops was mortal: he was liable to the shocking affection of sleep—a thing which previously I had never suspected. If a man indulges in the vicious habit of sleeping, all the skill in aurigation of Apollo himself, with the horses of Aurora to execute his notions, avails him nothing. "Oh, Cyclops!" I exclaimed, "thou art mortal. My friend, thou snorest." Through the first eleven miles, however, this infirmity—which I grieve to say that he shared with the whole Pagan Pantheon—betrayed itself only by brief snatches. On waking up, he made an apology for himself which, instead of mending matters, laid open a gloomy vista of coming disasters. The summer assizes, he reminded me, were now going on at Lancaster: in consequence of which for three nights and three days he had not lain down on a bed. During the day he was waiting for his own summons as a witness on the trial in which he was interested, or else, lest he should be missing at the critical moment, was drinking with the other witnesses under the pastoral surveillance of the attorneys. During the night, or that part of it which at sea would form the middle watch, he was driving. This explanation certainly accounted for his drowsiness, but in a way which made it much more alarming; since now, after several days' resistance to this infirmity, at length he was steadily giving way. Throughout the second stage he grew more and more drowsy. In the second mile of the third stage he surrendered himself finally and without a struggle to his perilous temptation. All his past resistance had but deepened the weight of this final oppression. Seven atmospheres of sleep rested upon him; and, to consummate the case, our worthy guard, after singing "Love amongst the Roses" for perhaps thirty times, without invitation and without applause, had in revenge moodily resigned himself to slumber—not so deep, doubtless, as the coachman's, but deep enough for mischief. And thus at last, about ten miles from Preston, it came about that I found myself left in charge of his Majesty's London and Glasgow mail, then running at the least twelve miles an hour.

What made this negligence less criminal than else it must have been thought was the condition of the roads at night during the assizes. At that time, all the law business of populous Liverpool, and also of populous Manchester, with its vast cincture of populous rural districts, was called up by ancient usage to the tribunal of Lilliputian Lancaster.[7] To break up this old traditional usage required, 1, a conflict with powerful established interests, 2, a large system of new arrangements, and 3, a new parliamentary statute. But as yet this change was merely in contemplation. As things were at present, twice in the year so vast a body of business rolled northwards from the southern quarter of the county that for a fortnight at least it occupied the severe exertions of two judges in

[6] Suppose a capital Y (the Pythagorean letter): Lancaster is at the foot of this letter; Liverpool at the top of the *right* branch; Manchester at the top of the *left*; Proud Preston at the centre, where the two branches unite. It is thirty-three miles along either of the two branches; it is twenty-two miles along the stem,—viz., from Preston in the middle to Lancaster at the root. There's a lesson in geography for the reader!—De Quincey.

[7] tiny: for the Lilliputians, see Vol. I, pp. 681 ff.

its despatch. The consequence of this was that every horse available for such a service, along the whole line of road, was exhausted in carrying down the multitudes of people who were parties to the different suits. By sunset, therefore, it usually happened that, through utter exhaustion amongst men and horses, the road sank into profound silence. Except the exhaustion in the vast adjacent county of York from a contested election, no such silence succeeding to no such fiery uproar was ever witnessed in England.

On this occasion the usual silence and solitude prevailed along the road. Not a hoof nor a wheel was to be heard. And, to strengthen this false luxurious confidence in the noiseless roads, it happened also that the night was one of peculiar solemnity and peace. For my own part, though slightly alive to the possibilities of peril, I had so far yielded to the influence of the mighty calm as to sink into a profound reverie. The month was August; in the middle of which lay my own birthday—a festival to every thoughtful man suggesting solemn and often sigh-born thoughts. The county was my own native county—upon which, in its southern section, more than upon any equal area known to man past or present, had descended the original curse of labor in its heaviest form, not mastering the bodies only of men, as of slaves, or criminals in mines, but working through the fiery will. Upon no equal space of earth was, or ever had been, the same energy of human power put forth daily. At this particular season also of the assizes, that dreadful hurricane of flight and pursuit, as it might have seemed to a stranger, which swept to and from Lancaster all day long, hunting the county up and down, and regularly subsiding back into silence about sunset, could not fail (when united with this permanent distinction of Lancashire as the very metropolis and citadel of labor) to point the thoughts pathetically upon that countervision of rest, of saintly repose from strife and sorrow, towards which, as their secret haven, the profounder aspirations of man's heart are in solitude continually travelling. Obliquely upon our left we were nearing the sea; which also must, under the present circumstances, be repeating the general state of halcyon repose. The sea, the atmosphere, the light, bore each an orchestral part in this universal lull. Moonlight and the first timid tremblings of the dawn were by this time blending; and the blendings were brought into a still more exquisite state of unity by a slight silvery mist, motionless, and dreamy, that covered the woods and fields, but with a veil of equable transparency. Except the feet of our own horses,—which, running on a sandy margin of the road, made but little disturbance,—there was no sound abroad. In the clouds and on the earth prevailed the same majestic peace; and, in spite of all that the villain of a schoolmaster has done for the ruin of our sublimer thoughts, which are the thoughts of our infancy, we still believe in no such nonsense as a limited atmosphere. Whatever we may swear with our false feigning lips, in our faithful hearts we still believe, and must forever believe, in fields of air traversing the total gulf between earth and the central heavens. Still, in the confidence of children that tread without fear *every* chamber in their father's house, and to whom no door is closed, we, in that Sabbatic vision which sometimes is revealed for an hour upon nights like this, ascend with easy steps from the sorrow-stricken fields of earth upwards to the sandals of God.

Suddenly, from thoughts like these I was awakened to a sullen sound, as of some motion on the distant road. It stole upon the air for a moment; I listened in awe; but then it died away. Once roused, however, I could not but observe with alarm the quickened motion of our horses. Ten years' experience had made my eye learned in the valuing of motion; and I saw that we were now running thirteen miles an hour. I pretend to no presence of mind. On the contrary, my fear is that I am miserably and shamefully deficient in that quality as regards action. The palsy of doubt and distraction hangs like some guilty weight of dark unfathomed remembrances upon my energies when the signal is flying for *action*. But, on the other hand, this accursed gift I have, as regards *thought*, that in the first step towards the possibility of a misfortune I see its total evolution; in the radix of the series I see too certainly and too instantly its entire expansion; in the first syllable of the dreadful sentence I read already the last. It was not that I feared for ourselves. *Us* our bulk and impetus charmed against peril in any collision. And I had ridden through too many hundreds of perils that were frightful to approach, that were matter of laughter to look back upon, the first face of which was horror, the parting face a jest—for any anxiety to rest upon *our* interests. The mail was not built, I felt assured, nor bespoke, that could betray *me* who trusted to its protection. But any carriage that we could meet would be frail and light in comparison of ourselves. And I remarked this ominous accident of our situation,—we were

on the wrong side of the road. But then, it may be said, the other party, if other there was, might also be on the wrong side; and two wrongs might make a right. *That* was not likely. The same motive which had drawn *us* to the right-hand side of the road—viz., the luxury of the soft beaten sand as contrasted with the paved centre—would prove attractive to others. The two adverse carriages would therefore, to a certainty, be travelling on the same side; and from this side, as not being ours in law, the crossing over to the other would, of course, be looked for from *us*.[8] Our lamps, still lighted, would give the impression of vigilance on our part. And every creature that met us would rely upon *us* for quartering. All this, and if the separate links of the anticipation had been a thousand times more, I saw, not discursively, or by effort, or by succession, but by one flash of horrid simultaneous intuition.

Under this steady though rapid anticipation of the evil which *might* be gathering ahead, ah! what a sullen mystery of fear, what a sigh of woe, was that which stole upon the air, as again the far-off sound of a wheel was heard! A whisper it was—a whisper from, perhaps, four miles off—secretly announcing a ruin that, being foreseen, was not the less inevitable; that, being known, was not therefore healed. What could be done—who was it that could do it—to check the storm-flight of these maniacal horses? Could I not seize the reins from the grasp of the slumbering coachman? You, reader, think that it would have been in *your* power to do so. And I quarrel not with your estimate of yourself. But, from the way in which the coachman's hand was viced between his upper and lower thigh, this was impossible. Easy was it? See, then, that bronze equestrian statue. The cruel rider has kept the bit in his horse's mouth for two centuries. Unbridle him for a minute, if you please, and wash his mouth with water. Easy was it? Unhorse me, then, that imperial rider; knock me those marble feet from those marble stirrups of Charlemagne.

The sounds ahead strengthened, and were now too clearly the sounds of wheels. Who and what could it be? Was it industry in a taxed cart? Was it youthful gaiety in a gig? Was it sorrow that loitered, or joy that raced? For as yet the snatches of sound were too intermitting, from distance, to decipher the character of the motion. Whoever were the travellers, something must be done to warn them. Upon the other party rests the active responsibility, but upon *us*—and, woe is me! that *us* was reduced to my frail opium-shattered self—rests the responsibility of warning. Yet, how should this be accomplished? Might I not sound the guard's horn? Already, on the first thought, I was making my way over the roof of the guard's seat. But this, from the accident which I have mentioned, of the foreign mails being piled upon the roof, was a difficult and even dangerous attempt to one cramped by nearly three hundred miles of outside travelling. And, fortunately, before I had lost much time in the attempt, our frantic horses swept round an angle of the road which opened upon us that final stage where the collision must be accomplished and the catastrophe sealed. All was apparently finished. The court was sitting; the case was heard; the judge had finished; and only the verdict was yet in arrear.

Before us lay an avenue straight as an arrow, six hundred yards, perhaps, in length; and the umbrageous trees, which rose in a regular line from either side, meeting high overhead, gave to it the character of a cathedral aisle. These trees lent a deeper solemnity to the early light; but there was still light enough to perceive, at the further end of this Gothic aisle, a frail reedy gig, in which were seated a young man, and by his side a young lady. Ah, young sir! what are you about? If it is requisite that you should whisper your communications to this young lady—though really I see nobody, at an hour and on a road so solitary, likely to overhear you—is it therefore requisite that you should carry your lips forward to hers? The little carriage is creeping on at one mile an hour; and the parties within it, being thus tenderly engaged, are naturally bending down their heads. Between them and eternity, to all human calculation, there is but a minute and a half. Oh heavens! what is it that I shall do? Speaking or acting, what help can I offer? Strange it is, and to a mere auditor of the tale might seem laughable, that I should need a suggestion from the *Iliad* to prompt the sole resource that remained. Yet so it was. Suddenly I remembered the shout of Achilles, and its effect. But could I pretend to shout like the son of Peleus, aided by Pallus? No: but then I needed not the shout that should alarm all Asia militant; such a shout would suffice as might carry terror into the

[8] "It is true that, according to the law of the case as established by legal precedents, all carriages were required to give way before royal equipages, and therefore before the mail as one of them. But this only increased the danger, as being a regulation very imperfectly made known, very unequally enforced, and therefore often embarrassing the movements on both sides."—De Quincey.

hearts of two thoughtless young people and one gig-horse. I shouted—and the young man heard me not. A second time I shouted—and now he heard me, for now he raised his head.

Here, then, all had been done that, by me, *could* be done; more on *my* part was not possible. Mine had been the first step; the second was for the young man; the third was for God. If, said I, this stranger is a brave man, and if indeed he loves the young girl at his side—or, loving her not, if he feels the obligation, pressing upon every man worthy to be called a man, of doing his utmost for a woman confided to his protection—he will at least make some effort to save her. If *that* fails, he will not perish the more, or by a death more cruel, for having made it; and he will die as a brave man should, with his face to the danger, and with his arm about the woman that he sought in vain to save. But, if he makes no effort,—shrinking without a struggle from his duty,—he himself will not the less certainly perish for this baseness of poltroonery. He will die no less: and why not? Wherefore should we grieve that there is one craven less in the world? No; *let* him perish, without a pitying thought of ours wasted upon him; and, in that case, all our grief will be reserved for the fate of the helpless girl who now, upon the least shadow of failure in *him*, must by the fiercest of translations—must without time for a prayer—must within seventy seconds—stand before the judgment-seat of God.

But craven he was not: sudden had been the call upon him, and sudden was his answer to the call. He saw, he heard, he comprehended, the ruin that was coming down: already its gloomy shadow darkened above him; and already he was measuring his strength to deal with it. Ah! what a vulgar thing does courage seem when we see nations buying it and selling it for a shilling a-day: ah! what a sublime thing does courage seem when some fearful summons on the great deeps of life carries a man, as if running before a hurricane, up to the giddy crest of some tumultuous crisis from which lie two courses, and a voice says to him audibly, "One way lies hope; take the other, and mourn for ever!" How grand a triumph if, even then, amidst the raving of all around him, and the frenzy of the danger, the man is able to confront his situation—is able to retire for a moment into solitude with God, and to seek his counsel from *Him*!

For seven seconds, it might be, of his seventy, the stranger settled his countenance steadfastly upon us, as if to search and value every element in the conflict before him. For five seconds more of his seventy he sat immovably, like one that mused on some great purpose. For five more, perhaps, he sat with eyes upraised, like one that prayed in sorrow, under some extremity of doubt, for light that should guide him to the better choice. Then suddenly he rose; stood upright; and, by a powerful strain upon the reins, raising his horse's fore-feet from the ground, he slewed him round on the pivot of his hind-legs, so as to plant the little equipage in a position nearly at right angles to ours. Thus far his condition was not improved; except as a first step had been taken towards the possibility of a second. If no more were done, nothing was done; for the carriage still occupied the very centre of our path, though in an altered direction. Yet even now it may not be too late: fifteen of the seventy seconds may still be unexhausted; and one almighty bound may avail to clear the ground. Hurry, then, hurry! for the flying moments—*they* hurry. Oh, hurry, hurry, my brave young man! for the cruel hoofs of our horses—*they* also hurry! Fast are the flying moments, faster are the hoofs of our horses. But fear not for *him*, if human energy can suffice; faithful was he that drove to his terrific duty; faithful was the horse to *his* command. One blow, one impulse given with voice and hand, by the stranger, one rush from the horse, one bound as if in the act of rising to a fence, landed the docile creature's fore-feet upon the crown or arching centre of the road. The larger half of the little equipage had then cleared our overtowering shadow: *that* was evident even to my own agitated sight. But it mattered little that one wreck should float off in safety if upon the wreck that perished were embarked the human freightage. The rear part of the carriage—was *that* certainly beyond the line of absolute ruin? What power could answer the question? Glance of eye, thought of man, wing of angel, which of these had speed enough to sweep between the question and the answer, and divide the one from the other? Light does not tread upon the steps of light more indivisibly than did our all-conquering arrival upon the escaping efforts of the gig. *That* must the young man have felt too plainly. His back was now turned to us; not by sight could he any longer communicate with the peril; but, by the dreadful rattle of our harness, too truly had his ear been instructed that all was finished as regarded any effort of *his*. Already in resignation he had rested from his struggle; and perhaps in his heart

he was whispering, "Father, which are in heaven, do Thou finish above what I on earth have attempted." Faster than ever millrace we ran past them in our inexorable flight. Oh, raving of hurricanes that must have sounded in their young ears at the moment of our transit! Even in that moment the thunder of collision spoke aloud. Either with the swinglebar, or with the haunch of our near leader, we had struck the off-wheel of the little gig; which stood rather obliquely, and not quite so far advanced as to be accurately parallel with the near-wheel. The blow, from the fury of our passage, resounded terrifically. I rose in horror, to gaze upon the ruins we might have caused. From my elevated station I looked down, and looked back upon the scene; which in a moment told its own tale, and wrote all its records on my heart for ever.

Here was the map of the passion that now had finished. The horse was planted immovably, with his fore-feet upon the paved crest of the central road. He of the whole party might be supposed untouched by the passion of death. The little cany carriage—partly, perhaps, from the violent torsion of the wheels in its recent movement, partly from the thundering blow we had given to it—as if it sympathized with human horror, was all alive with tremblings and shiverings. The young man trembled not, nor shivered. He sat like a rock. But *his* was the steadiness of agitation frozen into rest by horror. As yet he dared not to look round; for he knew that, if anything remained to do, by him it could no longer be done. And as yet he knew not for certain if their safety were accomplished. But the lady——

But the lady——! Oh, heavens! will that spectacle ever depart from my dreams, as she rose and sank upon her seat, sank and rose, threw up her arms wildly to heaven, clutched at some visionary object in the air, fainting, praying, raving, despairing? Figure to yourself, reader, the elements of the case; suffer me to recall before your mind the circumstances of that unparalleled situation. From the silence and deep peace of this saintly summer night—from the pathetic blending of this sweet moonlight, dawnlight, dreamlight—from the manly tenderness of this flattering, whispering, murmuring love—suddenly as from the woods and fields—suddenly as from the chambers of the air opening in revelation—suddenly as from the ground yawning at her feet, leaped upon her, with the flashing of cataracts, Death the crowned phantom, with all the equipage of his terrors, and the tiger roar of his voice.

The moments were numbered; the strife was finished; the vision was closed. In the twinkling of an eye, our flying horses had carried us to the termination of the umbrageous aisle; at the right angles we wheeled into our former direction; the turn of the road carried the scene out of my eyes in an instant, and swept it into my dreams for ever.

(1849)

Minor Romantic Poets

Thomas Moore

(1779-1852)

Tom Moore was born in Dublin, took his degree at Trinity College there, and occupied for a time a government post in Bermuda. His first series of *Irish Melodies* (1807) took Ireland and England by storm, and he continued to issue further volumes of them until 1835. It is for these facile, undisguisedly emotional lyrics that Moore has always been best liked. Lovers and sentimental folk have in vast numbers responded to the heart-warming phrases of his amatory poems and to tunes which he himself composed for them. Irish patriots have, on the other hand, loved him for being, as Shelley put it, Ireland's "sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong."

But Moore's output indicates an amazing versatility: his virile translations into verse of Anacreon (1800), his novel, *The Epicureans* (1827), and his biographies of Sheridan (1825) and Byron (1830), whose *Works* and *Letters* and *Journals* he edited (1830-35), are all interesting contributions to literature. Moore, indeed, led a highly successful life as a man of letters. In addition to what we have named, he wrote several clever political satires, and an Oriental romance in verse, *Lalla Rookh* (1817), in the style popularized by Scott and Byron.

The standard edition of his *Poetical Works* was edited by Godley (1910). A recent study of Moore has been made by H. M. Jones (1937).

The Time I've Lost in Wooing

The time I've lost in wooing,
In watching and pursuing
The light that lies
In woman's eyes,
Has been my heart's undoing.
Though Wisdom oft has sought me,
I scorned the lore she brought me,
My only books
Were woman's looks,
And folly's all they've taught me.

Her smile when Beauty granted,
I hung with gaze enchanted,
Like him the Sprite,
Whom maids by night
Oft meet in glen that's haunted.
Like him, too, Beauty won me,
But while her eyes were on me;
If once their ray
Was turned away,
Oh, winds could not outrun me.

And are those follies going?
And is my proud heart growing
Too cold or wise
For brilliant eyes
Again to set it glowing?
No, vain, alas! th' endeavor
From bonds so sweet to sever;
Poor Wisdom's chance
Against a glance
Is now as weak as ever.

The Harp That Once Through Tara's Halls

The harp that once through Tara's[1] halls
The soul of music shed,
Now hangs as mute on Tara's walls
As if that soul were fled.
So sleeps the pride of former days,
So glory's thrill is o'er,
And hearts that once beat high for praise
Now feel that pulse no more!

No more to chiefs and ladies bright
The harp of Tara swells;
The chord alone that breaks at night
Its tale of ruin tells.
Thus Freedom now so seldom wakes,
The only throb she gives
Is when some heart indignant breaks,
To show that still she lives.

[1] An ancient palace and assembly place in Ireland, twenty-one miles northwest of Dublin.

Oh, Breathe Not His Name!

ROBERT EMMET[1]

Oh, breathe not his name! let it sleep in the shade,
Where cold and unhonored his relics are laid;
Sad, silent, and dark be the tears that we shed,
As the night-dew that falls on the grass o'er his head.

But the night-dew that falls, though in silence it weeps,
Shall brighten with verdure the grave where he sleeps;
And the tear that we shed, though in secret it rolls,
Shall long keep his memory green in our souls.

James Henry Leigh Hunt
(1784-1859)

Born in Middlesex and educated at Christ's Hospital, Leigh Hunt entered the field of journalism while still in his teens. The responsibilities of marriage and a large family kept him at it for the rest of his life. Always an enemy of tyranny and falsehood, he exerted considerable influence through his radical journal, *The Examiner*. His criticism of the Prince Regent resulted in his being imprisoned for two years (1813-15). But his captivity was in itself a triumph, for to his prison came Byron, Moore, and hosts of friends to pay homage to his courage.

It is to Hunt's great credit that he recognized genius in Shelley and Keats, whose early work he published. Hunt, unfortunately, thought of himself as something of a major poet; and, indeed, he had among young ladies a vogue which might have given force to such an opinion. The best known of his poetical undertak-

[1] Irish patriot and revolutionist (1778-1803).

ings is *The Story of Rimini* (1816), chiefly because it provided a model for Keats's *Endymion* as well as the occasion for the attack on the "Cockney School" of poetry (of which he was the acknowledged leader). He is better remembered, however, for a series of pretty lyrics and a group of excellent familiar essays. As a poet he had more grace than genius. His prose is more stimulating, and contains much interesting literary gossip. His *Autobiography* (1850) is a valuable record of the times.

An interesting study of Hunt is that of R. B. Johnson (1896). A. Symons has edited a collection of his *Essays* (1903).

To the Grasshopper and the Cricket[1]

Green little vaulter in the sunny grass,
Catching your heart up at the feel of June,
Sole voice that's heard amidst the lazy noon,
When even the bees lag at the summoning brass:[2]
And you, warm little housekeeper, who class
With those who think the candles come too soon,
Loving the fire, and with your tricksome tune
Nick the glad silent moments as they pass;
Oh sweet and tiny cousins, that belong,
One to the fields, the other to the hearth,
Both have your sunshine; both, though small, are strong
At your clear hearts; and both seem giv'n to earth
To sing in thoughtful ears this natural song—
In doors and out, summer and winter, Mirth.

(1816)

Abou Ben Adhem

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An angel writing in a book of gold:—
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
"What writest thou?"—The vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, "The names of those who love the Lord."
"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still; and said, "I pray thee, then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow-men."

The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blessed,
And, lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest!

(1834)

[1] Cf. Keats's poem on the same subject, Vol. II, 342. These two poems were written simultaneously as a sort of poetic contest.

[2] Brass is beaten to summon bees.

Jenny Kiss'd Me

Jenny kiss'd me when we met,
Jumping from the chair she sat in;
Time, you thief, who love to get
Sweets into your list, put that in!
Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,
Say that health and wealth have miss'd me.
Say I'm growing old, but add,
Jenny kiss'd me. (pub. 1838)

Thomas Hood
(1799-1845)

Hood was born in London, the son of a bookseller. Gifted with genuine talent, he led a life of much suffering and disappointment which finally extinguished the light of poetry within him. His verse, mostly in the light vein, shows his fine sense of humor and his sensitive nature.

He first gained public notice by a volume of humorous poems, *Whims and Oddities* (1826). In the same style are *The Comic Annual* (1830), *Up the Rhine* (1839), and *Whimsicalities* (1843). Late in life he edited *Hood's Magazine*, a humorous periodical. That a man who was a lifelong victim of poverty and illness should have chosen to be a humorist is one of the strange aspects of his career. But occasionally he found relief from his professional clowning in writing poems of deep feeling and humanitarian vision. *The Bridge of Sighs* and the proletarian *The Song of the Shirt* have become, by reason of their powerful sincerity, among the best known of English poems.

Jerrold's edition of the *Poetical Works* (1906) and his *Thomas Hood, His Life and Times* (1907) are authoritative.

The Bridge of Sighs

One more Unfortunate,
  Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate,
  Gone to her death!

Take her up tenderly,
  Lift her with care;
Fashioned so slenderly,
  Young, and so fair!

Look at her garments
Clinging like cerements;
Whilst the wave constantly
  Drips from her clothing;
Take her up instantly,
  Loving, not loathing.

Touch her not scornfully;
Think of her mournfully,
  Gently and humanly;
Not of the stains of her,
All that remains of her
  Now is pure womanly.

Make no deep scrutiny
Into her mutiny
  Rash and undutiful:
Past all dishonor,
Death has left on her
  Only the beautiful.

Still, for all slips of hers,
  One of Eve's family—
Wipe those poor lips of hers
  Oozing so clammily.

Loop up her tresses
  Escaped from the comb,
Her fair auburn tresses;
Whilst wonderment guesses
  Where was her home?

Who was her father?
  Who was her mother?
Had she a sister?
  Had she a brother?
Or was there a dearer one
Still, and a nearer one
  Yet, than all other?

Alas! for the rarity
Of Christian charity
  Under the sun!
O, it was pitiful!
Near a whole city full,
  Home she had none.

Sisterly, brotherly,
Fatherly, motherly
  Feelings had changed:
Love, by harsh evidence,
Thrown from its eminence;
Even God's providence
  Seeming estranged.

Where the lamps quiver
So far in the river,
  With many a light
From window to casement,
From garret to basement,
She stood with amazement,
  Houseless by night.

The bleak wind of March
  Made her tremble and shiver;
But not the dark arch,
  Or the black flowing river:
Mad from life's history,
Glad to death's mystery,
  Swift to be hurl'd—
Anywhere, anywhere
  Out of the world!

In she plunged boldly—
No matter how coldly
  The rough river ran—
Over the brink of it,
Picture it—think of it,
  Dissolute Man!
Lave in it, drink of it,
  Then, if you can!

Take her up tenderly,
  Lift her with care;
Fashion'd so slenderly,
  Young, and so fair!

Ere her limbs frigidly
Stiffen too rigidly,
  Decently, kindly,
Smooth and compose them;
And her eyes, close them,
  Staring so blindly!

Dreadfully staring
  Thro' muddy impurity,
As when with the daring
Last look of despairing
  Fix'd on futurity.

Perishing gloomily,
Spurr'd by contumely,
Cold inhumanity,
Burning insanity,
  Into her rest.—
Cross her hands humbly,
As if praying dumbly,
  Over her breast!

Owning her weakness,
  Her evil behavior,
And leaving with meekness,
  Her sins to her Savior!

The Song of the Shirt

(1843)

With fingers weary and worn,
  With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
  Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
  In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
  She sang the "Song of the Shirt."

"Work! work! work!
  While the cock is crowing aloof!
And work—work—work,
  Till the stars shine through the roof!
It's Oh! to be a slave
  Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save,
  If this is Christian work!

"Work—work—work,
  Till the brain begins to swim;
Work—work—work,
  Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and band,
  Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
  And sew them on in a dream!

"Oh, Men, with Sisters dear!
  Oh, Men, with Mothers and Wives!
It is not linen you're wearing out
  But human creatures' lives!
Stitch—stitch—stitch,
  In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
  A Shroud as well as a Shirt.

"But why do I talk of Death?
  That Phantom of grisly bone,
I hardly fear its terrible shape,
  It seems so like my own—
It seems so like my own,
  Because of the fasts I keep;
Oh, God! that bread should be so dear,
  And flesh and blood so cheap!

"Work—work—work!
  My labor never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
  A crust of bread—and rags.
That shatter'd roof—this naked floor—
  A table—a broken chair—
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
  For sometimes falling there!

"Work—work—work!
  From weary chime to chime,
Work—work—work,
  As prisoners work for crime!
Band, and gusset, and seam,
  Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumb'd,
  As well as the weary hand.

"Work—work—work,
  In the dull December light,
And work—work—work,
  When the weather is warm and bright—
While underneath the eaves
  The brooding swallows cling
As if to show me their sunny backs
  And twit me with the spring.

"Oh! but to breathe the breath
  Of the cowslip and primrose sweet—
With the sky above my head,
  And the grass beneath my feet;
For only one short hour
  To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
  And the walk that costs a meal.

"Oh! but for one short hour!
  A respite however brief!
No blessèd leisure for Love or Hope,
  But only time for Grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
  But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
  Hinders needle and thread!"

With fingers weary and worn,
  With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
  Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
  In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,—
Would that its tone could reach the Rich!—
  She sang this "Song of the Shirt!" (1843)

THE VICTORIANS

The Victorian Background

QUEEN VICTORIA was on the throne of England from 1837 to 1901. It is true that she managed to personify the self-complacent respectability of those middle-class ideals which were dominant among the general public during her long reign, and hence there is justification in identifying the era with her name. Under two women, Elizabeth and Victoria, English literature experienced its most luxurious flowering. But the analogy between the two queens can be pushed no further. Whereas Elizabeth was intimately connected with the magnificent outburst of poetry in her era, Victoria was more generally to be found as symbolic of much *against* which the best minds of her time were reacting. Despite her personal dignity and commendable domestic virtues, she was a woman of almost unvaryingly mediocre taste who found her greatest pleasure only in the inferior artists, musicians, and writers of her day. Her want of intellectual or esthetic cultivation is all the more remarkable when we consider the abundance of artistic treasures which surrounded her in that period. It is, therefore, probably nearer the truth to consider the name "Victorian" as merely a convenient designation for a span of years covering two-thirds of the century, rather than for any unifying principle behind the artistic creations then produced. Actually, the Victorian Age in English literature was far too complex and rich to admit of any single characterization.

What can, however, be said of the age is that no earlier period of our literature demonstrates so keen a sensitivity to the social milieu in which it was produced. Possible though it is to discover the social factor in the literature of any period, it is utterly impossible to ignore it in the Victorian era. Many Victorians devoted themselves to solving social problems, many were equally concerned with turning their backs on them; but nearly all must be understood in terms of this omnipresent social stimulus which drove them to literary composition.

The Victorian Age is by general consent said to have begun in 1832, while Victoria's uncle, William IV, was ruler. In that year the First Reform Bill was enacted, giving direct political power to the middle class which had long exercised it economically. During the previous decade the working class, having recovered from the illusion that progress could be achieved through the destruction of machines, was beginning to be self-conscious and articulate. Workers began to make themselves felt in journalism and to organize themselves into trade unions. They had supported the Reform Bill of 1832, but found themselves now entirely disfranchised in favor of their employers.

Middle-class suffrage became the basis of parliamentary activity, and the bourgeoisie reposed comfortably in the prospect of undisputed domination of the country. The old names of "Whig" and "Tory" gave way to "Liberal" and "Conservative," and the Liberals set themselves the task of effecting in the political domain Adam Smith's economic principle of unrestricted competitive individualism. The Catholic Emancipation Act had been passed (1829); slavery was abolished in 1833; the repeal of the Corn Laws (1846) made free trade a national policy; Jews were made eligible for municipal offices (1845) and later for Parliamentary membership (1858); the Roman Catholic hierarchy was restored (1850); and voting by ballot was instituted (1872). These improvements were passed by Liberals and Conservatives alike, for between them there was little difference for a long time, as both were influenced by the teachings of Bentham—that Utilitarianism which urged the "greatest happiness for the greatest number." James Mill, Bentham's disciple, developed this philosophy, and passed leadership on to his son, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), the most prominent of Victorian Utilitarians. The typical Liberal point of view is lucidly expressed in these words of J. S. Mill: "The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise, or even right." This is the very apotheosis of the doctrine of *laissez-faire*—or, as we have come to call it, "rugged individualism."

Under this aegis, the middle class was able vastly to increase its wealth, its power, its mechanical contrivances, its material comforts, and its markets. And as its markets expanded, it acquired new holdings in Asia and Africa by colonization and conquest. Small wonder that its typical representative could rejoice with Macaulay at the progress being achieved, or could cry with Mr. Roebuck whom Arnold stigmatized into immortality: "I pray that our unrivalled happiness may last."

But that free play of individualism in which the industrialist gloried had a hideous side which he preferred to overlook. For its policy of noninterference involved a callous unconcern with the distresses of workingmen. To the masses, dependent upon the will of their employers for their very livelihood, the concept of economic freedom which advantaged the latter meant nothing. A high birth rate made labor cheap in a flooded market and made slum conditions progressively worse. The Act of 1825 had subjected to punishment by three months' imprisonment with hard labor all persons "who should by violence, threats or intimidation, molestation, or obstruction, do, or endeavor to do, or aid, abet, or assist in doing or endeavoring to do," any of many deeds inconsistent with the freedom of contract. This law was naturally effective in thwarting the development of trade unionism, and it was not until 1859 that "molestation" and "obstruction" were defined so as to exclude "endeavoring peaceably or in a reasonable manner . . . to persuade others to cease or abstain from work." Lacking the right to vote, the working classes were unable to change the unlawful status of their organizations.

Viewed from the position of the working populace, the Victorian Era presents the record of a long and difficult struggle to improve conditions. The first great

insurgent movement, Chartism, offered a real threat to the prerogatives of the middle class. The "People's Charter," drawn up (1838) in exasperation over the intolerable wretchedness of the mass of urban population, called for: universal manhood suffrage, voting by secret ballot, annual elections for Parliament, abolition of property qualifications for office in the House of Commons, payment of salaries to members of the House of Commons, and equal electoral districts. Without the first point, universal suffrage, the masses could not hope to achieve effective power. That point was won only in 1917 with the Manhood Suffrage Bill. The Chartist movement (1839-42), marked by a series of strikes and riots in industrial centers, eventually failed. By now, however, all its proposals but one (annual parliaments) have been incorporated into the English electoral system. Moreover, it turned the attention of the bourgeoisie to the condition of the people. Reports on the handloom weavers, on the coal mines, on sanitary conditions, and even on the "disposal of the bodies of the dead in the poorer quarters" awoke the horror of the general public. By long and arduous protest social legislation was wrung from an unwilling Parliament. Factory Acts from 1833 to 1878 imposed better working conditions upon employers; Ashley's Act (1847) established the ten-hour day; the Mines Act (1842) forbade the employment of women and children underground; the Acts of 1867 and 1873 rescued women and children from rough agricultural labor; and between 1871 and 1875 various Public Health Acts became law.

But despite these real gains for the working people, the rights of their employers to unimpeded profit-making were stolidly maintained. The theoretical justification for the government's reluctance to interfere on behalf of labor came from Malthus's *Essay on Population* (1798). This far-reaching speculation, originally intended to confute Godwin's radicalism, maintained that the social evils of poverty, disease, and war were necessary to prevent overpopulation. Malthus warned against "coddling" the people at the risk of upsetting the operations of "natural laws." The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, a typical piece of Utilitarianism, was created under Malthusian influence. But it was Liberal in that it put an end to private relief and fixed a value on self-reliance. It provided for the herding of the poor into workhouses where, under the rule of "all or nothing," they had to agree to surrender their freedom in exchange for an opportunity to labor.

Various theorists sprang up to the defense of the people. Shortsighted men, like the disciples of Cobbett, dreamed of a return to a patriarchal peasant society. Others, equally futile, urged a regression to the eighteenth-century system of domestic craftsmanship. Robert Owen (1771-1858), the founder of the co-operative movement, was one of the first reformers to look to the future instead of to the past. Accepting industrialism, he was convinced that the machine could be controlled for the benefit of the people. His system of "phalansteries," houses of self-supporting, self-sufficient communities run on a socialistic basis, was tried in Ireland, the United States, Hampshire, Glasgow, and New Lanark. Though some of these experiments were temporarily successful, they all came to failure. Owen's socialistic theories are noteworthy as the earliest important attempt to challenge the basis of the economic order of Victorian England. They were to be carried on and modified in the trade-union movement, and in the theories of Karl Marx, William Morris, and the Fabians.

Early and Mid-Victorian Poets and Prose Writers

Against this background of advance in liberalism and material prosperity on the one hand, and the growing claims of the working class to attention on the other, Victorian authors wrote and formed their attitudes. To these forces must be added another which powerfully affected their philosophies: the startling progress of science in the nineteenth century. In its practical applications, science, of course, was closely bound up with social advance. To discourse on the differences which telegraph, telephone, railroads, and the development of photography made in civilian life were to expend time on the obvious. Scientific invention, in a word, increased the comforts of the general public and the economic dependence of the poor. In the intellectual sphere natural science, however, made much more serious inroads into the consciousness of Victorians. The ancient theory of special creation had been subject for some time to criticism from the evolutionary theories of Buffon, Diderot, Erasmus Darwin, Goethe, Sir Charles Lyell, and Jean Lamarck. But it remained for Charles Darwin (cf. *below*) to marshal such an imposing array of facts to vindicate the doctrine of organic evolution that the very foundations of revealed religion were threatened. The authority of the Bible received the most serious challenge it had ever known, and for some the whole basis of Christian ethics was called into question.

To make out of this complex of social, political, religious, and ethical forces a unity which could be called "Victorian" would require, if it could be even then accomplished, the perspective of greater distance from it than we now possess. We shall be safer, therefore, to examine the writers in this section in terms of their reactions to these varied stimuli.

Apostle of the new Liberalism, Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) was an enthusiast for liberty, individualism, and the increasing material advance of society (cf. *below*). His *Essays* and *History of England* display a clear, if not profound, mind that delights in sharp antitheses and paradoxes. The easy balance of his style mirrors perfectly his well-bred avoidance of searching problems or stress.

Against everything Macaulay stood for, we behold the irascible figure of Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), who deliberately forged a vehement, startling style (cf. *below*) in order to shock his readers into attention. Alarmed at the materialism and money-worship of his age, he branded as false the smug optimism of the Utilitarians. He pointed to the deprivations and sordid existence of the slaves of industry, and lashed his contemporaries as murderers of the soul. His *Sartor Resartus* (cf. *below*) pierces through the appearances of things to the hidden spirit of man. Blasting the lazy material comfort-seeking of the middle class, he preached the sacredness of labor. Because of this belief he opposed democracy in *Past and Present* (cf. *below*) as destructive of society's spiritual good. For the evils of the present order he prescribed (in *Heroes and Hero-Worship*) the leadership of the hero under whose banner alone he felt men could escape from their present anarchy. His *French Revolution* is a stormy history of a social upheaval in terms of the great men who led it.

In search for an ideal with which to compare industrial civilization, Carlyle fell back on medieval monasticism with its consecration to the performance of humble tasks. The escape to the Middle Ages for inspiration became an insistent note of the Victorian Era. John Ruskin (1819-1900), too, in his search for moral values which make for great art, found what he sought in Gothic architecture (cf. *below*). In his *Modern Painters* (cf. *below*) he gave high praise to those contemporary landscape painters who had recognized that spiritual values were of greater consequence than mere sensuous appeal. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* and *The Stones of Venice* (cf. *below*) reject the Renaissance ideals in architecture, and exalt the superiority of the medieval because of its spiritual sincerity. His artistic researches had brought him closer to the teaching of Carlyle, and he began to concentrate on the economic conditions which are responsible for bad art. A stalwart enemy of the Utilitarians, he denounced the ugliness of industrialized society and its heavy toll of human souls. Expending his entire fortune in various endeavors to realize his ideals within his own lifetime, he became an untiring propagandist for his economic theories. His *Unto This Last, Munera Pulveris,* and *Fors Clavigera* expounded his beliefs and stirred public opinion. In the lecture from *Sesame and Lilies* called *The Mystery of Life and Its Arts* (cf. *below*) is to be found what is perhaps the fullest statement of his ideas.

Ruskin's preachments powerfully altered the readiness with which Englishmen had accepted the ugliness of their surroundings. A desire to find a place for beauty in everyday living gradually became a conscious part of English thinking. Chief among the propagators of the new quest for beauty was a group of men, encouraged and inspired by Ruskin, who called themselves the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. They, too, turned to the Middle Ages for release from the Mammon-idolatry of their time. Admirers of Keats, they accepted his worship of beauty as their ideal. Like him, they wrote much in a medieval setting, and they cultivated poets of the Middle Ages such as Dante, Villon (cf. *below*), and the anonymous romance-writers of France, England, and Scandinavia. Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882), the leader of the Brotherhood (cf. *below*), was a poet and painter of great gifts. He translated Dante's *Vita Nuova*; and his two best-known poems, *The Blessed Damozel* (cf. *below*) and *Sister Helen* (cf. *below*), are wonderful recapturings of medieval intensity of spirit. They possess, in addition, a rich sensuousness which was the heritage of Keats and the Romantics. These qualities are fused through mystical symbolism in his remarkable sonnet-sequence, *The House of Life* (cf. *below*). Christina Rossetti (1830-1894), his sister, achieved more perfectly than any of the group their ideal of simplicity in a series of marvelous lyrics which exhibit her deep piety and devotion to the Anglican Church (cf. *below*). William Morris (1834-1896), their friend and associate, was a man of innumerable talents (cf. *below*). It is not only in poems like *The Eve of Crecy* (cf. *below*), *The Defense of Guenevere* (cf. *below*), and *The Earthly Paradise* (cf. *below*), his romances, or his translations that we find him deriving artistic sustenance from the Middle Ages. Spurred on by Ruskin, he sought to counteract the soulless manufacture of his time by reviving in handicrafts the loving care and devotion of medieval artisans. Besides being a painter and poet, he designed tapestries, fabrics, wallpaper, furniture, and

stained glass, and founded a press for the printing of beautiful handmade books that might rival the bookmaking of olden times. These enterprises led him to the vision of a society regenerated through socialism, which he expressed in *A Dream of John Ball*, *News from Nowhere*, and such poems as *The Day Is Coming* (cf. *below*).

How much this yearning for the spiritual and artistic values of the Middle Ages may be attributed to the Oxford Movement, it is difficult to appraise. But certainly the writings and prestige of its chief proponent, John Henry Newman (1801-1890), did much to focus attention upon the beauty and dignity of medieval church ritual (cf. *below*). Unsympathetic to Liberalism, and alienated, like Carlyle and Ruskin, by the materialism of the era, he desired to wrest the Anglican Church from the grip of political and worldly domination. In his studies to re-establish beauty and dignity in the English Church, he gradually found faith in the Roman Catholicism which he had been attacking. His defense of his conversion, *Apologia pro Vita Sua* (cf. *below*) and his beautiful poem, *The Dream of Gerontius* (cf. *below*), are an expression of the triumphs of his mystical nature over the many doubts and struggles to which his generation was heir.

Prominent among these doubts, as we have said, were those raised by science. For a while scientists and theologians tried the vain expedient of seeking to rout each other from the field. Scientists became more arrogant and theologians more dogmatic, until it became apparent that in the general scheme of things some place would have to be made for the findings of science. Darwin's great disciple, Thomas Huxley (1825-1895), labored untiringly (cf. *below*) to make the average Englishman aware of the implications of the evolutionary theory, and his career as a man of letters was entirely directed toward that end. He did much to relieve the bitterness of the conflict between religion and science, by formulating for himself a tolerant agnosticism which allowed to religion credit for its support of ethics. Largely through his influence, such agnosticism became popular among the intellectuals of England, though, of course, there remained many uncompromising adherents to the letter of the Bible and equally rigid mechanists who were convinced that the universe could be explained in terms of demonstrable cause and effect.

Some poets, like Arthur Hugh Clough (1819-1861), were plunged for a while into despair (cf. *below*) by the challenge of science to their beliefs. Clough, who had been trained to piety, was only more greatly depressed by the turning-away from the problem by the Oxford Movement's disciples. After a period of bitter doubt, he at last won to a moral creed unsustained by religious dogma. It was his friend Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), however, who of all Victorians most completely faced the religious question. In his poetry (cf. *below*), which contains some of the finest reflective verse in our literature, he sought some basic discipline of life. Aware of the great prop that religion had once afforded to certainty and hope, he could not still the voice of doubt within him, robbing him of religion's comfort. A gentle air of melancholy pervades his verse, for in his poetry, chiefly the product of his earlier life, he could find no solution to the conflict of faith and reason. When he came to writing his great prose (cf. *below*), he was ready to take a more positive stand. The

spirit of Christianity was worth preserving, he decided, but Christian dogma must adapt itself to the contributions of science and enlightened thought. In *Literature and Dogma*, recognizing the fact that an "inevitable revolution" had taken place in the world of religion, he attacked middle-class morality and faith. The Bible may still be treasured as a "Book of conduct," he thought, but he refused to grant it any other authority. Conduct was the most important aspect of life to Arnold, however, and hence the Bible would be assured, in his plans, a high place of respect. Arnold's philosophy was essentially humanistic, and he exerted himself to preach the potential dignity of mankind. His reaction to the materialism of his day was to attack it for depriving men of the full and best use of their faculties. He taunted his compatriots for their Philistine smugness and vulgarity in literature, art, religion, morals, and public life. In his *Essays in Criticism* (cf. *below*) and in *Culture and Anarchy* he urged the cultivation of the best that had been thought and said in the world. This new humanism, as one critic has said, "which to a large extent he succeeded in founding . . . [was] an island of refuge in the religious débacle which took place in the last half of the century."

The poet who is usually thought of as most thoroughly characteristic of his age is Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892). The popular notion of Tennyson as the typical "Victorian" is, even though we do not define our terms, just enough. For he made a sincere attempt to imbibe all that science, philosophy, and religion had to offer the century. It is to his credit that he was not willing to accept, as Macaulay accepted, a thoughtless optimism. But, unfortunately, Tennyson was not a profound thinker. Struggle though he did to understand the intellectual forces of his time, he was unequal to adventuring in untrodden roads. Inevitably Tennyson finished by celebrating things as they are, and in finding ideals in the conventions of his day. His *Idylls of the King*, for example, transfer the pretenses of Victorian moral respectability to King Arthur's court, but all the glitter of historic perspective cannot hide their fundamental make-believe. In the soul-probings of *In Memoriam* (cf. *below*), his desire to reconcile the facts of science with orthodox beliefs is motivated by such insufficient intellectual courage that he is left not much wiser than he began. It is only when Tennyson is content to be a poet rather than a teacher that he is satisfying. In such poems as *The Lady of Shalott*, *Œnone*, *The Lotos-Eaters*, *Break, Break, Break*, and the songs from *The Princess*—in which the demands made upon him are those of an artist—he is truly superb and may with reason be considered the finest poet of his era.

Robert Browning (1812-1889), with whom it has been customary to contrast Tennyson, might as effectively be contrasted with all his contemporaries. He was a man far more interested in human beings than in general concepts, and his writing is as alien to the optimism of Macaulay, to the lectures of Carlyle and Ruskin, as to the uncertainties of Tennyson or the doubts and humanism of Arnold. Aggressively optimistic Browning undoubtedly was, but his optimism was of a species almost personal, unrelated to the glories of the British Empire or the improvements of Liberalism and science. Although in *Why I Am a Liberal* (cf. *below*) he makes plain his endorsement of social progress, he was, in comparison with his great con-

temporaries, almost unconcerned with the causes and results of the Victorian social milieu. Nor did the conflict between religion and science greatly disturb him. He was essentially a religious man, but he allied himself to no formal religion. It is doubtful, indeed, if one could say that Browning had any organized philosophy. Yet no writer of his century is more robust, wholesome, and full of the joy of living The human soul and its crises, defeats, and victories were the chief objects of his curiosity. His greatest gift was his dramatic insight into the workings of the human character, and it was natural, therefore, that he should have focused his attention upon individual men and women rather than on social problems. Perhaps because freed from the encumbrance of those problems, he was most at home in late Renaissance Italy, where the excesses of that age's individualism afforded studies wonderfully suited to Browning's interests—e.g. *My Last Duchess* (cf. *below*), *The Bishop Orders His Tomb* (cf. *below*), *Fra Lippo Lippi* (cf. *below*), *Andrea del Sarto* (cf. *below*), and *The Ring and the Book*. Browning's inspiriting message is that life is worth the struggle, and that only by meeting pain and joy with courage can we prove our worth to God.

Browning's energetic courtship of the poet, Elizabeth Barrett (1806-1861), who eventually became Mrs. Browning, inspired her to write the most impassioned sonnet-sequence in our language, *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (cf. *below*). Under the influence of Carlyle she was a strong partisan of the depressed working class, and her *The Cry of the Children* (cf. *below*) is a stirring protest against child labor.

There remains to be examined one more typical reaction to the social, scientific, and religious complexities of the century: a determination to cast all questions to the winds and live for beauty, pleasure, and experience. This philosophy was to be heard in the chastened, classic measures in which Edward FitzGerald (1809-1883) adapted the *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (cf. *below*). But the leading propounder of this hedonism was Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837-1909). Identified for a time with the Pre-Raphaelite group and its ideals, he fell strongly under the influence of the French poet Baudelaire (cf. *below*), and became a singer of the experiences of the flesh. Later in life he turned to matters of greater intellectual content. But the value of Swinburne's poetry (cf. *below*) is not so much in what he had to say as in the manner in which he said it. For this reason some sober critics would exclude him from the ranks of great poets. On the other hand, he was perhaps the most astounding musician that English verse has ever known, and his magic over sound has retained for him a wide audience.

The Victorian Novel

From the very outset, the Victorian period witnessed considerable variety in the novel, a form which continued to assume further importance as a literary medium.

Frederick Marryatt (1792-1848), a successor to the traditions of Smollett, produced a series of lively sea stories, full of good humor and technical accuracy, of which the favorites have been *Peter Simple* (1834), *Jacob Faithful* (1834), and *Midshipman Easy* (1836).

Edward Bulwer Lytton (1803-1873) attempted every kind of novel fashionable in his day. Animated by the brilliance of the Byronic hero, he made two pictures of dandies, *Falkland* (1827) and *Pelham* (1832), and two of fascinating criminals, *Paul Clifford* (1830) and *Eugene Aram* (1832). Under the influence of Scott's historical novels he wrote *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834), *Rienzi* (1835), *The Last of the Barons* (1843), and *Harold* (1848). When public interest changed to the domestic novel, he composed *The Caxtons* (1850), *My Novel* (1853), and *What Will He Do With It?* (1858). These are but a portion of his total output of novels, not one of which is either poor or excellent. His greatest gift is an ability to carry his reader along; his weaknesses include theatricality, false rhetoric, and a general lack of sincerity. He wrote also poetry and plays, and his drama *Richelieu* (1838) is still performed.

The novels of Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881), later Lord Beaconsfield, seem destined better to withstand the ravages of time. His early successes, dealing, like Lytton's, with society life, though excessively showy, have a greater ease and certainty of tone: *Vivian Grey* (1826), *The Young Duke* (1831), *Contarini Fleming* (1832), *Alroy* (1833), and *Venetia* (1837). Perhaps the most engaging of these, however, is the satirical extravaganza, *Ixion in Heaven* (1828). After his entrance into Parliament as a democratic Tory, he devoted himself to pointing out the need for ameliorating the conditions of the working class. *Coningsby* (1844) has been called "the best novel of politics ever written." *Sybil* (1845), composed under the influence of Carlyle, presents a picture of society divided into "two nations, between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy"; Chartism is explained as the "wail of intolerable serfage" brought about by capitalist worship of Mammon and by the new dominance of the machine; Disraeli urges the reunion of the rich and poor through loyalty to English traditions and opposition to the Liberal capitalists, but does not suggest how the marriage is to be arranged. Other political novels by Disraeli are *Tancred* (1847), *Lothair* (1870), and *Endymion* (1880). Disraeli's fault is that of Lytton—an air of unreality, which in his case comes from his tendency to create characters to illustrate a thesis; but his wit is still fresh and welcome.

We now come to the man who enjoyed a wider and more enthusiastic popularity than any other Englishman of his century, Charles Dickens (1812-1870). There was a time when that unparalleled popularity was regarded by the esthetes as proof of Dickens's merely transitory importance. But despite the vitiating element of sentimentalism in many of his pages, his genius was of a high order. Dozens of his characters—Sam Weller, Mrs. Gamp, Mr. Micawber, Scrooge, Chadband, Pecksniff, Joe Gargery, Dora Copperfield, to mention but a very few—are as familiar to our imagination as Don Quixote, and Dickens's immortality is fairly assured. He began his career with *Sketches by Boz* (1833-36). His first novel, of the picaresque type, *Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (1836-37), was begun as an engagement to write the text to accompany a series of cartoons on sporting life; the death of the artist left Dickens free to compose a character-crammed book, formless and masterful in its humor, in which he discovered his wonderful gifts to the world. The immediately ensuing years witnessed the

development of the Chartist movement, and during them Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* (1838), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1839), *The Old Curiosity Shop,* and *Barnaby Rudge* (1840-41)—in all of which he takes an optimistic view of society. *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), and *Dombey and Son* (1848) are largely overcast by the depression consequent upon the social upheaval connected with the last sputterings of Chartism. Thereafter, through the years 1849-1865, a period in which reaction triumphed all over Europe, Dickens's pen became increasingly bitter and increasingly radical: *David Copperfield* (1850), *Bleak House* (1853), *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1857), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), *Great Expectations* (1861), and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865).

A son of the lower middle class, Dickens was convinced "that it is in the lower ranks of life that the really interesting and worthwhile people are to be found." Such an outlook enabled him to give a vital image of what life is like to everyday people. As for upper-class "society," his feelings about it were well expressed in a letter to a friend: "The more I see of its extraordinary conceit, and its stupendous ignorance of what is passing out of doors, the more certain I am that it is approaching the period when being incapable of reforming itself it will have to submit to being reformed by others off the face of the earth." Most of his books attack some social evil: *Nicholas Nickleby,* the private schools; *The Old Curiosity Shop,* child labor; *Bleak House,* the cumbersome workings of the law; *Dombey and Son,* the egotism of the capitalist; *Oliver Twist,* the workhouse system; and so on. His later books seem to have been definitely influenced by Carlyle—particularly *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Hard Times.* In the latter, the whole immorality of what he called "Gradgrind" economics (i.e. *laissez-faire* economics) is indicted, as may be seen by this passage: "It was a fundamental principle of the Gradgrind philosophy that everything was to be paid for. Nobody was ever on any account to give anybody anything, or render anybody help without purchase. . . . Every inch of the existence of mankind, from birth to death, was to be a bargain across a counter."

Dickens's energies were enormous; in addition to continuously writing, he gave public lectures and readings, and indeed killed himself by overwork. There is something of the torrential profusion of Nature itself about him and all that he did—for he was compounded of tenderness, anger, deep humanity, a little vulgarity, and almost as many qualities as could be named. If his shortcomings were many, so were his gifts. He was addicted to happy endings, theatricalism, extravagant coincidences, caricatures, and Sunday-school lessons in his novels. On the other hand, his power to create physical reality in his pages, his ability to enter into the minds of children and young people, his generous indignation at social abuses, his incomparable pictures of London and England, his outbursts of sheer poetic insight—these leave him without peers among novelists. To do him justice it is necessary to read all of him, and if he never created a book without flaws, he wrote none without great rewards for his reader. He is at his best, perhaps—though it is probably unwise to seek to single out treasures from his cornucopia—in *Bleak House, Great Expectations,* and *David Copperfield.* His greatest rival, Thackeray, could say of him: "I may quarrel with Mr. Dickens's

art a thousand and a thousand times: I delight and wonder at his genius. I recognize it—I speak with awe and reverence—a commission from that Divine Beneficence, whose blessed task we know it will one day be to wipe every tear from every eye. Thankfully I take my share of the feast of love and kindness which this gentle and charitable soul has contributed to the happiness of the world. I take and enjoy my share, and say a Benediction for the meal."

That generous tribute emanated from the only man who could lay claim to a share of Dickens's supremacy during his lifetime. William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) was not only a great novelist but a great essayist as well, and that side of his career is discussed elsewhere (cf. *below*). He took as his sphere of interest the upper middle classes, and deliberately narrowed his subject to the behavior of individuals within the family circle. Temperamentally a satirist like Fielding, he wrote *Barry Lyndon* (1844) much in the vein of *Jonathan Wild*. But his greatest works deal with life in the drawing room, and he took upon himself to expose the shallowness, cruelty, hypocrisy, and greed of the socially privileged. In this objective his greatest success was in *Vanity Fair* (1847-48), the novel that brought him fame. Set against the background of the Napoleonic wars, this "novel without a hero" has as its central character the incomparable, wicked, witty, half-tragic Becky Sharp, through whom Thackeray showed the stupidities of aristocratic society. It is probable that no discriminating critic would think of listing the greatest English novels without including *Vanity Fair*; the large canvas is handled with unfailing brilliance and power, and every quality from wit to pathos and grandeur is represented with the certain touch of the master. *Henry Esmond* (1853) marked a break with the Scott tradition by proving that a historical novel could be written in realistic terms. A picture of the times of Sir Richard Steele, who figures in it, this has been often called Thackeray's finest piece of artistry in narration. It was followed by the scarcely less engrossing *The Newcomes* (1854-55) and *The Virginians* (1858-59). *Pendennis* (1848-50), containing much autobiography, is likely to remind one again of Thackeray's master's *Tom Jones*.

Thackeray thoroughly knew the class he depicted. But it would be inaccurate to describe him as only a satirist, for he had profound sympathies for goodness, kindliness, and sincerity wherever he found them. Fundamentally he was a humanist and an artist, a man who took pleasure in the human pageant and had no excessive hope and no despair over mankind's progress. He was a far more careful artist than Dickens, and his prose is admirable for its clarity, raciness, and wit. It has been said that he never wrote a dull page in his life. His fine historical sense and cultivation enabled him to recreate with fidelity the manners and speech of the past. More than any of his contemporaries he had a strong sense of the literary form of the novel. But it is his skill in portraying the psychology of his characters—an ability unshared by Dickens—that, above all, places him in the front rank of novelists.

Among other Victorian novelists, high praise must be given to Emily Brontë (1818-1848), a woman with considerable poetic gifts (cf. *below*), for her remarkable *Wuthering Heights* (1848), a novel of tense, dark power. Her sister, Charlotte

Brontë (1816-1855), was the author of four novels, *The Professor* (published 1857), *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Shirley* (1849), and *Villette* (1853); a writer of impassioned eloquence, she often marred her work by false rhetoric. *Jane Eyre* is important as the first portrait of a "plain" heroine, and is remarkable for its sincere characterization. Mrs. Gaskell (1810-1865), Charlotte Brontë's biographer, wrote a series of novels, *Mary Barton* (1848), *North and South* (1855), *Ruth* (1853), and *Cranford* (1853)—all but the last the fruit of close observation of the evils of industrialized Manchester, where she lived for years. Charles Kingsley (1819-1875), Anglican minister and founder of the Christian Socialists, incorporated his ideals of reform in *Yeast* (1848) and *Alton Locke* (1850); he was at his best as a historical novelist in *Hypatia* (1853), a picture of early Christianity, and in *Westward Ho!* (1855), which deals with the Elizabethan navigators. Charles Reade (1814-1884), who had a taste for documentation, wrote several good novels with a social purpose: *It Is Never Too Late to Mend* (1853), on the horrors of prison life; *Hard Cash* (1863), on the abuses of insane asylums; and *Put Yourself in His Place* (1870), on trade unions. His best book, however, is the historical novel, *The Cloister and the Hearth* (1867), which depicts the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. Wilkie Collins (1824-1889), the most masterful constructor of plots among the Victorians, composed an interesting series of terror-novels, of which the most famous are *The Woman in White* (1860) and *The Moonstone* (1868). Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) wrote some fifty novels in an unexuberant, leisurely style which seems to impart the quality of truth to his studies of provincial life; his best are those dealing with communities of cathedral towns in his Barsetshire novels, *The Warden* (1855), *Barchester Towers* (1857), *Doctor Thorne* (1858), *Framley Parsonage* (1861), etc. The authentic pictures of gipsy life reproduced in the novels of George Borrow (1803-1881)—*The Bible in Spain* (1843), *Lavengro* (1851), *The Romany Rye* (1857), and *Wild Wales* (1862)—are full of autobiographical reminiscence and abound in the freshness of the out-of-doors.

George Eliot (1819-1880), whose real name was Mary Ann Evans, enjoyed during her lifetime a reputation somewhat out of proportion to her gifts. She seemed to be equipping the novel with a new depth, and although she had broken with orthodox religion possessed a strong moral bent. Her studies were made in the realm of rural society, among farmers, small landowners, and clergymen. Instead of using irony, like Thackeray, she approached the psychology of her characters with pity and sympathy. She was able to make powerful appeals to the conscience by her striking pictures of the consequences of evil and hypocrisy. But her novels suffer from an overweight of didactic reflection and endless inquiry into moral issues, and her plots are retarded and smothered by the author's insistent "philosophizing." She suffers, also, from a certain insensitiveness to style, and she is guilty of long stretches of dull writing. Her novels, however, had an enormous ethical influence on her age. The best of them are *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1859), *Adam Bede* (1859, *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Middlemarch* (1872), and *Daniel Deronda* (1874-76).

Among studies which afford a valuable background for this period, mention

should be made of: R. W. Church's *The Oxford Movement* (1891); O. Elton's *Survey of English Literature*, Vols. III and IV (1920); F. J. C. Hearnshaw's *The Social and Political Ideas of Some Representative Thinkers of the Victorian Age* (1923); G. Saintsbury's *History of Nineteenth Century Literature* (1896); D. C. Somervell's *English Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (1929); L. Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918); H. D. Traill's *Social England*, Vol. VI (1897); H. Walker's *The Literature of the Victorian Era* (1921); Frances Winwar's *Poor Splendid Wings: The Rossettis and Their Circle* (1933); and G. M. Young's *Early Victorian England* (2 vols., 1934).

Thomas Carlyle

(1795-1881)

Thomas Carlyle was born on December 4, 1795, at Ecclefechan, in Annandale, a county of southern Scotland. He was the eldest of nine children of a stonemason who later took up farming. The Carlyles belonged to a strict Calvinistic sect and the atmosphere of Thomas's boyhood home was kindly but austere. In his *Reminiscences* he speaks of his father with deep affection, but it was from his mother that the boy received a full measure of affectionate understanding.

By his fourteenth year he had shown such aptitude for study that his parents decided to stretch their narrow means and prepare him for the ministry. Accordingly, in November 1809 he walked to Edinburgh and entered the university there. He did not, however, particularly distinguish himself as a scholar, though he soon acquired a position of intellectual leadership among his fellow students. Until 1818, when he abandoned his plan for a clerical career, he spent several years in teaching. Among his competitors was Edward Irving, a native of Carlyle's own county. In spite of their professional rivalry, they became fast friends, and Irving's influence upon Carlyle during these formative years broadened the younger man's interests. Access to Irving's library enabled Carlyle to do a great deal of reading. The foundation of his faith now began to shake, and the spiritual crisis he underwent is recorded in *Sartor Resartus*. He rejected the theology of his fathers, but he never gave up their spiritual fervor. While he was thus passing sleepless weeks of self-examination, he made an important discovery. In 1819 he commenced a study of the German language, and was soon eagerly reading the German poets and philosophers. The greater achievements of that literature were still unknown to most British writers (cf. Vol. II, p. 194), and Carlyle was for some years actively engaged in presenting them to his contemporaries. In the process, he fell more and more under the spell of German thought, especially that of the philosophers.

The next few years found Carlyle occupied in hard study, private tutoring, translating from the German, and some original writing. In 1824 he decided to try his luck in London. He made the acquaintance of a number of literary men. Perhaps the most memorable of his experiences at this time was the visit he paid to Coleridge, later vividly recounted in his *Life of Sterling*. Disappointed with London, Carlyle made up his mind to settle in his native district, where he could live more cheaply and carry on his literary labors without distraction. But he was not to win the tranquility he desired. Dyspepsia and insomnia both began to afflict him, and he was never to be free of their torment.

More distracting than illness, however, was a new event in his life. In 1822 he was introduced by Edward Irving to Jane Baillie Welsh, who had been Irving's pupil. She was a brilliant girl, with beauty and social charm. Aware of her attractiveness, proud of her family, she had aspirations toward a literary career. Carlyle was only too willing to assume the role of adviser and guide in her preparations. Their correspondence, begun at this time, forms one of the most interesting series of love letters in any language. After four years of courtship, during which Carlyle was now hopeful, now despairing, he gained her consent and they were married on October 17, 1826. Theirs was a strange and exciting companionship. Uncomprehending friends easily overinterpreted their frictions. But there can be little doubt that they were tied to each other by the strongest of bonds. For forty years they were the nucleus of a stimulating circle of distinguished friends, and upon his wife's death in 1866 Carlyle was seriously broken.

For a year after their marriage they lived in Edinburgh. Finding expenses too high in the metropolis, they moved in 1828 to a lonely farm owned by Mrs. Welsh and operated by Thomas's brother Alexander, at Craigenputtock. Here the young couple passed the most difficult years of their lives. Carlyle was commencing to write his more enduring work and was not hurrying into print, so that they had to deal not only with loneliness but with financial uncertainty as well. On the other hand, he was beginning to be known in the literary world in England and also on the Continent He was corresponding with Goethe, whose great novel, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, Carlyle had translated in 1824. Of all the friendships made during these years, however, that which he formed with the young American, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who came to visit him at Craigenputtock, was most important. Kindred spirits, they warmed toward each other and their lifelong devotion was a central fact in their intellectual development.

Carlyle's emotional and ideological struggles, his discovery of German transcendental philosophy, and his dissatisfaction with his era filled him with the desire to win his age away from the materialism into which it had fallen. The first of the nineteenth-century prophets, he wrote *Sartor Resartus* (cf. *below*), which began to appear in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1834, as a kind of spiritual autobiography. Louis Cazamian has thus characterized the work: "The central idea is as old as human thought. It is the deepest principle of all idealism, ancient or modern: things are not what they seem, but quite different. The mainsprings of his thought and the whole force of his temperament impelled Carlyle to this age-old affirmation. His Puritan inheritance left in him a profound, an insatiable need of a spiritualist philosophy; to his distinction between body and mind, the influences of religion naturally coupled a passionate preference of the mind to the body; and from this preference it was but a step to the denial of the reality of the body. The German idealists corroborated and accentuated this sovereign tendency in Carlyle. Like Emerson, he always conceived of them primarily as transcendentalists, as men whose reflections bore upon the supreme realities, transcending the field of sensible appearances. The transcendental movement, the ascent toward what is above, toward what is beyond, was to be the constant rhythm of his thinking, the scheme of his doctrine. . . . His temperamental craving for a religion which should satisfy his reason became more conscious and more audacious, from his contact with the idealism of Kant. It was at this contact that he determined, for the expression of his confident and ardent faith in the universe, upon the age-old subject of man's doubt, the falsehood of appearances; it was at this contact that his moral personality issued its confession of belief, that the central book of his life took shape."

Difficult as the style of *Sartor Resartus* was for its readers, the discerning soon realized that an important teacher was in their midst. In the summer of 1834 the Carlyles moved to London and took up residence in the house in Chelsea (now a Carlyle museum) which was to be their home for the rest of their lives. The next great work on which he engaged was *The French Revolution*. The famous story connected with it shows Carlyle's characteristic spiritual courage. When, after enormous labors, he had

completed the first volume, he gave his only copy of it to his friend John Stuart Mill to read. Through a household accident the manuscript was burned. Though nearly at the end of his financial resources and in despair over his lost time and energy, Carlyle did not even upbraid his friend for his carelessness, but set to work rewriting it. In 1837 he had the three volumes completed. *The French Revolution* is a continuation of Carlyle's exposition of the world as a manifestation of the divine idea. In this work he wrote to inculcate the lessons which history has recorded for the instruction of misguided humanity. As a historian Carlyle cannot be rated very high, and in the last analysis the book stands not as a trustworthy collection of historical data so much as a literary triumph. For its great quality is the vitality with which Carlyle presents the dramatic scenes of world-shaking events. The success of *The French Revolution* ended his financial worries. Within a few years his position as a mentor was firmly established.

Carlyle had witnessed the growth of utilitarianism, democracy, and a system of social ethics based upon individual commercial enterprise. He had developed a horror of the soullessness of the factory, the abject condition of wage-earners, the money-worship of the bourgeoisie, the whole social milieu produced by *laissez-faire* economics—"dismal science," as he called it. Convinced that the whole system was wrong, Carlyle was nevertheless unable to penetrate to the fundamental causes of social misery, and laid the blame at the door of democracy, which he felt to be the great force killing the spiritual values in men. Though calling himself "a radical and an absolute," he set himself in opposition to liberalism, under whose influence the revolutionary Chartist movement (cf. Vol. II, p. 437) was growing. His *Chartism* (1839) is a curious mixture of tendencies: his sympathies with the victims of manufacture have affinities with Socialism, but his certainty that salvation can come only through individual leaders seems (in the light of recent history) essentially reactionary in character.

This doctrine of progress through great leaders he elaborated in *Heroes and Hero-Worship*, delivered as a series of lectures in 1839, and published the next year. This volume, containing some of his most popular essays, presents heroes not only from among rulers and warriors but from among poets and writers—those who have, in his opinion, shaped the destiny of their times (cf. *Boswell, below*). History, as his *French Revolution* had tried to demonstrate, was the record of the deeds of great men. It is the duty, Carlyle thought, of those of us who are not great to find a great man to lead us, to follow him, and to lend our little strength to his noble strength. This romantic precept is, of course, full of danger to humanity, and has certain resemblances to the theory of the Superman later propounded by Nietzsche. It was the same philosophy which motivated Carlyle to write the biographies of *Oliver Cromwell* (1845) and of *Frederick the Great* (1858-65). In a different strain he wrote the *Life of John Sterling* (1851), an affectionate tribute to a dear friend.

In *Past and Present* (1843) Carlyle approached the political issues of his time more directly (cf. *below*). Attacking the spiritual blindness and mediocrity which he believed to be fostered by industrialism and democracy, he posed for modern society the ideals of medieval monasticism. His demand for a government powerful enough to suppress social disorders was naturally greeted with disfavor by the Liberals. However tempting the idea of benevolent despotism might have been as a short-cut to social amelioration, we cannot fail, knowing twentieth-century history, to regard Carlyle's ideas as untenable. Many of the criticisms he levels against democracy may be just enough, but we are likely to be confident that the disadvantages of democracy are evils far preferable to the putative advantages of rule by an individual or a group, no matter how enlightened. But Carlyle's generation received considerable moral impetus from his exasperated denunciations. His fundamental belief, curiously similar to Langland's (cf. Vol. I, p. 176), that only hard, honest work could save humanity, was a healthy antidote to the parasitism of the moneyed manufacturing class. It inspired Ruskin, Mrs. Browning, and the Pre-Raphaelites, among many others.

Carlyle's greatest weakness as a thinker is his lack of a system. He understood social evils only in flashes of emotion and indignation. The last word on him will probably be that he was at bottom an artist, master of a tortured, original style that fuses the grand with the homely, the tragic with buffoonery, and which is always vital, invigorating, and studded with unforgettable phrases.

Carlyle's final years, full of honors and official rewards, were partly spent in annotating the letters from his wife, published as *Letters and Memorials* (1883). Soon after his death, his literary executor, Froude, issued Carlyle's *Reminiscences*, unfortunately without the editing enjoined by the author. As a result there ensued a considerable amount of misunderstanding on the subject of Carlyle's private life. Subsequent collections of letters and biographical studies have revised literary opinion, so that Carlyle the man is again as much admired as Carlyle the great writer.

The standard edition of his works was edited in thirty-one volumes by H. D. Traill (1895-1901). The *Reminiscences* and Froude's four volumes of biography (1884; 1897) are the chief sources for Carlyle's life. Other important biographies have been written by M. D. Conway (1881), A. Carlyle (1903), J. Nichol (1904), R. S. Craig (1908), W. S. Johnson (1911), L. Cazamian (1913; trans. 1932), N. Young (1927), O. Burnett (1930), D. A. Wilson (6 vols., 1923-34), and E. Neff (1932). The correspondence with Jane Welsh (1909), Goethe (1887), and Emerson (1886) has been issued, as well as a series of miscellaneous letters (1886; 1889). Important critical studies have been made by F. W. Roe (1910), B. Perry (1915), M. Storrs (1929), and C. F. Harrold (1934).

Sartor Resartus[1]

In a letter to his brother on October 19, 1830, Carlyle said: "What I am writing is the strangest of all things; begun as an article for *Fraser;* then found to be too long (except it were divided in two); now sometimes looking as if it would swell into a Book. A very singular piece I assure you! It glances from Heaven to Earth and back again in a strange and satirical frenzy." The article had, by August 1831, in fact become a book, *Sartor Resartus*. The basic idea had been suggested to Carlyle by a passage in *The Tale of a Tub* in which Swift speaks of the universe as like a "large suit of clothes which invests everything," and asks, "What is man himself but a microcoat?"

Carlyle professes here to be writing a commentary on, and exposition of, the work of an eccentric German professor, one Diogenes Teufelsdröckh (i.e. Born-of-God Devil's-dung) of the University of Weissnichtwo (i.e. None-knows-where), on "Clothes, Their Origin and Influence." This device enabled the author to express his passionate sincerity and iconoclastic ideas with the comforting assistance of a disguise. To lend credibility to his design, he interspersed German phrases (as if from the "original" manuscript of Teufelsdröckh) and gave to the whole the air of a translation that could not escape the German idiom. But it is superficial to describe the style of *Sartor Resartus* (i.e. Tailor Retailored) as an imitation of German prose. "Carlylese" is a manner compounded of many elements, of which the Germanic is only one. The freedom of vocabulary and structure, for instance, contains many an echo of the King James Bible (cf. Vol. I, p. 346). The total effect of Carlyle's prose is to convey perfectly the complex of his personality: impassioned, irascible, inspired, mocking, and tender—by turns, and, sometimes, all in the same sentence.

The dilemma of literal-minded readers upon the appearance of *Sartor Resartus* may be illustrated by the remarks of the critic of the *North American Review* for October 1835: "Our private opinion is . . . that the whole story of a correspondence with Germany, a university of Nobody-knows-where, a Professor of Things in General, a Coun-

[1] The Tailor Retailored.

sellor Grasshopper, a Flower-Goddess Blumine, and so forth, has about as much foundation in truth as the late entertaining account of Sir John Herschel's discoveries in the moon. Fictions of this kind . . . ought not, perhaps, to be condemned with too much severity. But without intending to adopt a too rigid standard of morals, we own that we doubt a little the propriety of offering to the public a treatise on Things in General, under the name and in the form of an Essay on Dress."

Sartor Resartus has the double purpose of exposing the shams of society (elaborate, though frayed, robes which conceal the soul of life) and of revealing the divine idea in all creation.

Book II, Chapter IX, *The Everlasting Yea*

"Temptations in the Wilderness!" exclaims Teufelsdröckh:[2] "Have we not all to be tried with such? Not so easily can the old Adam, lodged in us by birth, be dispossessed. Our Life is compassed round with Necessity; yet is the meaning of Life itself no other than Freedom, than Voluntary Force: thus have we a warfare; in the beginning, especially, a hard-fought battle. For the God-given mandate, *Work thou in Well-doing,* lies mysteriously written, in Promethean Prophetic Characters, in our hearts; and leaves us no rest, night or day, till it be deciphered and obeyed; till it burn forth, in our conduct, a visible, acted Gospel of Freedom. And as the clay-given mandate, *Eat thou and be filled,* at the same time persuasively proclaims itself through every nerve,—must not there be a confusion, a contest, before the better Influence can become the upper?

"To me nothing seems more natural than that the Son of Man, when such God-given mandate first prophetically stirs within him, and the Clay must now be vanquished or vanquish,—should be carried of the spirit into grim Solitudes, and there fronting the Tempter do grimmest battle with him; defiantly setting him at naught, till he yield and fly. Name it as we choose: with or without visible Devil, whether in the natural Desert of rocks and sands, or in the populous moral Desert of selfishness and baseness,—to such Temptation are we all called. Unhappy if we are not! Unhappy if we are but Half-men, in whom that divine handwriting has never blazed forth, all-subduing, in true sun-splendor; but quivers dubiously amid meaner lights: or smoulders, in dull pain, in darkness, under earthly vapors!—Our Wilderness is the wide World in an Atheistic Century; our Forty Days[3] are long years of suffering and fasting: nevertheless, to these also comes an end. Yes, to me also was given, if not Victory, yet the consciousness of Battle, and the resolve to persevere therein while life or faculty is left. To me also, entangled in the enchanted forests, demon-peopled, doleful of sight and of sound, it was given, after weariest wanderings, to work out my way into the higher sunlight slopes—of that Mountain which has no summit, or whose summit is in Heaven only!"

He says elsewhere, under a less ambitious figure; as figures are, once for all, natural to him: "Has not thy Life been that of most sufficient men (*tüchtigen Männer*) thou hast known in this generation? An outflush of foolish young Enthusiasm, like the first fallow-crop, wherein are as many weeds as valuable herbs: this all parched away, under the Droughts of practical and spiritual Unbelief, as Disappointment, in thought and act, often-repeated gave rise to Doubt, and Doubt gradually settled into Denial! If I have had a second-crop, and now see the perennial greensward, and sit under umbrageous cedars, which defy all Drought (and Doubt); herein too, be the Heavens praised, I am not without examples, and even exemplars."

So that, for Teufelsdröckh also, there has been a "glorious revolution": these mad shadow-hunting and shadow-hunted Pilgrimings of his were but some purifying "Temptation in the Wilderness," before his apostolic work (such as it was) could begin; which Temptation is now happily over, and the Devil once more worsted! Was "that high moment in the *Rue de l'Enfer*,"[4] then, properly the turning-point of the battle; when the Fiend said, *Worship me, or be torn in shreds;* and was answered valiantly with an *Apage Satana?*[5]—Singular Teufelsdröckh, would thou hadst told

[2] the imaginary German professor into whose mouth Carlyle puts his own ideas.

[3] suggested by the forty days of fasting and temptation endured by Christ in the wilderness.

[4] The Street of Hell. [5] Get thee behind me, Satan.

thy singular story in plain words! But it is fruitless to look there, in those Paper-bags, for such. Nothing but innuendoes, figurative crotchets: a typical Shadow, fitfully wavering, propheticosatiric; no clear logical Picture. "How paint to the sensual eye," asks he once, "what passes in the Holy-of-Holies of Man's Soul; in what words, known to these profane times, speak even afar-off of the unspeakable?" We ask in turn: Why perplex these times, profane as they are, with needless obscurity, by omission and by commission? Not mystical only is our Professor, but whimsical; and involves himself, now more than ever, in eye-bewildering *chiaroscuro*.[6] Successive glimpses, here faithfully imparted, our more gifted readers must endeavor to combine for their own behoof.

He says: "The hot Harmattan[7] wind had raged itself out; its howl went silent within me; and the long-deafened soul could now hear. I paused in my wild wanderings; and sat me down to wait, and consider; for it was as if the hour of change drew nigh. I seemed to surrender, to renounce utterly, and say: Fly, then, false shadows of Hope; I will chase you no more, I will believe you no more. And ye too, haggard spectres of Fear, I care not for you; ye too are all shadows and a lie. Let me rest here: for I am way-weary and life-weary; I will rest here, were it but to die: to die or to live is alike to me; alike insignificant."—And again: "Here, then, as I lay in that CENTRE OF INDIFFERENCE; cast, doubtless by benignant upper Influence, into a healing sleep, the heavy dreams rolled gradually away, and I awoke to a new Heaven and a new Earth. The first preliminary moral Act, Annihilation of Self (*Selbsttödtung*), had been happily accomplished; and my mind's eyes were now unsealed, and its hands ungyved."

Might we not also conjecture that the following passage refers to his Locality, during this same "healing sleep"; that his Pilgrim-staff lies cast aside here, on "the high table-land"; and indeed that the repose is already taking wholesome effect on him? If it were not that the tone, in some parts, has more of riancy, even of levity, than we could have expected! However, in Teufelsdröckh, there is always the strangest Dualism: light dancing, with guitar-music, will be going on in the fore-court, while by fits from within comes the faint whimpering of woe and wail. We transcribe the piece entire.

"Beautiful it was to sit there, as in my skyey Tent, musing and meditating; on the high table-land, in front of the Mountains; over me, as roof, the azure Dome, and around me, for walls, four azure-flowing curtains,—namely, of the Four azure Winds, on whose bottom-fringes also I have seen gilding. And then to fancy the fair Castles that stood sheltered in these Mountain hollows; with their green flower-lawns, and white dames and damosels, lovely enough: or better still, the straw-roofed Cottages, wherein stood many a Mother baking bread, with her children round her:—all hidden and protectingly folded-up in the valley-folds; yet there and alive, as sure as if I beheld them. Or to see, as well as fancy, the nine Towns and Villages, that lay round my mountain-seat, which, in still weather, were wont to speak to me (by their steeple-bells) with metal tongue; and, in almost all weather, proclaimed their vitality by repeated Smoke-clouds; whereon, as on a culinary horologe, I might read the hour of the day. For it was the smoke of cookery, as kind housewives at morning, midday, eventide, were boiling their husbands' kettles; and ever a blue pillar rose up into the air, successively or simultaneously, from each of the nine, saying, as plainly as smoke could say: Such and such a meal is getting ready here. Not uninteresting! For you have the whole Borough, with all its love-makings and scandal-mongeries, contentions and contentments, as in miniature, and could cover it all with your hat.—If, in my wide Wayfarings, I had learned to look into the business of the World in its details, here perhaps was the place for combining it into general propositions, and deducing inferences therefrom.

"Often also could I see the black Tempest marching in anger through the Distance: round some Schreckhorn,[8] as yet grim-blue, would the eddying vapor gather, and there tumultuously eddy, and flow down like a mad witch's hair; till, after a space, it vanished, and, in the clear sunbeam, your Schreckhorn stood smiling grim white, for the vapor had held snow. How thou fermentest and elaboratest, in thy great fermenting-vat and laboratory of an Atmosphere, of a World, O Nature!—Or what is Nature? Ha! why do I not name thee God? Art not thou the 'Living Garment of God'? O Heavens, is it, in very deed, HE, then, that ever speaks through thee; that lives and loves in thee, that lives and loves in me?

"Fore-shadows, call them rather fore-splendors, of that Truth, and Beginning of Truths, fell mys-

[6] a picture made up of shadow and light.

[7] a dry, dust-laden wind blowing from the interior on the Atlantic coast of Africa.

[8] a mountain in the Alps.

teriously over my soul. Sweeter than Dayspring to the Ship-wrecked in Nova Zembla;[9] ah, like the mother's voice to her little child that strays bewildered, weeping, in unknown tumults; like soft streamings of celestial music to my too-exasperated heart, came that Evangel. The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel-house with spectres; but godlike, and my Father's!

"With other eyes, too, could I now look upon my fellow man: with an infinite Love, an infinite Pity. Poor, wandering, wayward man! Art thou not tried, and beaten with stripes, even as I am? Ever, whether thou bear the royal mantle or the beggar's gabardine, art thou not so weary, so heavy-laden; and thy Bed of Rest is but a Grave. O my Brother, my Brother, why cannot I shelter thee in my bosom, and wipe away all tears from thy eyes!—Truly, the din of many-voiced Life, which, in this solitude, with the mind's organ, I could hear, was no longer a maddening discord, but a melting one; like inarticulate cries, and sobbings of a dumb creature, which in the ear of Heaven are prayers. The poor Earth, with her poor joys, was now my needy Mother, not my cruel Stepdame; Man, with his so mad Wants and so mean Endeavors, had become the dearer to me; and even for his sufferings and his sins, I now first named him Brother. Thus was I standing in the porch of that *'Sanctuary of Sorrow'*; by strange, steep ways had I too been guided thither; and ere long its sacred gates would open, and the *'Divine Depth of Sorrow'* lie disclosed to me."

The Professor says, he here first got eye on the Knot that had been strangling him, and straightway could unfasten it, and was free. "A vain interminable controversy," writes he, "touching what is at present called Origin of Evil, or some such thing, arises in every soul, since the beginning of the world; and in every soul, that would pass from idle Suffering into actual Endeavoring, must first be put an end to. The most, in our time, have to go content with a simple, incomplete enough Suppression of this controversy; to a few some Solution of it is indispensable. In every new era, too, such Solution comes-out in different terms; and ever the Solution of the last era has become obsolete, and is found unserviceable. For it is man's nature to change his Dialect from century to century; he cannot help it though he would. The authentic *Church-Catechism* of our present century has not yet fallen into my hands: meanwhile, for my own private behoof, I attempt to elucidate the matter so. Man's Unhappiness, as I construe, comes of his Greatness; it is because there is an Infinite in him, which with all his cunning he cannot quite bury under the Finite. Will the whole Finance Ministers and Upholsterers and Confectioners of modern Europe undertake, in joint-stock company, to make one Shoeblack HAPPY? They cannot accomplish it, above an hour or two: for the Shoeblack also has a Soul quite other than his Stomach; and would require, if you consider it, for his permanent satisfaction and saturation, simply this allotment, no more, and no less: *God's infinite Universe altogether to himself*, therein to enjoy infinitely, and fill every wish as fast as it rose. Oceans of Hochheimer,[10] a Throat like that of Ophiuchus:[11] speak not of them; to the infinite Shoeblack they are as nothing. No sooner is your ocean filled, than he grumbles that it might have been of better vintage. Try him with half of a Universe, of an Omnipotence, he sets to quarrelling with the proprietor of the other half, and declares himself the most maltreated of men.—Always there is a black spot in our sunshine: it is even, as I said, the *Shadow of Ourselves*.

"But the whim we have of Happiness is somewhat thus. By certain valuations, and averages, of our own striking, we come upon some sort of average terrestrial lot; this we fancy belongs to us by nature, and of indefeasible right. It is simple payment of our wages, of our deserts; requires neither thanks nor complaint; only such *overplus* as there may be do we account Happiness; any *deficit* again is Misery. Now consider that we have the valuation of our own deserts ourselves, and what a fund of Self-conceit there is in each of us, —do you wonder that the balance should so often dip the wrong way, and many a Blockhead cry: See there, what a payment; was ever worthy gentleman so used!—I tell thee, Blockhead, it all comes of thy Vanity; of what thou *fanciest* those same deserts of thine to be. Fancy that thou deservest to be hanged (as is most likely), thou wilt feel it happiness to be only shot: fancy that thou deservest to be hanged in a hair-halter, it will be a luxury to die in hemp.

"So true is it, what I then said, that *the Fraction of Life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your Numerator as by lessening your Denominator*. Nay, unless my Algebra deceive

[9] an island in the Arctic Ocean north of Russia.

[10] a white Rhine wine.

[11] an ancient northern constellation representing a man holding a serpent.

me, *Unity* itself divided by *Zero* will give *Infinity*. Make thy claim of wages a zero, then; thou hast the world under thy feet. Well did the Wisest of our time[12] write: 'It is only with Renunciation (*Entsagen*) that Life, properly speaking, can be said to begin.'

"I asked myself: What is this that, ever since earliest years, thou hast been fretting and fuming, and lamenting and self-tormenting, on account of? Say it in a word: is it not because thou art not HAPPY? Because the THOU (sweet gentleman) is not sufficiently honored, nourished, soft-bedded, and lovingly cared-for? Foolish soul! What Act of Legislature was there that *thou* shouldst be Happy? A little while ago thou hadst no right to *be* at all. What if thou wert born and predestined not to be Happy, but to be Unhappy! Art thou nothing other than a Vulture, then, that fliest through the Universe seeking after somewhat to *eat*; and shrieking dolefully because carrion enough is not given thee? Close thy *Byron*; open thy *Goethe*."

"*Es leuchtet mir ein*, I see a glimpse of it!" cries he elsewhere: "there is in man a HIGHER than Love of Happiness: he can do without Happiness, and instead thereof find Blessedness! Was it not to preach-forth this same HIGHER that sages and martyrs, the Poet and the Priest, in all times, have spoken and suffered; bearing testimony, through life and through death, of the Godlike that is in Man, and how in the Godlike only has he Strength and Freedom? Which God-inspired Doctrine art thou also honored to be taught; O Heavens! and broken with manifold merciful Afflictions, even till thou become contrite, and learn it! O, thank thy Destiny for these; thankfully bear what yet remain: thou hadst need of them; the Self in thee needed to be annihilated. By benignant fever-paroxysms is Life rooting out the deep-seated chronic Disease, and triumphs over Death. On the roaring billows of Time, thou art not engulfed, but borne aloft into the azure of Eternity. Love not Pleasure; love God. This is the EVERLASTING YEA, wherein all contradiction is solved: wherein whoso walks and works, it is well with him."

And again: "Small is it that thou canst trample the Earth with its injuries under thy feet, as old Greek Zeno[13] trained thee: thou canst love the Earth while it injures thee, and even because it injures thee; for this a Greater than Zeno was needed, and he too was sent. Knowest thou that '*Worship of Sorrow*'? The Temple thereof, founded some eighteen centuries ago, now lies in ruins, overgrown with jungle, the habitation of doleful creatures: nevertheless, venture forward; in a low crypt, arched out of falling fragments, thou findest the Altar still there, and its sacred Lamp perennially burning."

Without pretending to comment on which strange utterances, the Editor will only remark, that there lies beside them much of a still more questionable character; unsuited to the general apprehension; nay wherein he himself does not see his way. Nebulous disquisitions on Religion, yet not without bursts of splendor; on the "perennial continuance of Inspiration"; on Prophecy; that there are "true Priests, as well as Baal-Priests, in our own day": with more of the like sort. We select some fractions, by way of finish to this farrago.

"Cease, my much respected Herr von Voltaire,"[14] thus apostrophizes the Professor: "shut thy sweet voice; for the task appointed thee seems finished. Sufficiently hast thou demonstrated this proposition, considerable or otherwise: That the Mythus of the Christian Religion looks not in the eighteenth century as it did in the eighth. Alas, were thy six-and-thirty quartos, and the six-and-thirty thousand other quartos and folios, and flying sheets or reams, printed before and since on the same subject, all needed to convince us of so little! But what next? Wilt thou help us to embody the divine Spirit of that Religion in a new Mythus, in a new vehicle and vesture, that our Souls, otherwise too like perishing, may live? What! thou hast no faculty in that kind? Only a torch for burning, no hammer for building? Take our thanks, then, and ——— thyself away.

"Meanwhile what are antiquated Mythuses to me? Or is the God present, felt in my own heart, a thing which Herr von Voltaire will dispute out of me; or dispute into me? To the '*Worship of Sorrow*' ascribe what origin and genesis thou pleasest, *has* not that Worship originated, and been generated; is it not *here*? Feel it in thy heart, and then say whether it is of God! This is Belief; all else is Opinion,—for which latter whoso will, let him worry and be worried."

"Neither," observes he elsewhere, "shall ye tear-out one another's eyes, struggling over 'Plenary

[12] Goethe.

[13] Greek philosopher, founder of Stoicism (third century B.C.).

[14] Cf. Vol. I, p. 755.

Inspiration,' and such-like: try rather to get a little even Partial Inspiration, each of you for himself. One BIBLE I know, of whose Plenary Inspiration doubt is not so much as possible; nay with my own eyes I saw the God's-Hand writing it: thereof all other Bibles are but Leaves,—say, in Picture-writing to assist the weaker faculty."

Or, to give the wearied reader relief, and bring it to an end, let him take the following perhaps more intelligible passage:

"To me, in this our life," says the Professor, "which is an internecine warfare with the Time-spirit, other warfare seems questionable. Hast thou in any way a Contention with thy brother, I advise thee, think well what the meaning thereof is. If thou gauge it to the bottom, it is simply this: 'Fellow, see! thou art taking more than thy share of Happiness in the world, something from *my* share: which, by the Heavens, thou shalt not; nay I will fight thee rather.'—Alas, and the whole lot to be divided is such a beggarly matter, truly a 'feast of shells,' for the substance has been spilled out: not enough to quench one Appetite; and the collective human species clutching at them!—Can we not, in all such cases, rather say: 'Take it, thou too-ravenous individual; take that pitiful additional fraction of a share, which I reckoned mine, but which thou so wantest; take it with a blessing: would to Heaven I had enough for thee!'—If Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*[15] be, 'to a certain extent, Applied Christianity,' surely to a still greater extent, so is this. We have here not a Whole Duty of Man,[16] yet a Half Duty, namely the Passive half: could we but do it, as we can demonstrate it!

"But indeed Conviction, were it never so excellent, is worthless till it convert itself into Conduct. Nay properly Conviction is not possible till then; inasmuch as all Speculation is by nature endless, formless, a vortex amid vortices: only by a felt indubitable certainty of Experience does it find any centre to revolve round, and so fashion itself into a system. Most true is it, as a wise man teaches us, that 'Doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by Action.' On which ground, too, let him who gropes painfully in darkness or uncertain light, and prays vehemently that the dawn may ripen into day, lay this other precept well to heart, which to me was of invaluable service: *'Do the Duty which lies nearest thee,'* which thou knowest to be a Duty! Thy second Duty will already have become clearer.

"May we not say, however, that the hour of Spiritual Enfranchisement is even this: When your Ideal World, wherein the whole man has been dimly struggling and inexpressibly languishing to work, becomes revealed, and thrown open; and you discover, with amazement enough, like the Lothario in *Wilhelm Meister*,[17] that your 'America is here or nowhere'? The Situation that has not its Duty, its Ideal, was never yet occupied by man. Yes here, in this poor, miserable, hampered, despicable Actual, wherein thou even now standest, here or nowhere is thy Ideal: work it out therefrom; and working, believe, live, be free. Fool! the Ideal is in thyself, the impediment too is in thyself: thy Condition is but the stuff thou art to shape that same Ideal out of: what matters whether such stuff be of this sort or that, so the Form thou give it be heroic, be poetic? O thou that pinest in the imprisonment of the Actual, and criest bitterly to the gods for a kingdom wherein to rule and create, know this of a truth: the thing thou seekest is already with thee, 'here or nowhere,' couldst thou only see!

"But it is with man's Soul as it was with Nature: the beginning of Creation is—Light. Till the eye have vision, the whole members are in bonds. Divine moment, when over the tempest-tossed Soul, as once over the wild-weltering Chaos, it is spoken: Let there be Light! Ever to the greatest that has felt such moment, is it not miraculous and God-announcing; even as, under simpler figures, to the simplest and least. The mad primeval Discord is hushed; the rudely-jumbled conflicting elements bind themselves into separate Firmaments: deep silent rock-foundations are built beneath; and the skyey vault with its everlasting Luminaries above: instead of a dark wasteful Chaos, we have a blooming, fertile, heaven-encompassed World.

"I too could now say to myself: Be no longer a Chaos, but a World, or even World-kin. Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee: out with it, then. Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called Today; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work."

[15] Teachings about Science. Johanne Gottlieb Fichte, celebrated German philosopher (1762-1814).

[16] probably referring to a well-known book of moral and religious instruction with this title published in 1659.

[17] by Goethe.

Book III, Chapter VIII, *Natural Supernaturalism*

It is in his stupendous Section, headed *Natural Supernaturalism*, that the Professor first becomes a Seer; and, after long effort, such as we have witnessed, finally subdues under his feet this refractory Clothes-Philosophy, and takes victorious possession thereof. Phantasms enough he has had to struggle with; "Cloth-webs and Cob-webs," of Imperial Mantles, Superannuated Symbols, and what not: yet still did he courageously pierce through. Nay, worst of all, two quite mysterious, world-embracing Phantasms, TIME and SPACE, have ever hovered round him, perplexing and bewildering: but with these also he now resolutely grapples, these also he victoriously rends asunder. In a word, he has looked fixedly on Existence, till, one after the other, its earthly hulls and garnitures have all melted away; and now, to his rapt vision, the interior celestial Holy of Holies[1] lies disclosed.

Here, therefore, properly it is that the Philosophy of Clothes attains to Transcendentalism; this last leap, can we but clear it, takes us safe into the promised land, where *Palingenesia*,[2] in all senses, may be considered as beginning. "Courage, then!" may our Diogenes exclaim, with better right than Diogenes[3] the First once did. This stupendous Section we, after long painful meditation, have found not to be unintelligible; but, on the contrary, to grow clear, nay radiant, and all-illuminating. Let the reader, turning on it what utmost force of speculative intellect is in him, do his part; as we, by judicious selection and adjustment, shall study to do ours:

"Deep has been, and is, the significance of Miracles," thus quietly begins the Professor; "far deeper perhaps than we imagine. Meanwhile, the question of questions were: What specially is a Miracle? To that Dutch King of Siam, an icicle had been a miracle; whoso had carried with him an air-pump, and vial of vitriolic ether, might have worked a miracle. To my Horse, again, who unhappily is still more unscientific, do not I work a miracle, and magical *'Open sesame!'* every time I please to pay twopence, and open for him an impassable *Schlagbaum*, or shut Turnpike?

"'But is not a real Miracle simply a violation of the Laws of Nature?' ask several. Whom I answer by this new question: What are the Laws of Nature? To me perhaps the rising of one from the dead were no violation of these Laws, but a confirmation; were some far deeper Law, now first penetrated into, and by Spiritual Force, even as the rest have all been, brought to bear on us with its Material Force.

"Here too may some inquire, not without astonishment: On what ground shall one, that can make Iron swim, come and declare that therefore he can teach Religion? To us, truly, of the Nineteenth Century, such declaration were inept enough; which nevertheless to our fathers, of the First Century, was full of meaning.

"'But is it not the deepest Law of Nature that she be constant?' cries an illuminated class: 'Is not the Machine of the Universe fixed to move by unalterable rules?' Probable enough, good friends: nay I, too, must believe that the God, whom ancient inspired men assert to be 'without variableness or shadow of turning,' does indeed never change; that Nature, that the Universe, which no one whom it so pleases can be prevented from calling a Machine, does move by the most unalterable rules. And now of you, too, I make the old inquiry: What those same unalterable rules, forming the complete Statute-Book of Nature, may possibly be?

"They stand written in our Works of Science, say you; in the accumulated records of Man's Experience?—Was Man with his Experience present at the Creation, then, to see how it all went on? Have any deepest scientific individuals yet dived down to the foundations of the Universe, and gauged everything there? Did the Maker take them into His counsel; that they read His groundplan of the incomprehensible All; and can say, This stands marked therein, and no more than this? Alas, not in anywise! These scientific individuals have been nowhere but where we also are; have seen some handbreadths deeper than we see into the Deep that is infinite, without bottom as without shore.

"Laplace's Book on the Stars, wherein he exhibits that certain Planets, with their Satellites, gyrate round our worthy Sun, at a rate and in a course, which, by greatest good fortune, he and the like of him have succeeded in detecting,—is to me as precious as to another. But is this what thou namest 'Mechanism of the Heavens,' and 'System of the World'; this, wherein Sirius and the

[1] *Exodus*, 26:33 and 34. [2] new birth.

[3] According to the story, Diogenes, the Cynic philosopher, encouraged his hearers toward the end of a tedious lecture with, "Courage, friends! I see land." Later when he saw a boy throwing stones at a gallows he said, "Courage! You will attain your object."

Pleiades, and all Herschel's Fifteen-thousand Suns per minute,[4] being left out, some paltry handful of Moons, and inert Balls, had been—looked at, nicknamed, and marked in the Zodiacal Way-bill; so that we can now prate of their Whereabout; their How, their Why, their What, being hid from us, as in the signless Inane?

"System of Nature! To the wisest man, wide as is his vision, Nature remains of quite *infinite* depth, of quite infinite expansion; and all Experience thereof limits itself to some few computed centuries and measured square-miles. The course of Nature's phases, on this our little fraction of a Planet, is partially known to us: but who knows what deeper courses these depend on; what infinitely larger Cycle (of causes) our little Epicycle revolves on? To the Minnow every cranny and pebble, and quality and accident, of its little native Creek may have become familiar: but does the Minnow understand the Ocean Tides and periodic Currents, the Trade-winds, and Monsoons, and Moon's Eclipses; by all which the condition of its little Creek is regulated, and may, from time to time (*un*miraculously enough), be quite overset and reversed? Such a minnow is Man; his Creek this Planet Earth; his Ocean the immeasurable All; his Monsoons and periodic Currents the mysterious Course of Providence through Æons of Æons.

"We speak of the Volume of Nature: and truly a Volume it is,—whose Author and Writer is God. To read it! Dost thou, does man, so much as well know the Alphabet thereof? With its Words, Sentences, and grand descriptive Pages, poetical and philosophical, spread out through Solar Systems, and Thousands of Years, we shall not try thee. It is a Volume written in celestial hieroglyphs, in the true Sacred-writing; of which even Prophets are happy that they can read here a line and there a line. As for your Institutes, the Academies of Science, they strive bravely; and, from amid the thick-crowded, inextricably intertwisted hieroglyphic writing, pick out, by dextrous combination, some Letters in the vulgar Character, and therefrom put together this and the other economic Recipe, of high avail in Practice. That Nature is more than some boundless Volume of such Recipes, or huge, well-nigh inexhaustible Domestic-Cookery Book, of which the whole secret will in this manner one day evolve itself, the fewest dream.

"Custom," continues the Professor, "doth make dotards of us all. Consider well, thou wilt find that Custom is the greatest of Weavers; and weaves airraiment for all the Spirits of the Universe; whereby indeed these dwell with us visibly, as ministering servants, in our houses and workshops; but their spiritual nature becomes, to the most, forever hidden. Philosophy complains that Custom has hoodwinked us, from the first; that we do everything by Custom, even Believe by it; that our very Axioms, let us boast of Free-thinking as we may, are oftenest simply such Beliefs as we have never heard questioned. Nay, what is Philosophy throughout but a continual battle against Custom; an ever-renewed effort to *transcend* the sphere of blind Custom, and so become Transcendental?

"Innumerable are the illusions and legerdemain-tricks of Custom: but of all these, perhaps the cleverest is her knack of persuading us that the Miraculous, by simple repetition, ceases to be Miraculous. True, it is by this means we live; for man must work as well as wonder: and herein is Custom so far a kind nurse, guiding him to his true benefit. But she is a fond foolish nurse, or rather we are false foolish nurselings, when, in our resting and reflecting hours, we prolong the same deception. Am I to view the Stupendous with stupid indifference, because I have seen it twice, or two-hundred, or two-million times? There is no reason in Nature or in Art why I should: unless, indeed, I am a mere Work-Machine, for whom the divine gift of Thought were no other than the terrestrial gift of Steam is to the Steam-engine; a power whereby cotton might be spun, and money and money's worth realized.

"Notable enough too, here as elsewhere, wilt thou find the potency of Names; which indeed are but one kind of such custom-woven, wonder-hiding Garments. Witchcraft, and all manner of Spectre-work, and Demonology, we have now named Madness and Diseases of the Nerves. Seldom reflecting that still the new question comes upon us: What is Madness, what are Nerves? Ever, as before, does Madness remain a mysterious-terrific, altogether *infernal* boiling-up of the Nether Chaotic Deep, through this fair-painted Vision of Creation, which swims thereon, which we name the Real. Was Luther's Picture of the Devil less a Reality, whether it were formed within the bodily eye, or without it? In every the wisest Soul

[4] an allusion to the astronomer Herschel's division of the heavens into squares one astronomical minute in size. Carlyle is giving an impression of the magnitude of the heavens by what he calls the way-bill, or inventory, of the stars.

lies a whole world of internal Madness, an authentic Demon-Empire; out of which, indeed, his world of Wisdom has been creatively built together, and now rests there, as on its dark foundations does a habitable flowery Earth-rind.

"But deepest of all illusory Appearances, for hiding Wonder, as for many other ends, are your two grand fundamental world-enveloping Appearances, SPACE and TIME. These, as spun and woven for us from before Birth itself, to clothe our celestial ME for dwelling here, and yet to blind it,—lie all-embracing, as the universal canvas, or warp and woof, whereby all minor Illusions, in this Phantasm Existence, weave and paint themselves. In vain, while here on Earth, shall you endeavor to strip them off; you can, at best, but rend them asunder for moments, and look through.

"Fortunatus had a wishing Hat, which when he put on, and wished himself Anywhere, behold he was There. By this means had Fortunatus triumphed over Space, he had annihilated Space; for him there was no Where, but all was Here. Were a Hatter to establish himself, in the Wahngasse of Weissnichtwo, and make felts of this sort for all mankind, what a world we should have of it! Still stranger, should, on the opposite side of the street, another Hatter establish himself; and, as his fellow-craftsman made Space-annihilating Hats, make Time-annihilating! Of both would I purchase, were it with my last groschen;[5] but chiefly of this latter. To clap-on your felt, and, simply by wishing that you were Any*where*, straightway to be *There*! Next to clap-on your other felt, and, simply by wishing that you were Any*when*, straightway to be *Then*! This were indeed the grander: shooting at will from the Fire-Creation of the World to its Fire-Consummation; here historically present in the First Century, conversing face to face with Paul and Seneca; there prophetically in the Thirty-first, conversing also face to face with other Pauls and Senecas, who as yet stand hidden in the depth of that late Time!

"Or thinkest thou it were impossible, unimaginable? Is the Past annihilated, then, or only past; is the Future nonextant, or only future? Those mystic faculties of thine, Memory and Hope, already answer: already through those mystic avenues, thou the Earth-blinded summonest both Past and Future, and communest with them, though as yet darkly, and with mute beckonings. The curtains of Yesterday drop down, the curtains of Tomorrow roll up; but Yesterday and Tomorrow both *are*. Pierce through the Time-element, glance into the Eternal. Believe what thou findest written in the sanctuaries of Man's Soul, even as all Thinkers, in all ages, have devoutly read it there: that Time and Space are not God, but creations of God; that with God as it is a universal HERE, so is it an everlasting NOW.

"And seest thou therein any glimpse of IMMORTALITY?—O Heaven! Is the white Tomb of our Loved One, who died from our arms, and had to be left behind us there, which rises in the distance, like a pale, mournfully receding Milestone, to tell how many toilsome uncheered miles we have journeyed on alone,—but a pale spectral Illusion! Is the lost Friend still mysteriously Here, even as we are Here mysteriously, with God!—Know of a truth that only the Time-shadows have perished, or are perishable; that the real Being of whatever was, and whatever is, and whatever will be, *is* even now and forever. This, should it unhappily seem new, thou mayest ponder at thy leisure; for the next twenty years, or the next twenty centuries: believe it thou must; understand it thou canst not.

"That the Thought-forms, Space and Time, wherein, once for all, we are sent into this Earth to live, should condition and determine our whole Practical reasonings, conceptions, and imagings or imaginings, seems altogether fit, just, and unavoidable. But that they should, furthermore, usurp such sway over pure spiritual Meditation, and blind us to the wonder everywhere lying close on us, seems nowise so. Admit Space and Time to their due rank as Forms of Thought; nay even, if thou wilt, to their quite undue rank of Realities: and consider, then, with thyself how their thin disguises hide from us the brightest God-effulgences! Thus, were it not miraculous, could I stretch forth my hand and clutch the Sun? Yet thou seest me daily stretch forth my hand and therewith clutch many a thing, and swing it hither and thither. Art thou a grown baby, then, to fancy that the Miracle lies in miles of distance, or in pounds avoirdupois of weight; and not to see that the true inexplicable God-revealing Miracle lies in this, that I can stretch forth my hand at all; that I have free Force to clutch aught therewith? Innumerable other of this sort are the deceptions, and wonder-hiding stupefactions, which Space practices on us.

"Still worse is it with regard to Time. Your grand antimagician, and universal wonder-hider, is this same lying Time. Had we but the Time-annihilating Hat, to put on for once only, we

[5] a German coin worth about two cents.

should see ourselves in a World of Miracles, wherein all fabled or authentic Thaumaturgy, and feats of Magic, were outdone. But unhappily we have not such a Hat; and man, poor fool that he is, can seldom and scantily help himself without one.

"Were it not wonderful, for instance, had Orpheus, or Amphion,[6] built the walls of Thebes by the mere sound of his Lyre? Yet tell me, Who built these walls of Weissnichtwo; summoning out all the sandstone rocks, to dance along from the *Steinbruch*[7] (now a huge Troglodyte[8] Chasm, with frightful green-mantled pools); and shape themselves into Doric and Ionic pillars, squared ashlar houses and noble streets? Was it not the still higher Orpheus, or Orpheuses, who, in past centuries, by the divine Music of Wisdom, succeeded in civilizing Man? Our highest Orpheus walked in Judea, eighteen-hundred years ago: his sphere-melody, flowing in wild native tones, took captive the ravished souls of men; and, being of a truth sphere-melody, still flows and sounds, though now with thousandfold accompaniments, and rich symphonies, through all our hearts; and modulates, and divinely leads them. Is that a wonder, which happens in two hours; and does it cease to be wonderful if happening in two million? Not only was Thebes built by the music of an Orpheus; but without the music of some inspired Orpheus was no city ever built, no work that man glories in ever done.

"Sweep away the Illusion of Time; glance, if thou have eyes, from the near moving-cause to its far-distant Mover: The stroke that came transmitted through a whole galaxy of elastic balls, was it less a stroke than if the last ball only had been struck, and sent flying? O, could I (with the Time-annihilating Hat) transport thee direct from the Beginnings to the Endings, how were thy eyesight unsealed, and thy heart set flaming in the Light-sea of celestial wonder! Then sawest thou that this fair Universe, were it in the meanest province thereof, is in very deed the star-domed City of God; that through every star, through every grass-blade, and most through every Living Soul, the glory of a present God still beams. But Nature, which is the Time-vesture of God, and reveals Him to the wise, hides Him from the foolish.

"Again, could anything be more miraculous than an actual authentic Ghost? The English Johnson longed, all his life, to see one; but could not, though he went to Cock Lane, and thence to the church-vaults, and tapped on coffins. Foolish Doctor! Did he never, with the mind's eye as well as with the body's, look round him into that full tide of human Life he so loved; did he never so much as look into Himself? The good Doctor was a Ghost, as actual and authentic as heart could wish; well-nigh a million of Ghosts were travelling the streets by his side. Once more I say, sweep away the illusion of Time; compress the three-score years into three minutes: what else was he, what else are we? Are we not Spirits, that are shaped into a body, into an Appearance; and that fade away again into air and Invisibility? This is no metaphor, it is a simple scientific *fact*; we start out of Nothingness, take figure, and are Apparitions; round us, as round the veriest spectre, is Eternity; and to Eternity minutes are as years and æons. Come there not tones of Love and Faith, as from celestial harp-strings, like the Song of beatified Souls? And again, do not we squeak and jibber (in our discordant, screech-owlish debatings and recriminatings); and glide bodeful, and feeble, and fearful; or uproar (*poltern*), and revel in our mad Dance of the Dead,—till the scent of the morning air summons us to our still Home; and dreamy Night becomes awake and Day? Where now is Alexander of Macedon: does the steel Host, that yelled in fierce battle-shouts at Issus and Arbela,[9] remain behind him; or have they all vanished utterly, even as perturbed Goblins must? Napoleon too, and his Moscow Retreats and Austerlitz Campaigns! Was it all other than the veriest Spectre-hunt; which has now, with its howling tumult that made Night hideous, flitted away?—Ghosts! There are nigh a thousand-million walking the Earth openly at noontide; some half-hundred have vanished from it, some half-hundred have arisen in it, ere thy watch ticks once.

"O Heaven, it is mysterious, it is awful to consider that we not only carry each a future Ghost within Him; but are, in very deed, Ghosts! These Limbs, whence had we them; this stormy Force; this life-blood with its burning Passion? They are dust and shadow; a Shadow-system gathered round our ME; wherein, through some moments or years, the Divine Essence is to be revealed in the Flesh. That warrior on his strong war-horse, fire flashes through his eyes; force dwells in his arm and heart: but warrior and war-horse are a vision; a revealed Force, nothing more. Stately they tread the Earth, as if it were a firm substance: fool! the Earth is but a film; it cracks in twain, and warrior

[6] mythical musicians accredited with this feat.
[7] quarry. [8] cave-dweller.
[9] battles in which Alexander defeated Darius.

and war-horse sink beyond plummet's sounding. Plummet's? Fantasy herself will not follow them. A little while ago, they were not; a little while, and they are not, their very ashes are not.

"So has it been from the beginning, so will it be to the end. Generation after generation takes to itself the Form of a Body; and forth-issuing from Cimmerian[10] Night, on Heaven's mission APPEARS. What Force and Fire is in each he expends: one grinding in the mill of Industry; one hunter-like climbing the giddy Alpine heights of Science; one madly dashed in pieces on the rocks of Strife, in war with his fellow:—and then the Heaven-sent is recalled; his earthly Vesture falls away, and soon even to sense becomes a vanished Shadow. Thus, like some wild-flaming, wild-thundering train of Heaven's Artillery, does this mysterious MANKIND thunder and flame, in long-drawn, quick-succeeding grandeur, through the unknown Deep. Thus, like a God-created, fire-breathing Spirit-host, we emerge from the Inane; haste stormfully across the astonished Earth; then plunge again into the Inane. Earth's mountains are levelled, and her seas filled up, in our passage: can the Earth, which is but dead and a vision, resist Spirits which have reality and are alive? On the hardest adamant some footprint of us is stamped-in; the last Rear of the host will read traces of the earliest Van. But whence?—O Heaven, whither? Sense knows not; Faith knows not; only that it is through Mystery to Mystery, from God and to God.

'We *are such stuff*
As dreams are made of, and our little Life
Is rounded with a sleep!' "[11]

(1834)

Past and Present

Book III, Chapter XI, *Labor*

For there is a perennial nobleness, and even sacredness, in Work. Were he never so benighted, forgetful of his high calling, there is always hope in a man that actually and earnestly works: in Idleness alone is there perpetual despair. Work, never so Mammonish,[1] mean, *is* in communication with Nature; the real desire to get Work done will itself lead one more and more to truth, to Nature's appointments and regulations, which are truth.

The latest Gospel in this world is, Know thy work and do it. 'Know thyself'[2]: long enough has that poor 'self' of thine tormented thee; thou wilt never get to 'know' it, I believe! Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself; thou art an unknowable individual: know what thou canst work at; and work at it, like a Hercules! That will be thy better plan.

It has been written, 'an endless significance lies in Work'; a man perfects himself by working. Foul jungles are cleared away, fair seedfields rise instead, and stately cities; and withal the man himself first ceases to be a jungle and foul unwholesome desert thereby. Consider how, even in the meanest sorts of Labor, the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony, the instant he sets himself to work! Doubt, Desire, Sorrow, Remorse, Indignation, Despair itself, all these like helldogs lie beleaguering the soul of the poor dayworker, as of every man: but he bends himself with free valor against his task, and all these are stilled, all these shrink murmuring far off into their caves. The man is now a man. The blessed glow of Labor in him, is it not as purifying fire, wherein all poison is burnt up, and of sour smoke itself there is made bright blessed flame!

Destiny, on the whole, has no other way of cultivating us. A formless Chaos, once set it *revolving*, grows round and ever rounder; ranges itself, by mere force of gravity, into strata, spherical courses; is no longer a Chaos, but a round compacted World. What would become of the Earth, did she cease to revolve? In the poor old Earth, so long as she revolves, all inequalities, irregularities disperse themselves; all irregularities are incessantly becoming regular. Hast thou looked on the Potter's wheel,—one of the venerablest objects; old as the Prophet Ezechiel and far older? Rude lumps of clay, how they spin themselves up, by mere quick whirling, into beautiful circular dishes. And fancy the most assiduous Potter, but without his wheel; reduced to make dishes or rather amorphous botches, by mere kneading and baking! Even such

[10] pertaining to the Cimmerians, a fabulous people living in complete darkness.

[1] money-getting; cf. *Paradise Lost*, II, 270, Vol. I, p. 454.

[2] a maxim inscribed on the temple of Apollo at Delphi.

[11] Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, IV, i, 156-8.

a Potter were Destiny, with a human soul that would rest and lie at ease, that would not work and spin! Of an idle unrevolving man the kindest Destiny, like the most assiduous Potter without wheel, can bake and knead nothing other than a botch; let her spend on him what expensive coloring, what gilding and enameling she will, he is but a botch. Not a dish; no, a bulging, kneaded, crooked, shambling, squint-cornered, amorphous botch,—a mere enameled vessel of dishonor! Let the idle think of this.

Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness. He has a work, a life-purpose; he has found it, and will follow it! How, as a free-flowing channel, dug and torn by noble force through the sour mud-swamp of one's existence, like an ever-deepening river there, it runs and flows;—draining-off the sour festering water, gradually from the root of the remotest grass-blade; making, instead of pestilential swamp, a green fruitful meadow with its clear-flowing stream. How blessed for the meadow itself, let the stream and *its* value be great or small! Labor is Life: from the inmost heart of the Worker rises his god-given Force, the sacred celestial Life-essence breathed into him by Almighty God; from his inmost heart awakens him to all nobleness,—to all knowledge, 'self-knowledge' and much else, so soon as Work fitly begins. Knowledge? The knowledge that will hold good in working, cleave thou to that; for Nature herself accredits that, says Yea to that. Properly thou hast no other knowledge but what thou hast got by working: the rest is yet all a hypothesis of knowledge; a thing to be argued of in schools, a thing floating in the clouds, in endless logic-vortices, till we try it and fix it. 'Doubt, of whatever kind, can be ended by Action alone.'

Book II, Chapter XIII, *Democracy*

If the Serene Highnesses and Majesties do not take note of that, then, as I perceive, *that* will take note of itself! The time for levity, insincerity, and idle babble and play-acting, in all kinds, is gone by; it is a serious, grave time. Old long-vexed questions, not yet solved in logical words or parliamentary laws, are fast solving themselves in facts, somewhat unblessed to behold! This largest of questions, this question of Work and Wages, which ought, had we heeded Heaven's voice, to have begun two generations ago or more, cannot be delayed longer without hearing Earth's voice. "Labor" will verily need to be somewhat "organized," as they say,—God knows with what difficulty. Man will actually need to have his debts and earnings a little better paid by man; which, let Parliaments speak of them or be silent of them, are eternally his due from man, and cannot, without penalty and at length not without death-penalty, be withheld. How much ought to cease among us straightway; how much ought to begin straightway, while the hours yet are!

Truly they are strange results to which this of leaving all to "Cash;" of quietly shutting-up the God's Temple, and gradually opening wide-open the Mammon's Temple, with "Laissez-faire,[3] and Every man for himself,"—have led us in these days! We have Upper, speaking Classes, who indeed do "speak" as never man spake before; the withered flimsiness, the godless baseness and barrenness of whose Speech might of itself indicate what kind of Doing and practical Governing went on under it! For Speech is the gaseous element out of which most kinds of Practice and Performance, especially all kinds of moral Performance, condense themselves, and take shape; as the one is, so will the other be. Descending, accordingly, into the Dumb Class in its Stockport Cellars and Poor-Law Bastilles,[4] have we not to announce that they also are hitherto unexampled in the History of Adam's Posterity?

Life was never a May-game for men: in all times the lot of the dumb millions born to toil was defaced with manifold sufferings, injustices, heavy burdens, avoidable and unavoidable; not play at all, but hard work that made the sinews sore and the heart sore. As bond-slaves, *villani, bordarii, sochemanni,* nay indeed as dukes, earls and kings, men were oftentimes made weary of their life; and had to say, in the sweat of their brow and of their soul, Behold, it is not sport, it is grim earnest, and our back can bear no more! Who knows not what massacrings and harryings there have been; grinding, long-continuing, unbearable injustices,—till the heart had to rise in madness, and some *"Eu Sachsen, nimith euer sachses,* You Saxons, out with your gully-knives, then!" You Saxons, some "arrestment," partial "arrestment of the Knaves and Dastards" has become indispensable!—The page of Dryasdust is heavy with such details.

[3] let alone; the doctrine held that business should be let alone, without governmental restrictions.

[4] Carlyle's slighting reference is to the workhouses of his day where the poor were sent.

And yet I will venture to believe that in no time, since the beginnings of Society, was the lot of those same dumb millions of toilers so entirely unbearable as it is even in the days now passing over us. It is not to die, or even to die of hunger, that makes a man wretched; many men have died; all men must die,—the last exit of us all is in a Fire-Chariot of Pain. But it is to live miserable we know not why; to work sore and yet gain nothing; to be heart-worn, weary, yet isolated, unrelated, girt-in with a cold universal Laissez-faire: it is to die slowly all our life long, imprisoned in a deaf, dead, Infinite Injustice, as in the accursed iron belly of a Phalaris' Bull![5] This is and remains forever intolerable to all men whom God has made. Do we wonder at French Revolutions, Chartisms,[6] Revolts of Three Days?[7] The times, if we will consider them, are really unexampled.

Never before did I hear of an Irish Widow reduced to "prove her sisterhood by dying of typhus-fever and infecting seventeen persons,"—saying in such undeniable way, "You *see* I was your sister!" Sisterhood, brotherhood, was often forgotten; but not till the rise of these ultimate Mammon and Shotbelt Gospels did I ever see it so expressly denied. If no pious Lord or *Lawward* would remember it, always some pious Lady (*"Hlaf-dig,"* Benefactress, *"Loafgiveress,"* they say she is,—blessings on her beautiful heart!) was there, with mild mother-voice and hand, to remember it; some pious thoughtful *Elder*, what we now call "Prester," *Presbyter* or "Priest," was there to put all men in mind of it, in the name of the God who had made all.

Not even in Black Dahomey[8] was it ever, I think, forgotten to the typhus-fever length. Mungo Park,[9] resourceless, had sunk down to die under the Negro Village-Tree, a horrible White object in the eyes of all. But in the poor Black Woman, and her daughter who stood aghast at him, whose earthly wealth and funded capital consisted of one small calabash of rice, there lived a heart richer than *Laissez-faire*: they, with a royal munificence, boiled their rice for him; they sang all night to him, spinning assiduous on their cotton distaffs, as he lay to sleep: "Let us pity the poor white man; no mother has he to fetch him milk, no sister to grind him corn!" Thou poor black Noble One,—thou *Lady* too: did not a God make thee too; was there not in thee too something of a God!—

Gurth,[10] born thrall of Cedric the Saxon, has been greatly pitied by Dryasdust and others. Gurth, with the brass collar round his neck, tending Cedric's pigs in the glades of the wood, is not what I call an exemplar of human felicity: but Gurth, with the sky above him, with the free air and tinted boscage and umbrage round him, and in him at least the certainty of supper and social lodging when he came home; Gurth to me seems happy, in comparison with many a Lancashire and Buckinghamshire man of these days, not born thrall of anybody! Gurth's brass collar did not gall him: Cedric *deserved* to be his master. The pigs were Cedric's, but Gurth too would get his parings of them. Gurth had the inexpressible satisfaction of feeling himself related indissolubly, though in a rude brass-collar way, to his fellow-mortals in this Earth. He had superiors, inferiors, equals.—Gurth is now "emancipated" long since; has what we call "Liberty." Liberty, I am told, is a divine thing. Liberty when it becomes the "Liberty to die by starvation" is not so divine!

Liberty? The true liberty of a man, you would say, consisted in his finding out, or being forced to find out the right path, and to walk thereon. To learn, or to be taught, what work he actually was able for; and then by permission, persuasion, and even compulsion, to set about doing of the same! That is his true blessedness, honor, "liberty" and maximum of wellbeing; if liberty be not that, I for one have small care about liberty. You do not allow a palpable madman to leap over precipices; you violate his liberty, you that are wise; and keep him, were it in strait-waistcoats, away from the precipices! Every stupid, every cowardly and foolish man is but a less palpable madman: his true liberty were that a wiser man, that any and every wiser man, could, by brass collars, or in whatever milder or sharper way, lay hold of him when he was going wrong, and order and compel him to go a little righter. O, if thou really art my *Senior*, Seigneur, my *Elder*, Presbyter or Priest,—if thou art in very deed my *Wiser*, may a beneficent instinct lead and impel thee to "conquer" me, to command me! If thou do know better than I what is good and right, I conjure thee in the name of God, force me to do it; were it by never

[5] Phalaris, tyrant of Agrigentum (sixth century B.C.), threw his prisoners into a red-hot brazen bull.

[6] The Chartists were a group of English political reformers, active from 1838 for the next ten years.

[7] the French Revolution of 1830, which lasted during three days of July.

[8] a district of west Africa.

[9] African explorer (1771-1806).

[10] See Scott's *Ivanhoe*, chapter I.

such brass collars, whips and handcuffs, leave me not to walk over precipices! That I have been called, by all the Newspapers, a "free man" will avail me little, if my pilgrimage have ended in death and wreck. O that the Newspapers had called me slave, coward, fool, or what it pleased their sweet voices to name me, and I had attained not death, but life!—Liberty requires new definitions.

A conscious abhorrence and intolerance of Folly, of Baseness, Stupidity, Poltroonery and all that brood of things, dwells deep in some men: still deeper in others an *un*conscious abhorrence and intolerance, clothed moreover by the beneficent Supreme Powers in what stout appetites, energies, egoisms so-called, are suitable to it;—these latter are your Conquerors, Romans, Normans, Russians, Indo-English; Founders of what we call Aristocracies. Which indeed have they not the most "divine right" to found;—being themselves very truly Αριστοι BRAVEST, BEST; and conquering generally a confused rabble of WORST, or at lowest, clearly enough, of WORSE? I think their divine right, tried, with affirmatory verdict, in the greatest Law-Court known to me, was good! A class of men who are dreadfully exclaimed against by Dryasdust; of whom nevertheless beneficent Nature has oftentimes had need; and may, alas, again have need.

When, across the hundredfold poor scepticisms, trivialisms and constitutional cobwebberies of Dryasdust, you catch any glimpse of a William the Conqueror, a Tancred of Hauteville[11] or suchlike, —do you not discern veritably some rude outline of a true God-made King; whom not the Champion of England cased in tin, but all Nature and the Universe were calling to the throne? It is absolutely necessary that he get thither. Nature does not mean her poor Saxon children to perish, of obesity, stupor or other malady, as yet: a stern Ruler and Line of Rulers therefore is called in,—a stern but most beneficent *perpetual House-Surgeon* is by Nature herself called in, and even the appropriate *fees* are provided for him! Dryasdust talks lamentably about Hereward and the Fen Counties; fate of Earl Waltheof; Yorkshire and the North reduced to ashes: all which is undoubtedly lamentable.[12] But every Dryasdust apprises me of one fact: "A child, in this William's reign, might have carried a purse of gold from end to end of England." My erudite friend, it is a fact which outweighs a thousand! Sweep away thy constitutional, sentimental and other cobwebberies; look eye to eye, if thou still have any eye, in the face of this big burly William Bastard: thou wilt see a fellow of most flashing discernment, of most strong lion-heart;—in whom, as it were, within a frame of oak and iron, the gods have planted the soul of "a man of genius"! Dost thou call that nothing? I call it an immense thing!—Rage enough was in Willelmus Conquæstor,[13] rage enough for his occasions;—and yet the essential element of him, as of all such men, is not scorching *fire*, but shining illuminative *light*. Fire and light are strangely interchangeable; nay, at bottom, I have found them different forms of the same most godlike "elementary substance" in our world: a thing worth stating in these days. The essential element of this Conquæstor is, first of all, the most sun-eyed perception of what *is* really what on this God's Earth;—which, thou wilt find, does mean at bottom "Justice," and "Virtues" not a few: *Conformity* to what the Maker has seen good to make; that, I suppose, will mean Justice and a Virtue or two?—

Dost thou think Willelmus Conquæstor would have tolerated ten years' jargon, one hour's jargon, on the propriety of killing Cotton-manufacturers by partridge Corn-Laws?[14] I fancy, this was not the man to knock out of his night's-rest with nothing but a noisy bedlamism in your mouth! "Assist us still better to bush the partridges; strangle Plugson who spins the shirts?"—*"Par la Splendeur de Dieu!"*[15]— —Dost thou think Willelmus Conquæstor, in this new time, with Steam-engine Captains of Industry on one hand of him, and Joe-Manton[16] Captains of Idleness on the other, would have doubted which *was* really the BEST; which did deserve strangling, and which not?

I have a certain indestructible regard for Willelmus Conquæstor. A resident House-Surgeon, provided by Nature for her beloved English People, and even furnished with the requisite fees, as I said; for he by no means felt himself doing Nature's work, this Willelmus, but his own work exclusively! And his own work withal it was; informed *"par la Splendeur de Dieu."*—I say, it is necessary to get the work out of such a man, however harsh that be! When a world, not yet doomed for death, is rushing down to ever-deeper Baseness

[11] a hero celebrated in Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*; cf. Vol. I, p. 260.

[12] a reference to various revolts suppressed by William the Conqueror.

[13] William the Conqueror.

[14] laws regulating the grain trade in England.

[15] By the splendor of God, a favorite oath of William's.

[16] a contemporary gun-smith, here suggestive of the sporting aristocracy.

and Confusion, it is a dire necessity of Nature's to bring in her ARISTOCRACIES, her BEST, even by forcible methods. When their descendants or representatives cease entirely to *be* the Best, Nature's poor world will very soon rush down again to Baseness; and it becomes a dire necessity of Nature's to cast them out. Hence French Revolutions, Five-point Charters, Democracies, and a mournful list of *Etceteras*, in these our afflicted times.

To what extent Democracy has now reached, how it advances irresistible with ominous, ever-increasing speed, he that will open his eyes on any province of human affairs may discern. Democracy is everywhere the inexorable demand of these ages, swiftly fulfilling itself. From the thunder of Napoleon battles, to the jabbering of Open-vestry in St. Mary Axe, all things announce Democracy. A distinguished man, whom some of my readers will hear again with pleasure, thus writes to me what in these days he notes from the Wahngasse of Weissnichtwo,[17] where our London fashions seem to be in full vogue. Let us hear the Herr Teufelsdröckh again, were it but the smallest word!

"Democracy, which means despair of finding any Heroes to govern you, and contented putting-up with the want of them,—alas, thou too, *mein Lieber*, seest well how close it is of kin to *Atheism*, and other sad *Isms*: he who discovers no God whatever, how shall he discover Heroes, the visible Temples of God?—Strange enough meanwhile it is, to observe with what thoughtlessness, here in our rigidly Conservative Country, men rush into Democracy with full cry. Beyond doubt, his Excellenz the Titular-Herr Ritter Kauderwälsch von Pferdefuss-Quacksalber, he our distinguished Conservative Premier himself, and all but the thicker-headed of his Party, discern Democracy to be inevitable as death, and are even desperate of delaying it much!

"You cannot walk the streets without beholding Democracy announce itself: the very Tailor has become, if not properly Sansculottic,[18] which to him would be ruinous, yet a Tailor unconsciously symbolizing, and prophesying with his scissors, the reign of Equality. What now is our fashionable coat? A thing of super-finest texture, of deeply meditated cut; with Malineslace[19] cuffs; quilted with gold; so that a man can carry, without difficulty, an estate of land on his back! *Keineswegs*, By no manner of means! The Sumptuary Laws[20] have fallen into such a state of desuetude as was never before seen. Our fashionable coat is an amphibium between barn-sack and drayman's doublet. The cloth of it is studiously coarse; the color a speckled soot-black or rust-brown gray; the nearest approach to a Peasant's. And for shape, thou shouldst see it! The last consummation of the year now passing over us is definable as Three Bags; a big bag for the body, two small bags for the arms, and by way of collar a hem! The first Antique Cheruscan[21] who, of felt-cloth or bear's-hide, with bone or metal needle, set about making himself a coat, before Tailors had yet awakened out of Nothing,—did not he make it even so? A loose wide poke for body, with two holes to let out the arms; this was his original coat: to which holes it was soon visible that two small loose pokes, or sleeves, easily appended, would be an improvement.

"Thus has the Tailor-art, so to speak, overset itself, like most other things; changed its centre-of-gravity; whirled suddenly over from zenith to nadir. Your Stulz,[22] with huge somerset, vaults from his high shopboard down to the depths of primal savagery,—carrying much along with him! For I will invite thee to reflect that the Tailor, as top-most ultimate froth of Human Society, is indeed swift-passing, evanescent, slippery to decipher; yet significant of much, nay of all. Topmost evanescent froth, he is churned-up from the very lees, and from all intermediate regions of the liquor. The general outcome he, visible to the eye, of what men aimed to do, and were obliged and enabled to do, in this one public department of symbolizing themselves to each other by covering of their skins. A smack of all Human Life lies in the Tailor: its wild struggles towards beauty, dignity, freedom, victory; and how, hemmed-in by Sedan and Huddersfield,[23] by Nescience, Dulness, Prurience, and other sad necessities and laws of Nature, it has attained just to this: Gray savagery of Three Sacks with a hem!

"When the very Tailor verges towards Sansculottism, is it not ominous? The last Divinity of poor mankind dethroning himself; sinking *his*

[17] the imaginary German town ("Don't Know Where") where Teufelsdröckh, the supposed hero of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, lived.

[18] literally, without breeches; used in the French Revolution to refer to the impoverished revolutionists.

[19] fine lace from Malines, a city in Belgium.

[20] laws regulating expenditure on food and clothing.

[21] a German tribe of the time of Caesar.

[22] a famous London tailor.

[23] cloth manufacturing cities of France and England respectively.

taper too, flame downmost, like the Genius of Sleep or of Death; admonitory that Tailor time shall be no more!—For, little as one could advise Sumptuary Laws at the present epoch, yet nothing is clearer than that where ranks do actually exist, strict division of costumes will also be enforced; that if we ever have a new Hierarchy and Aristocracy, acknowledged veritably as such, for which I daily pray Heaven, the Tailor will reawaken; and be, by volunteering and appointment, consciously and unconsciously, a safeguard of that same."—Certain farther observations, from the same invaluable pen, on our never-ending changes of mode, our "perpetual nomadic and even ape-like appetite for change and mere change" in all the equipments of our existence, and the "fatal revolutionary character" thereby manifested, we suppress for the present. It may be admitted that Democracy, in all meanings of the word, is in full career; irresistible by any Ritter Kauderwälsch or other Son of Adam as times go. "Liberty" is a thing men are determined to have.

But truly, as I had to remark in the meanwhile, "the liberty of not being oppressed by your fellow man" is an indispensable, yet one of the most insignificant fractional parts of Human Liberty. No man oppresses thee, can bid thee fetch or carry, come or go, without reason shown. True; from all men thou art emancipated: but from Thyself and from the Devil—? No man, wiser, unwiser, can make thee come or go: but thy own futilities, bewilderments, thy false appetites for Money, Windsor Georges[24] and suchlike? No man oppresses thee, O free and independent Franchiser: but does not this stupid Porterpot[25] oppress thee? No Son of Adam can bid thee come or go; but this absurd Pot of Heavy-wet, this can and does! Thou art the thrall not of Cedric the Saxon, but of thy own brutal appetites and this scoured dish of liquor. And thou pratest of thy "liberty"? Thou entire blockhead!

Heavy-wet and gin: alas, these are not the only kinds of thraldom. Thou who walkest in a vain show, looking out with ornamental dilettante[26] sniff and serene supremacy at all Life and all Death; and amblest jauntily; perking up thy poor talk into crotchets, thy poor conduct into fatuous somnambulisms;—and *art* as an "enchanted Ape" under God's sky, where thou mightest have been a man, had proper Schoolmasters and Conquerors, and Constables with cat-o'-nine tails, been vouchsafed thee; dost thou call that "liberty"? Or your unreposing Mammon-worshipper again, driven, as if by Galvanisms,[27] by Devils, and Fixed-ideas, who rises early and sits late, chasing the impossible; straining every faculty to "fill himself with the east wind,"—how merciful were it, could you, by mild persuasion, or by the severest tyranny so-called, check him in his mad path, and turn him into a wiser one! All painful tyranny, in that case again, were but mild "surgery"; the pain of it cheap, as health and life, instead of galvanism and fixed-idea, are cheap at any price.

Sure enough, of all paths a man could strike into, there *is*, at any given moment, a *best path* for every man; a thing which, here and now, it were of all things *wisest* for him to do;—which could he be but led or driven to do, he were then doing "like a man," as we phrase it; all men and gods agreeing with him, the whole Universe virtually exclaiming Well-done to him! His success, in such case, were complete; his felicity a maximum. This path, to find this path and walk in it, is the one thing needful for him. Whatsoever forwards him in that, let it come to him even in the shape of blows and spurnings, is liberty: whatsoever hinders him, were it ward-motes, open-vestries poll-booths, tremendous cheers, rivers of heavy-wet, is slavery.

The notion that a man's liberty consists in giving his vote at election-hustings, and saying, "Behold, now I too have my twenty-thousandth part of a Talker in our National Palaver; will not all the gods be good to me?"—is one of the pleasantest! Nature nevertheless is kind at present; and puts it into the heads of many, almost of all. The liberty especially which has to purchase itself by social isolation, and each man standing separate from the other, having "no business with him" but a cash-account: this is such a liberty as the Earth seldom saw;—as the Earth will not long put up with, recommend it how you may. This liberty turns out, before it have long continued in action, with all men flinging up their caps round it, to be, for the Working Millions a liberty to die by want of food; for the Idle Thousands and Units, alas, a still more fatal liberty to live in want of work; to have no earnest duty to do in this God's-World any more. What becomes a man in such predicament? Earth's Laws are silent; and

[24] badges of the Order of the Garter, whose patron is St. George.

[25] pots full of porter, a malt alcoholic drink.

[26] characteristic of a superficial lover of the arts.

[27] electric shocks.

Heaven's speak in a voice which is not heard. No work, and the ineradicable need of work, give rise to new very wondrous life-philosophies, new very wondrous life-practices! Dilettantism, Pococurantism,[28] Beau-Brummelism, with perhaps an occasional, half-mad, protesting burst of Byronism, establish themselves: at the end of a certain period,—if you go back to "the Dead Sea," there is, say our Moslem friends, a very strange "Sabbath-day" transacting itself there!—Brethren, we know but imperfectly yet, after ages of Constitutional Government, what Liberty and Slavery are.

Democracy, the chase of Liberty in that direction, shall go its full course; unrestrainable by him of Pferdefuss-Quacksalber, or any of *his* household. The Toiling Millions of Mankind, in most vital need and passionate instinctive desire of Guidance, shall cast away False-Guidance; and hope, for an hour, that No-Guidance will suffice them: but it can be for an hour only. The smallest item of human Slavery is the oppression of man by his Mock-Superiors; the palpablest, but I say at bottom the smallest. Let him shake-off such oppression, trample it indignantly under his feet; I blame him not, I pity and commend him. But oppression by your Mock-Superiors well shaken off, the grand problem yet remains to solve: That of finding government by your Real-Superiors! Alas, how shall we ever learn the solution of that, benighted, bewildered, sniffing, sneering, godforgetting unfortunates as we are? It is a work for centuries; to be taught us by tribulations, confusions, insurrections, obstructions; who knows if not by conflagration and despair! It is a lesson inclusive of all other lessons; the hardest of all lessons to learn.

One thing I do know: Those Apes, chattering on the branches by the Dead Sea, never got it learned; but chatter there to this day. To them no Moses need come a second time; a thousand Moseses would be but so many painted Phantasms, interesting Fellow-Apes of new strange aspect,—whom they would "invite to dinner," be glad to meet with in lion-soirées.[29] To them the voice of Prophecy, of heavenly monition, is quite ended. They chatter there, all Heaven shut to them, to the end of the world. The unfortunates! Oh, what is dying of hunger, with honest tools in your hand, with a manful purpose in your heart, and much real labor lying round you done, in comparison? You honestly quit your tools; quit a most muddy confused coil of sore work, short rations, of sorrows, dispiritments and contradictions, having now honestly done with it all;—and await, not entirely in a distracted manner, what the Supreme Powers, and the Silences and the Eternities may have to say to you.

A second thing I know: This lesson will have to be learned,—under penalties! England will either learn it, or England also will cease to exist among Nations. England will either learn to reverence its Heroes, and discriminate them from its Sham-Heroes and Valets and gaslighted Histrios;[30] and to prize them as the audible God's-voice, amid all inane jargons and temporary market-cries, and say to them with heart-loyalty, "Be ye King and Priest, and Gospel and Guidance for us:" or else England will continue to worship new and ever-new forms of Quackhood,—and so, with what resiliences and reboundings matters little, go down to the Father of Quacks! Can I dread such things of England? Wretched, thick-eyed, gross-hearted mortals, why will ye worship lies, and "Stuffed Clothes-suits created by the ninth-parts of men!" It is not your purses that suffer; your farm-rents, your commerces, your mill-revenues, loud as ye lament over these; no, it is not these alone, but a far deeper than these: it is your souls that lie dead, crushed down under despicable Nightmares, Atheisms, Brain-fumes; and are not souls at all, but mere succedanea[31] for *salt* to keep your bodies and their appetites from putrefying! Your cotton-spinning and thrice-miraculous mechanism, what is this too, by itself, but a larger kind of Animalism? Spiders can spin, Beavers can build and show contrivance; the Ant lays-up accumulation of capital, and has, for aught I know, a Bank of Antland. If there is no soul in man higher than all that, did it reach to sailing on the cloud-rack and spinning sea-sand; then I say, man is but an animal, a more cunning kind of brute: he has no soul, but only a succedaneum for salt. Whereupon, seeing himself to be truly of the beasts that perish, he ought to admit it, I think;—and also straightway universally to kill himself; and so, in a manlike manner at least *end*, and wave these brute-worlds *his* dignified farewell!—

(1843)

[28] so-named from a character in Voltaire's *Candide* who was incapable of enjoying himself in spite of his wealth and command of all the arts.

[29] evening entertainments in honor of some celebrity.

[30] actors.

[31] substitute remedies.

Boswell

From *Essay on Johnson*

We have a word to say of James Boswell.[1] Boswell has already been much commented upon; but rather in the way of censure and vituperation than of true recognition. He was a man that brought himself much before the world; confessed that he eagerly coveted fame, or if that were not possible, notoriety; of which latter as he gained far more than was his due, the public were incited, not only by their natural love of scandal, but by a special ground of envy, to say whatever ill of him could be said. Out of the fifteen millions that then lived, and had bed and board in the British islands, this man has provided us a greater pleasure than any other individual, at whose cost we now enjoy ourselves; perhaps has done us a greater *service* than can be especially attributed to more than two or three yet, ungrateful that we are, no written or spoken eulogy of James Boswell anywhere exists; his recompense in solid pudding (so far as copyright went) was not excessive; and as for the empty praise, it has altogether been denied him. Men are unwiser than children; they do not know the hand that feeds them.

Boswell was a person whose mean or bad qualities lay open to the general eye; visible, palpable to the dullest. His good qualities, again, belonged not to the time he lived in; were far from common then; indeed, in such a degree, were almost unexampled; not recognizable therefore by every one; nay, apt even (so strange had they grown) to be confounded with the very vices they lay contiguous to and had sprung out of. That he was a wine-bibber and gross liver; gluttonously fond of whatever would yield him a little solacement, were it only of a stomachic character, is undeniable enough. That he was vain, heedless, a babbler; had much of the sycophant, alternating with the braggadocio, curiously spiced too with an all-pervading dash of the coxcomb; that he gloried much when the tailor, by a court-suit, had made a new man of him; that he appeared at the Shakespeare Jubilee with a ribbon, imprinted "Corsica Boswell,"[2] round his hat; and in short, if you will, lived no day of his life without doing and saying more than one pretentious ineptitude: all this unhappily is evident as the sun at noon. The very look of Boswell seems to have signified so much. In that cocked nose, cocked partly in triumph over his weaker fellow-creatures, partly to snuff up the smell of coming pleasure, and scent it from afar; in those bag-cheeks, hanging like half-filled wine-skins, still able to contain more; in that coarsely protruded shelf-mouth, that fat dew-lapped chin: in all this, who sees not sensuality, pretension, boisterous imbecility enough; much that could not have been ornamental in the temper of a great man's overfed great man (what the Scotch name *flunky*), though it had been more natural there? The under part of Boswell's face is of a low, almost brutish character.

Unfortunately, on the other hand, what great and genuine good lay in him was nowise so self-evident. That Boswell was a hunter after spiritual notabilities, that he loved such, and longed, and even crept and crawled to be near them; that he first (in old Touchwood Auchinleck's[3] phraseology) "took on with Paoli";[4] and then being off with "the Corsican landlouper,"[5] took on with a schoolmaster,[6] "ane that keeped a schule, and ca'd it an academy;" that he did all this, and could not help doing it, had an "open sense," an open loving heart, which so few have: where excellence existed, he was compelled to acknowledge it; was drawn towards it, and (let the old sulphur-brand of a laird say what he liked) *could not but* walk with it—if not as superior, if not as equal, then as inferior and lackey, better so than not at all. If we reflect now that this love of excellence had not only such as evil *nature* to triumph over; but also what an *education* and social position withstood it and weighed it down, its innate strength, victorious over all these things, may astonish us. Consider what an inward impulse there must have been, how many mountains of impediment hurled aside, before the Scottish laird could, as humble

[1] Cf. Vol. I, pp. 767 ff.

[2] Boswell had taken part in a campaign with Paoli in Corsica.

[3] Boswell's father, Alexander Boswell, Laird of Auchinleck.

[4] Pasquale Paoli (1725-1807), a Corsican patriot and friend of Boswell's.

[5] adventurer.

[6] Johnson, who had once taught school.

servant, embrace the knees (the bosom was not permitted him) of the English dominie! Your Scottish laird, says an English naturalist of these days, may be defined as the hungriest and vainest of all bipeds yet known. Boswell too was a Tory;[7] of quite peculiarly feudal, genealogical, pragmatical temper; had been nurtured in an atmosphere of heraldry, at the feet of a very Gamaliel[8] in that kind; within bare walls, adorned only with pedigrees, amid serving-men in threadbare livery; all things teaching him, from birth upwards, that a laird was a laird. Perhaps there was a special vanity in his very blood: old Auchinleck had, if not the gay, tail-spreading, peacock vanity of his son, no little of the slow stalking, contentious, hissing vanity of the gander; a still more fatal species. Scottish advocates will tell you how the ancient man, having chanced to be the first sheriff appointed (after the abolition of "hereditary jurisdiction") by royal authority, was wont, in dull-snuffling pompous tone, to preface many a deliverance from the bench with these words: "I, the first king's sheriff in Scotland."

And now behold the worthy Bozzy, so prepossessed and held back by nature and by art, fly nevertheless like iron to its magnet with what enclosures and encumbrances you please—with wood, with rubbish, with brass: it matters not, the two feel each other, they struggle restlessly towards each other, they *will* be together. The iron may be a Scottish squirelet, full of gulosity[9] and "gigmanity;"[10] the magnet an English plebeian, and moving rag-and-dust mountain, coarse, proud, irascible, imperious: nevertheless, behold how they embrace, and inseparably cleave to one another! It is one of the strangest phenomena of the past century, that at a time when the old reverent feeling of discipleship (such as brought men from far countries with rich gifts, and prostrate soul, to the feet of the prophets) had passed utterly away from men's practical experience, and was no longer surmised to exist (as it does), perennial, indestructible, in man's inmost heart—James Boswell should have been the individual, of all others predestined to recall it, in such singular guise, to the wondering and, for a long while, laughing and unrecognizing world. It has been commonly said, "The man's vulgar vanity was all that attached him to Johnson; he delighted to be seen near him, to be thought connected with him." Now let it be at once granted that no consideration springing out of vulgar vanity could well be absent from the mind of James Boswell, in this his intercourse with Johnson, or in any considerable transaction of his life. At the same time, ask yourself; whether such vanity, and nothing else, actuated him therein; whether this was the true essence and moving principle of the phenomenon, or not rather its outward vesture, and the accidental environment (and defacement) in which it came to light? The man was, by nature and habit, vain; a sycophant-coxcomb, be it granted: but had there been nothing more than vanity in him, was Samuel Johnson the man of men to whom he must attach himself? At the date when Johnson was a poor rusty-coated "scholar," dwelling in Temple-lane, and indeed throughout their whole intercourse afterwards, were there not chancellors and prime ministers enough; graceful gentlemen, the glass of fashion; honor-giving noblemen; dinner-giving rich men; renowned fire-eaters, swordsmen, gownsmen, quacks and realities of all hues—any one of whom bulked much larger in the world's eye than Johnson ever did? To any one of whom, by half that submissiveness and assiduity, our Bozzy might have recommended himself; and sat there, the envy of surrounding lickspittles; pocketing now solid emolument, swallowing now well cooked viands and wines of rich red vintage; in each case, also, shone-on by some glittering reflex of renown or notoriety, so as to be the observed of innumerable observers. To no one of whom, however, though otherwise a most diligent solicitor and purveyor, did he so attach himself: such vulgar courtierships were his paid drudgery, or leisure amusement; the worship of Johnson was his grand, ideal, voluntary business. Does not the frothy-hearted, yet enthusiastic man, doffing his advocate's wig, regularly take post, and hurry up to London, for the sake of his sage chiefly; as to a feast of tabernacles, the Sabbath of his whole year? The plate-licker and wine-bibber dives into Bolt Court, to sip muddy coffee with a cynical old man and a sour-tempered blind old woman[11] (feeling the cups, whether they are full, with her finger); and patiently endures contradictions without end; too happy so he may be but allowed to listen and live. Nay, it does not appear that vulgar vanity could

[7] the ultra-conservative political party.

[8] a famous Jewish teacher under whom St. Paul studied.

[9] gluttony.

[10] narrow-minded respectability, made up of the word *gig*, a carriage, and *man*, referring to those people who measure respectability by their being able to keep a carriage.

[11] Cf. Vol. I, pp. 748, 779.

ever have been much flattered by Boswell's relation to Johnson. Mr. Croker[12] says, Johnson was, to the last, little regarded by the great world; from which, for a vulgar vanity, all honor, as from its fountain, descends. Bozzy, even among Johnson's friends and special admirers, seems rather to have been laughed at than envied: his officious, whisking, consequential ways, the daily reproofs and rebuffs he underwent, could gain from the world no golden but only leaden opinions. His devout discipleship seemed nothing more than a mean spanielship, in the general eye. His mighty "constellation," or sun, round whom he, as satellite, observantly gyrated, was, for the mass of men, but a huge ill-snuffed tallow-light, and he a weak night-moth, circling foolishly, dangerously about it, not knowing what he wanted. If he enjoyed Highland dinners and toasts, as henchmen to a new sort of chieftain, Henry Erskine[13] could hand him a shilling "for the sight of his bear." Doubtless the man was laughed at, and often heard himself laughed at for his Johnsonism. To be envied is the grand and sole aim of vulgar vanity; to be filled with good things is that of sensuality: for Johnson perhaps no man living *envied* poor Bozzy; and of good things (except himself paid for them) there was no vestige in that acquaintanceship. Had nothing other or better than vanity and sensuality been there, Johnson and Boswell had never come together, or had soon and finally separated again.

In fact, the so copious terrestrial dross that welters chaotically, as the outer sphere of this man's character, does but render for us more remarkable, more touching, the celestial spark of goodness, of light, and reverence for wisdom which dwelt in the interior, and could struggle through such encumbrances, and in some degree illuminate and beautify them. There is much lying yet undeveloped in the love of Boswell for Johnson. A cheering proof, in a time which else utterly wanted and still wants such, that living wisdom is quite *infinitely* precious to man, is the symbol of the god-like to him, which even weak eyes may discern; that loyalty, discipleship, all that was ever meant by *hero-worship*, lives perennially in the human bosom, and waits, even in these dead days, only for occasions to unfold it, and inspire all men with it, and make again the world alive! James Boswell we can regard as a practical witness, or real *martyr*, to this high everlasting truth. A wonderful martyr, if you will; and in a time which made such martyrdom doubly wonderful: yet the time and its martyr perhaps suited each other. For a decrepit, death-sick era, when Cant had first decisively opened her poison-breathing lips to proclaim that God-worship and Mammon-worship were one and the same, that life was a *lie*, and the earth Beelzebub's, which the *Supreme Quack* should inherit, and so all things were fallen into the yellow leaf, and fast hastening to noisome corruption: for such an era, perhaps no better prophet than a parti-colored zany[14] prophet, concealing, from himself and others, his prophetic significance in such unexpected vestures, was deserved, or would have been in place. A precious medicine lay hidden in floods of coarsest, most composite treacle; the world swallowed the treacle, for it suited the world's palate; and now, after half a century, may the medicine also begin to show itself! James Boswell belonged, in his corruptible part, to the lowest classes of mankind; a foolish, inflated creature, swimming in an element of self-conceit: but in his corruptible there dwelt an incorruptible, all the more impressive and indubitable for the strange lodging it had taken.

Consider, too, with what force, diligence, and vivacity he has rendered back all this which, in Johnson's neighborhood, his "open sense" had so eagerly and freely taken in. That loose-flowing, careless-looking work of his is as a picture by one of nature's own artists; the best possible remembrance of a reality; like the very image thereof in a clear mirror. Which indeed it was: let but the mirror be *clear*, this is the great point; the picture must and will be genuine. How the babbling Bozzy, inspired only by love, and the recognition which love can lend, epitomizes nightly the words of wisdom, the deeds and aspects of wisdom, and so, by little and little, unconsciously works together for us a whole *Johnsoniad*[15] a more free, perfect, sunlit and spirit-speaking likeness than for many centuries had been drawn by man of man! Scarcely since the days of Homer has the feat been equalled; indeed, in many senses, this also is a kind of heroic poem. The fit "Odyssey" of our unheroic age was to be written, not sung; of a thinker, not of a fighter; and (for want of a Homer) by the first open soul that might offer—looked such even through the organs of a Boswell. We do the man's

[12] the editor of Boswell's *Johnson*, 1834, which Carlyle is reviewing; for Macaulay's review of the same work, see p. 473, *below*.

[13] a Scottish aristocrat who was presented to Johnson by Boswell in 1773.

[14] a jester who mimicked professional jesters.

[15] an epic about Johnson; cf. *Iliad*.

intellectual endowment great wrong, if we measure it by its mere logical outcome; though, here too, there is not wanting a light ingenuity, a figurativeness and fanciful sport, with glimpses of insight far deeper than the common. But Boswell's grand intellectual talent was, as such ever is, an *unconscious* one, of far higher reach, and significance than logic; and showed itself in the whole, not in parts. Here again we have that old saying verified, "The heart sees further than the head."

Thus does poor Bozzy stand out to us an ill-assorted, glaring mixture of the highest and the lowest. What, indeed, is man's life generally but a kind of beast godhood; the god in us triumphing in us more and more over the beast; striving more and more to subdue it under his feet? Did not the ancients, in their wise, perenially-significant way, figure nature itself, in their sacred ALL, or PAN, as a portentous commingling of these two discords; as musical, humane, oracular in its upper part, yet ending below in the cloven hairy feet of a goat? The union of melodious, celestial free-will and reason with foul irrationality and lust; in which, nevertheless, dwelt a mysterious unspeakable fear and half mad *panic* awe; as for mortals there well might! And is not man a microcosm, or epitomized mirror of that same universe; or rather, is not that universe even himself, the reflex of his own fearful and wonderful being, "the waste fantasy of his own dream?" No wonder that man, that each man, and James Boswell like the others, should resemble it! The peculiarity in his case was the unusual defect of amalgamation and subordination: the highest lay side by side with the lowest; not morally combined with it and spiritually transfiguring it, but tumbling in half-mechanical juxtaposition with it, and from time to time, as the mad alternation chanced, irradiating it, or eclipsed by it.

The world, as we said, has been but unjust to him; discerning only the outer terrestrial and often sordid mass; without eye, as it generally is, for his inner divine secret; and thus figuring him nowise as a god Pan, but simply of the bestial species, like the cattle on a thousand hills. Nay, sometimes a strange enough hypothesis has been stated of him; as if it were in virtue even of these same bad qualities that he did his good work; as if it were the very fact of his being among the worst men in this world that had enabled him to write one of the best books therein! Falser hypothesis, we may venture to say, never rose in human soul. *Bad* is by its nature negative, and can do *nothing*; whatsoever enables us to do anything is by its very nature *good*. Alas, that there should be teachers in Israel, or even learners, to whom this world-ancient fact is still problematical, or even deniable! Boswell wrote a good book because he had a heart and an eye to discern wisdom, and an utterance to render it forth; because of his free insight, his lively talent—above all, of his love and open-mindedness. His sneaking sycophancies, his greediness and forwardness, whatever was bestial and earthy in him, are so many blemishes in his book, which still disturb us in its clearness; wholly hindrances, not helps. Towards Johnson, however, his feeling was not sycophancy, which is the lowest, but reverence, which is the highest of human feelings. None but a *reverent* man (which so unspeakably few are) could have found his way from Boswell's environment to Johnson's: if such worship for real God-made superiors, showed itself also as worship for apparent tailor-made superiors, even as hollow interested mouth-worship for such—the case, in this composite human nature of ours, was not miraculous, the more was the pity! But for ourselves, let every one of us cling to this last article of faith, and know it as the beginning of all knowledge worthy the name: That neither James Boswell's good book, nor any other good thing, in any time or in any place, was, is, or can be performed by any man in virtue of his *badness*, but always and solely in spite thereof.

(1832)

Thomas Babington Macaulay

(1800-1859)

Macaulay was born at Rothley Temple, Leicestershire, on October 25, 1800. His father, Zachary Macaulay, was a prominent philanthropist especially interested in the abolition of the slave trade. The atmosphere of Macaulay's boyhood was pietistic to the extreme. By the age of four Thomas was already manifesting a precocity almost unbelievable. Throughout his life he was to have such a power of voluminous reading and ready comprehension that his fund of information was the marvel of his contemporaries.

In 1826, after a distinguished career at Trinity College, Cambridge, Macaulay was admitted to the bar. But his time was mostly spent in the gallery of the House of Commons, where he learned valuable lessons in English politics. He was also beginning his serious career as a writer. The *Edinburgh Review* published, in August 1825, his essay on Milton (cf. *below*), which immediately established the literary reputation he was ever afterward to enjoy.

Though Macaulay was later apologetic about this essay, it formed a milestone in the history of English prose. The brilliant antitheses and the finely wrought periods were reminiscent of the best writers of the previous century; but he added to these his own characteristics, the absolute clarity of each paragraph with its definitely stated topic sentence and logical development. Even today students learn to write paragraphs on the model of Macaulay. The best of them, of course, soon depart from the strict confines of their model, but, if they have pondered their lesson well, they have learned from him the virtues of careful planning of each paragraph and have become aware of a multitude of devices by which a thought may be developed effectively.

In the essay on Milton Macaulay was already showing his interest in politics. With him, history was always to be written from a partisan point of view. Although he labored diligently on sources, there was never any doubt in his mind that in all the crises of English history the Whig party or its predecessors had upheld the cause of righteousness. Thus he takes the occasion of his treatment of Milton to draw the contrast between the Puritan and the Cavalier. After almost two centuries of misunderstanding and misrepresentation, the essential patriotism and the genuine qualities of Milton and his party received adequate appreciation.

By the time he was thirty, Macaulay had already established himself in the best London society because of his brilliant conversational abilities. In spite of the financial failure of his father at an inopportune moment for Macaulay's ambitions, he was admitted, in 1830, to the House of Commons. For a man of Macaulay's talents the time of his entry was most fortunate. In the long series of debates on the Reform Bill he made a number of speeches which caused him to be regarded as a leader in English politics. Until 1847 he was prominent either in Parliament or in colonial government. Among other services which he performed was the formation of the Penal Code for India. During the 1840's he held several cabinet positions. In the election of 1847 he lost his seat in Parliament and, except for a temporary return, retired to private life where he could carry out the plan for his great history.

Macaulay never married. During most of his life he moved easily in the best society of the time, gracing with his witty conversation the tables of its leaders. In his last years he found increasing pleasure in the family of his sister Hannah, the wife of Sir Charles Trevelyan. It is fortunate that his greatest biographer was his nephew, who

thus came to know him in the intimacy of the home. Sir George Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay* (1876) is one of the masterpieces of English biography. Macaulay died on December 28, 1859, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

By the spring of 1843 Macaulay had written thirty-six critical essays, and these he published in three volumes. The essays were on all kinds of subjects, some literary, some historical, some political. The tendencies of these essays have already been indicated in the remarks about his study of Milton. The stylistic effects were, if anything, exaggerated as time went on. But the public had acquired a taste for his tricks of style, and he secured a large and popular following. The antitheses which he had taught them to expect they now demanded, and Macaulay supplied them even when his subject did not always justify his action. What he has done to James Boswell (cf. *below*) with his sharp contrast between Boswell the man and Boswell the author will be seen by comparing Carlyle's much more accurate and penetrating study of the same subject (cf. *above*).

In 1842 Macaulay published his only attempt at poetry, his famous *Lays of Ancient Rome*. This group of poems, recounting in facile verse dramatic episodes from the early history of Rome, was very popular in his day and many of the poems, such as *Horatius*, have been learned by generations of schoolboys. But Macaulay had no real gifts as a poet and wisely refrained from further effort.

Most of the energies of his last years were given to the composition of his *History of England*. He planned to write the history of his country "from the accession of King James the Second down to a time which is within the memory of men still living." In preparation for this task he spent years in the examination of records and the reading of Parliamentary reports, diaries, and letters. He traveled to remote places to check his information and to acquaint himself with topography. As a result, he reconstructed in his own mind the life of the seventeenth century as no man of his generation had done.

In many ways the most interesting part of this history is in the introductory chapters, in which he sketches briefly yet vividly the stirring history of the two generations preceding the accession of James and in which he pictures with great detail everyday life in the England of 1685. Macaulay had set out to make history not only accurate but also as interesting as a novel. That he achieved his goal is seen by its remarkable popular success. The check for twenty thousand pounds which he received stood for a long time as a record in the rewards of authorship. The first two volumes of the *History* appeared in 1848 and the third and fourth in 1855. Macaulay was never able to carry the *History* beyond the death of William the Third. Thus the main treatment actually covers but seventeen years, and not the century and more which the author had proposed to treat.

Macaulay was one of the most successful men of his day and was highly honored by his contemporaries. In 1857 he was raised to the peerage with the title, Baron Macaulay of Rothley. A later generation has tended to discount as too superficial his abilities as a literary critic and as a poet, and it sees his politics as too blindly partisan to show real independence of thought. His most lasting fame will doubtless be based on his *History*.

Macaulay's works were collected in 1866 by his sister, Lady Trevelyan, in eight volumes. The standard life by Trevelyan has already been mentioned. Other biographies and critical studies have been by R. D. Urlin (1860), H. G. J. Clements (1862), H. H. Milman (1862), Frederick Arnold (1862), J. G. Kinkel (1879), J. C. Morison (1882), G. Buelow (1901), Arthur Bryant (1932), and R. C. Beatty (1938).

Boswell

From the review of *Croker's Boswell's Johnson*

The "Life of Johnson" is assuredly a great, a very great work. Homer is not more decidedly the first of dramatists, Demosthenes is not more decidedly the first of orators, than Boswell is the first of biographers. He has no second. He has distanced all his competitors so decidedly that it is not worth while to place them. Eclipse is first, and the rest nowhere.

We are not sure that there is in the whole history of the human intellect so strange a phenomenon as this book. Many of the greatest men that ever lived have written biography. Boswell was one of the smallest men that ever lived, and he has beaten them all. He was, if we are to give any credit to his own account or to the united testimony of all who knew him, a man of the meanest and feeblest intellect. Johnson described him as a fellow who had missed his only chance of immortality by not having been alive when the "Dunciad" was written. Beauclerk[1] used his name as a proverbial expression for a bore. He was the laughing-stock of the whole of that brilliant society which has owed to him the greater part of its fame. He was always laying himself at the feet of some eminent man, and begging to be spit upon and trampled upon. He was always earning some ridiculous nickname, and then "binding it as a crown unto him," not merely in metaphor, but literally. He exhibited himself, at the Shakespeare Jubilee, to all the crowd which filled Stratford-on-Avon, with a placard round his hat bearing the inscription of Corsica Boswell.[2] In his Tour, he proclaimed to all the world that at Edinburgh he was known by the appellation of Paoli Boswell. Servile and impertinent, shallow and pedantic, a bigot and a sot, bloated with family pride, and eternally blustering about the dignity of a born gentleman, yet stooping to be a talebearer, and eavesdropper, a common butt in the taverns of London, so curious to know everybody that was talked about, that, Tory and High Churchman as he was, he manœuvered, we have been told, for an introduction to Tom Paine;[3] so vain of the most childish distinctions, that when he had been to Court, he drove to the office where his book was printing without changing his clothes, and summoned all the printer's devils to admire his new ruffles and sword; such was this man, and such he was content and proud to be. Everything which another man would have hidden, everything the publication of which would have made another man hang himself, was matter of gay and clamorous exultation to his weak and diseased mind. What silly things he said, what bitter retorts he provoked, how at one place he was troubled with evil presentiments which came to nothing, how at another place, on waking from a drunken doze, he read the prayer-book and took a hair of the dog that had bitten him, how he went to see men hanged and came away maudlin, how he added five hundred pounds to the fortune of one of his babies because she was not scared at Johnson's ugly face, how he was frightened out of his wits at sea, and how the sailors quieted him as they would have quieted a child, how tipsy he was at Lady Cork's one evening and how much his merriment annoyed the ladies, how impertinent he was to the Duchess of Argyle and with what stately contempt she put down his impertinence, how Colonel Macleod sneered to his face at his impudent obtrusiveness, how his father, and the very wife of his bosom laughed and fretted at his fooleries—all these things he proclaimed to all the world, as if they had been subjects for pride and ostentatious rejoicing. All caprices of his temper, all the illusions of his vanity, all his hypochondriac whimsies, all his castles in the air, he displayed with a cool self-complacency, a perfect unconsciousness that he was making a fool of himself, to which it is impossible to find a parallel in the whole history of mankind. He had used many people ill; but assuredly he has used nobody so ill as himself.

That such a man should have written one of the best books in the world is strange enough. But this is not all. Many persons who have conducted themselves foolishly in active life, and whose conversation has indicated no superior powers of mind, have left us valuable works. Goldsmith was very justly described by one of his contemporaries as an inspired idiot,[4] and by another[5] as a being

[1] Topham Beauclerk, who frequently appears in company with Johnson.

[2] Boswell had been in Corsica with his friend, General Paoli, the Corsican patriot; cf. Vol. I, pp. 767-768.

[3] author of *The Rights of Man*; cf. Vol. I, p. 812.

[4] a remark by Horace Walpole.

[5] David Garrick, the actor.

"Who wrote like an angel, and talked like poor Poll."

La Fontaine[6] was in society a mere simpleton. His blunders would not come in amiss among the stories of Hierocles.[7] But these men attained literary eminence in spite of their weaknesses. Boswell attained it by reason of his weaknesses. If he had not been a great fool, he would never have been a great writer. Without all the qualities which made him the jest and the torment of those among whom he lived, without the officiousness, the inquisitiveness, the effrontery, the toad-eating, the insensibility to all reproof, he never could have produced so excellent a book. He was a slave proud of his servitude, a Paul Pry,[8] convinced that his own curiosity and garrulity were virtues, an unsafe companion who never scrupled to repay the most liberal hospitality by the basest violation of confidence, a man without delicacy, without shame, without sense enough to know when he was hurting the feelings of others or when he was exposing himself to derision; and because he was all this, he has, in an important department of literature, immeasurably surpassed such writers as Tacitus,[9] Clarendon,[10] Alfieri,[11] and his own idol Johnson.

Of the talents which ordinarily raise men to eminence as writers, Boswell had absolutely none. There is not in all his books a single remark of his own on literature, politics, religion, or society, which is not either commonplace or absurd. His dissertations on hereditary gentility, on the slave-trade, and on the entailing of landed estates, may serve as examples. To say that these passages are sophistical would be to pay them an extravagant compliment. They have no pretense to argument, or even to meaning. He has reported innumerable observations made by himself in the course of conversation. Of those observations we do not remember one which is above the intellectual capacity of a boy of fifteen. He has printed many of his own letters, and in these letters he is always ranting or twaddling. Logic, eloquence, wit, taste, all those things which are generally considered as making a book valuable were utterly wanting to him. He had, indeed, a quick observation and a retentive memory. These qualities, if he had been a man of sense and virtue would scarcely of themselves have sufficed to make him conspicuous; but because he was a dunce, a parasite, and a coxcomb, they have made him immortal.

Those parts of his book which, considered abstractedly, are most utterly worthless, are delightful when we read them as illustrations of the character of the writer. Bad in themselves, they are good dramatically, like the nonsense of Justice Shallow, the clipped English of Dr. Caius, or the misplaced consonants of Fluellen.[12] Of all confessors, Boswell is the most candid. Other men who have pretended to lay open their own hearts, Rousseau,[13] for example, and Lord Byron,[14] have evidently written with a constant view to effect, and are to be then most distrusted when they seem to be most sincere. There is scarcely any man who would not rather accuse himself of great crimes and of dark and tempestuous passions than proclaim all his little vanities and wild fancies. It would be easier to find a person who would avow actions like those of Cæsar Borgia[15] or Danton,[16] than one who would publish a day-dream like those of Alnaschar[17] and Malvolio.[18] Those weaknesses which most men keep covered up in the most secret places of the mind, not to be disclosed to the eye of friendship or of love, were precisely the weaknesses which Boswell paraded before all the world. He was perfectly frank, because the weakness of his understanding and the tumult of his spirits prevented him from knowing when he made himself ridiculous. His book resembles nothing so much as the conversation of the inmates of the Palace of Truth.

His fame is great; and it will, we have no doubt, be lasting; but it is fame of a peculiar kind, and indeed marvellously resembles infamy. We remember no other case in which the world has made so great a distinction between a book and its author. The case of Boswell is an exception, we think the only exception, to this rule. His work is universally allowed to be interesting, instructive, eminently

[6] Jean de La Fontaine (1621-1695), French author, famous for his fables.

[7] an ancient collection of jests and anecdotes.

[8] an inquisitive character in a contemporary play of that name.

[9] Roman historian of the first century A.D.

[10] Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon (1608-1674), historian of the English Civil Wars.

[11] Vittiorio Alfieri (1749-1803), Italian autobiographer.

[12] All of these characters are from Shakespeare's plays.

[13] Cf. Vol. II, p. 42.

[14] Cf. Vol. II, p. 206.

[15] an Italian cardinal and warrior (1478-1507) noted for his cruelty and corruption.

[16] Georges Jacques Danton (1759-1794), celebrated French revolutionist.

[17] a character in the *Arabian Nights* proverbial as a dreamer.

[18] the foolish steward in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night.*

original; yet it has brought him nothing but contempt. All the world reads it; yet we do not remember ever to have read or ever to have heard any expression of respect and admiration for the man to whom we owe so much instruction and amusement. While edition after edition of his book was coming forth, his son, as Mr. Croker[19] tells us, was ashamed of it, and hated to hear it mentioned. This feeling was natural and reasonable. Sir Alexander saw that, in proportion to the celebrity of the work, was the degradation of the author. The very editors of this unfortunate gentleman's books have forgotten their allegiance, and like those Puritan casuists who took arms by the authority of the king against his person, have attacked the writer while doing homage to his writings. Mr. Croker, for example, has published two thousand five hundred notes on the life of Johnson, and yet scarcely ever mentions the biographer whose performance he has taken such pains to illustrate without some expression of contempt.

An ill-natured man Boswell certainly was not; yet the malignity of the most malignant satirist could scarcely cut deeper than his thoughtless loquacity. Having himself no sensibility to derision and contempt, he took it for granted that all others were equally callous. He was not ashamed to exhibit to the whole world as a common spy, a common tattler, a humble companion without the excuse of poverty, and to tell a hundred stories of his own pertness and folly, and of the insults which his pertness and folly brought upon him. It was natural that he should show little discretion in cases in which the feelings or the honor of others might be concerned. No man, surely, ever published such stories respecting persons whom he professed to love and revere. He would infallibly have made his hero as contemptible as he has made himself, had not his hero really possessed some moral and intellectual qualities of a very high order. The best proof that Johnson was really an extraordinary man is that his character, instead of being degraded, has, on the whole, been decidedly raised by a work in which all his vices and weaknesses are exposed more unsparingly than they ever were exposed by Churchill or by Kenrick.[20]

Johnson grown old, Johnson in the fulness of his fame and in the enjoyment of a competent fortune, is better known to us than any other man in history. Everything about him, his coat, his wig, his figure, his face, his scrofula, his St. Vitus's dance, his rolling walk, his blinking eye, the outward signs which too clearly marked his approbation of his dinner, his insatiable appetite for fish sauce and veal pie with plums, his inextinguishable thirst for tea, his trick of touching the posts as he walked, his mysterious practice of treasuring up scraps of orange peel, his morning slumbers, his midnight disputations, his contortions, his mutterings, his gruntings, his puffings, his vigorous, acute, and ready eloquence, his sarcastic wit, his vehemence, his insolence, his fits of tempestuous rage, his queer inmates, old Mr. Levett and blind Mrs. Williams, the cat Hodge and the negro Frank, all are as familiar to us as the objects by which we have been surrounded from childhood. (1831)

From *Milton*

The public conduct of Milton must be approved or condemned, according as the resistance of the people to Charles I[1] shall appear to be justifiable or criminal. We shall therefore make no apology for dedicating a few pages to the discussion of that interesting and most important question. We shall not argue it on general grounds. We shall not recur to those primary principles from which the claim of any government to the obedience of its subjects is to be deduced. We are entitled to that vantage-ground, but we will relinquish it. We are, on this point, so confident of superiority that we are not unwilling to imitate the ostentatious generosity of those ancient knights who vowed to joust without helmet or shield against all enemies, and to give their antagonists the advantage of sun and wind. We will take the naked constitutional question. We confidently affirm that every reason which can be urged in favor of the Revolution of 1688 may be urged with at least equal force in favor of what is called the Great Rebellion.

In one respect only, we think, can the warmest admirers of Charles venture to say that he was a better sovereign than his son. He was not, in name and profession, a Papist; we say in name and pro-

[19] the editor of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, whose edition Macaulay is reviewing.

[1] The king of England, 1625-49.

[20] contemporaries of Dr. Johnson, who wrote attacks upon him.

fession, because both Charles himself and his creature Laud,[2] while they abjured the innocent badges of Popery, retained all its worst vices—a complete subjection of reason to authority, a weak preference of form to substance, a childish passion for mummeries, an idolatrous veneration for the priestly character, and, above all, a merciless intolerance. This, however, we waive. We will concede that Charles was a good Protestant, but we say that his Protestantism does not make the slightest distinction between his case and that of James.

The principles of the Revolution have often been grossly misrepresented, and never more than in the course of the present year. There is a certain class of men who, while they profess to hold in reverence the great names and great actions of former times, never look at them for any other purpose than in order to find in them some excuse for existing abuses. In every venerable precedent they pass by what is essential and take only what is accidental; they keep out of sight what is beneficial, and hold up to public imitation all that is defective. If, in any part of any great example, there be anything unsound, these flesh flies detect it with an unerring instinct, and dart upon it with a ravenous delight. If some good end has been attained in spite of them, they feel, with their prototype, that their

> "Labor must be to pervert that end,
> And out of good still to find means of evil."

To the blessings which England has derived from the Revolution these people are utterly insensible. The expulsion of a tyrant, the solemn recognition of popular rights—liberty, security, toleration—all go for nothing with them. One sect[3] there was which, from unfortunate temporary causes, it was thought necessary to keep under close restraint. One part of the empire[4] there was so unhappily circumstanced that at that time its misery was necessary to our happiness, and its slavery to our freedom. These are the parts of the Revolution which the politicians of whom we speak love to contemplate, and which seem to them, not indeed to vindicate, but in some degree to palliate, the good which it has produced. Talk to them of Naples, of Spain, or of South America: they stand forth zealots for the doctrine of Divine Right, which has now come back to us, like a thief from transportation, under the *alias* of Legitimacy. But mention the miseries of Ireland. Then William[5] is a hero. Then Somers and Shrewsbury[6] are great men. Then the Revolution is a glorious era! The very same persons who, in this country, never omit an opportunity of reviving every wretched Jacobite slander respecting the Whigs of that period, have no sooner crossed St. George's Channel than they begin to fill their bumpers to the glorious and immortal memory.[7] They may truly boast that they look not at men, but at measures. So that evil be done, they care not who does it; the arbitrary Charles or the liberal William, Ferdinand the Catholic or Frederick the Protestant.[8] On such occasions their deadliest opponents may reckon upon their candid construction. The bold assertions of these people have of late impressed a large portion of the public with an opinion that James II was expelled simply because he was a Catholic, and that the Revolution was essentially a Protestant revolution.

But this certainly was not the case, nor can any person who has acquired more knowledge of the history of those times than is to be found in Goldsmith's *Abridgment* believe that, if James had held his own religious opinions without wishing to make proselytes, or if, wishing even to make proselytes, he had contented himself with exerting only his constitutional influence for that purpose, the Prince of Orange would ever have been invited over. Our ancestors, we suppose, knew their own meaning; and, if we may believe them, their hostility was primarily, not to Popery, but to tyranny. They did not drive out a tyrant because he was a Catholic, but they excluded Catholics from the Crown because they thought them likely to be tyrants. The ground on which they, in their famous resolution, declared the throne vacant, was this: "that James had broken the fundamental laws of the kingdom." Every man, therefore, who approves of the Revolution of 1688 must hold that the breach of fundamental laws on the part of the sovereign justifies resistance. The question, then, is this: Had Charles I broken the fundamental laws of England?

No person can answer in the negative unless he refuses credit, not merely to all the accusations

[2] William Laud (1573-1645), Archbishop of Canterbury.
[3] Roman Catholics. [4] Ireland.
[5] William III.
[6] John Somers (1652-1716) and Charles Talbot, Earl and Duke of Shrewsbury (1660-1718). They assisted William III.
[7] of James II.
[8] Ferdinand V of Castile (1452-1516); Frederick the Great of Germany (1712-86).

brought against Charles by his opponents, but to the narratives of the warmest Royalists, and to the confessions of the king himself. If there be any truth in any historian of any party who has related the events of that reign, the conduct of Charles, from his accession to the meeting of the Long Parliament[9] had been a continued course of oppression and treachery. Let those who applaud the Revolution and condemn the Rebellion mention one act of James II to which a parallel is not to be found in the history of his father. Let them lay their fingers on a single article in the Declaration of Right, presented by the two houses to William and Mary, which Charles is not acknowledged to have violated. He had, according to the testimony of his own friends, usurped the functions of the legislature, raised taxes without the consent of Parliament, and quartered troops on the people in the most illegal and vexatious manner. Not a single session of Parliament had passed without some unconstitutional attack on the freedom of debate. The right of petition was grossly violated. Arbitrary judgments, exorbitant fines, and unwarranted imprisonments were grievances of daily occurrence. If these things do not justify resistance, the Revolution was treason; if they do, the great Rebellion was laudable.

But, it is said, why not adopt milder measures? Why, after the king had consented to so many reforms and renounced so many oppressive prerogatives, did the Parliament continue to rise in their demands at the risk of provoking a civil war? The ship money had been given up, the Star Chamber had been abolished, provision had been made for the frequent convocation and secure deliberation of Parliaments. Why not pursue an end confessedly good by peaceable and regular means? We recur again to the analogy of the Revolution. Why was James driven from the throne? Why was he not retained upon conditions? He, too, had offered to call a free Parliament, and to submit to its decision all the matters in dispute. Yet we are in the habit of praising our forefathers, who preferred a revolution, a disputed succession, a dynasty of strangers, twenty years of foreign and intestine war, a standing army, and a national debt, to the rule, however restricted, of a tried and proved tyrant. The Long Parliament acted on the same principle, and is entitled to the same praise. They could not trust the king. He had, no doubt, passed salutary laws; but what assurance was there that he would not break them? He had renounced oppressive prerogatives, but where was the security that he would not resume them? The nation had to deal with a man whom no tie could bind; a man who made and broke promises with equal facility; a man whose honor had been a hundred times pawned and never redeemed.

Here, indeed, the Long Parliament stands on still stronger ground than the Convention of 1688. No action of James can be compared to the conduct of Charles with respect to the Petition of Right.[10] The Lords and Commons present him with a bill in which the constitutional limits of his power are marked out. He hesitates; he evades; at last he bargains to give his assent for five subsidies. The bill receives his solemn assent; the subsidies are voted; but no sooner is the tyrant relieved than he returns at once to all the arbitrary measures which he had bound himself to abandon, and violates all the clauses of the very act which he had been paid to pass.

For more than ten years the people had seen the rights which were theirs by a double claim—by immemorial inheritance and by recent purchase—infringed by the perfidious king who had recognized them. At length circumstances compelled Charles to summon another Parliament. Another chance was given to our fathers; were they to throw it away as they had thrown away the former? Were they again to be cozened by *le Roi le veut*?[11] Were they again to advance their money on pledges which had been forfeited over and over again? Were they to lay a second Petition of Right at the foot of the throne, to grant another lavish aid in exchange for another unmeaning ceremony, and then to take their departure, till, after ten years more of fraud and oppression, their prince should again require a supply, and again repay it with a perjury? They were compelled to choose whether they would trust a tyrant or conquer him. We think that they chose wisely and nobly.

The advocates of Charles, like the advocates of other malefactors against whom overwhelming evidence is produced, generally decline all controversy about the facts, and content themselves with calling testimony to character. He had so many private virtues! And had James II no private virtues? Was Oliver Cromwell, his bitterest enemies themselves being judges, destitute of private virtues? And what, after all, are the virtues ascribed to Charles? A religious zeal, not more

[9] The Long Parliament lasted from 1640 to 1660.

[10] An act of Parliament passed in 1628 in order to restrain the prerogatives of the king.

[11] The king wills it.

sincere than that of his son, and fully as weak and narrow-minded, and a few of the ordinary household decencies which half the tombstones in England claim for those who lie beneath them. A good father! A good husband! Ample apologies indeed for fifteen years of persecution, tyranny, and falsehood!

We charge him with having broken his coronation oath, and we are told that he kept his marriage vow! We accuse him of having given up his people to the merciless inflictions of the most hot-headed and hard-hearted of prelates,[12] and the defense is that he took his little son on his knee and kissed him! We censure him for having violated the articles of the Petition of Right, after having, for good and valuable consideration, promised to observe them; and we are informed that he was accustomed to hear prayers at six o'clock in the morning! It is to such considerations as these, together with his Vandyke dress, his handsome face, and his peaked beard, that he owes, we verily believe, most of his popularity with the present generation.

For ourselves, we own that we do not understand the common phrase, "a good man, but a bad king." We can as easily conceive a good man and an unnatural father, or a good man and a treacherous friend. We cannot, in estimating the character of an individual, leave out of our consideration his conduct in the most important of all human relations; and if in that relation we find him to have been selfish, cruel, and deceitful, we shall take the liberty to call him a bad man, in spite of all his temperance at table and all his regularity at chapel.

We cannot refrain from adding a few words respecting a topic on which the defenders of Charles are fond of dwelling. If, they say, he governed his people ill, he at least governed them after the example of his predecessors. If he violated their privileges, it was because those privileges had not been accurately defined. No act of oppression has ever been imputed to him which has not a parallel in the annals of the Tudors.[13] This point Hume[14] has labored, with an art which is as discreditable in a historical work as it would be admirable in a forensic address. The answer is short, clear, and decisive. Charles had assented to the Petition of Right. He had renounced the oppressive powers said to have been exercised by his predecessors, and he had renounced them for money. He was not entitled to set up his antiquated claims against his own recent release.

These arguments are so obvious that it may seem superfluous to dwell upon them, but those who have observed how much the events of that time are misrepresented and misunderstood will not blame us for stating the case simply. It is a case of which the simplest statement is the strongest.

The enemies of the Parliament, indeed, rarely choose to take issue on the great points of the question. They content themselves with exposing some of the crimes and follies to which public commotions necessarily give birth. They bewail the unmerited fate of Strafford.[15] They execrate the lawless violence of the army. They laugh at the scriptural names of the preachers. Major-generals fleecing their districts; soldiers reveling on the spoils of a ruined peasantry; upstarts, enriched by the public plunder, taking possession of the hospitable firesides and hereditary trees of the old gentry; boys smashing the beautiful windows of cathedrals; Quakers riding naked through the market-place; Fifth-monarchy men[16] shouting for King Jesus; agitators lecturing from the tops of tubs on the fate of Agag—all these, they tell us, were the offspring of the Great Rebellion.

Be it so. We are not careful to answer in this matter. These charges, were they infinitely more important, would not alter our opinion of an event which alone has made us to differ from the slaves who crouch beneath despotic sceptres. Many evils, no doubt, were produced by the Civil War. They were the price of our liberty. Has the acquisition been worth the sacrifice? It is the nature of the devil of tyranny to tear and rend the body which he leaves. Are the miseries of continued possession less horrible than the struggles of the tremendous exorcism?

If it were possible that a people brought up under an intolerant and arbitrary system could subvert that system without acts of cruelty and folly, half the objections to despotic power would be removed. We should, in that case, be compelled to acknowledge that it at least produces no pernicious effects on the intellectual and moral character of a nation. We deplore the outrages which accompany revolutions. But the more violent the

[12] Laud.

[13] the monarchs of England from 1485 to 1603.

[14] David Hume (1711-1776), Scottish philosopher and historian.

[15] Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford (1593-1641), one of the counselors of Charles I, was executed in 1641.

[16] a religious sect which expected that the kingdom of Christ was about to be established on earth.

outrages, the more assured we feel that a revolution was necessary. The violence of those outrages will always be proportioned to the ferocity and ignorance of the people, and the ferocity and ignorance of the people will be proportioned to the oppression and degradation under which they have been accustomed to live. Thus it was in our Civil War. The heads of the Church and State reaped only that which they had sown. The government had prohibited free discussion; it had done its best to keep the people unacquainted with their duties and their rights. The retribution was just and natural. If our rulers suffered from popular ignorance, it was because they had themselves taken away the key of knowledge. If they were assailed with blind fury, it was because they had exacted an equally blind submission.

It is the character of such revolutions that we always see the worst of them at first. Till men have been some time free, they know not how to use their freedom. The natives of wine countries are generally sober. In climates where wine is a rarity intemperance abounds. A newly liberated people may be compared to a northern army encamped on the Rhine or the Xeres.[17] It is said that, when soldiers in such a situation first find themselves able to indulge without restraint in such a rare and expensive luxury, nothing is to be seen but intoxication. Soon, however, plenty teaches discretion, and, after wine has been for a few months their daily fare, they become more temperate than they had ever been in their own country. In the same manner, the final and permanent fruits of liberty are wisdom, moderation, and mercy. Its immediate effects are often atrocious crimes, conflicting errors, skepticism on points the most clear, dogmatism on points the most mysterious. It is just at this crisis that its enemies love to exhibit it. They pull down the scaffolding from the half-finished edifice; they point to the flying dust, the falling bricks, the comfortless rooms, the frightful irregularity of the whole appearance, and then ask in scorn where the promised splendor and comfort is to be found. If such miserable sophisms were to prevail, there would never be a good house or a good government in the world.

Ariosto[18] tells a pretty story of a fairy, who, by some mysterious law of her nature, was condemned to appear at certain seasons in the form of a foul and poisonous snake. Those who injured her during the period of her disguise were forever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who, in spite of her loathsome aspect, pitied and protected her, she afterwards revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her; accompanied their steps, granted all their wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love and victorious in war. Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful reptile. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But woe to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her! And happy are those who, having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and her glory!

There is only one cure for the evils which newly acquired freedom produces, and that cure is freedom. When a prisoner first leaves his cell he cannot bear the light of day; he is unable to discriminate colors or recognize faces. But the remedy is, not to remand him into his dungeon, but to accustom him to the rays of the sun. The blaze of truth and liberty may at first dazzle and bewilder nations which have become half blind in the house of bondage. But let them gaze on, and they will soon be able to bear it. In a few years men learn to reason. The extreme violence of opinions subsides. Hostile theories correct each other. The scattered elements of truth cease to contend, and begin to coalesce. And at length a system of justice and order is educed out of the chaos.

Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down, as a self-evident proposition that no people ought to be free till they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learned to swim. If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait forever.

Therefore it is that we decidedly approve of the conduct of Milton and the other wise and good men who, in spite of much that was ridiculous and hateful in the conduct of their associates, stood firmly by the cause of public liberty. We are not aware that the poet has been charged with personal participation in any of the blamable excesses of that time. The favorite topic of his enemies is the line of conduct which he pursued with regard to the execution of the king. Of that celebrated proceeding we by no means approve. Still we must say, in justice to the many

[17] a town in Spain from which sherry wine gets its name.
[18] Cf. Vol. I, pp. 253 ff.

eminent persons who concurred in it, and in justice more particularly to the eminent person who defended it, that nothing can be more absurd than the imputation which, for the last hundred and sixty years, it has been the fashion to cast upon the Regicides.[19] We have, throughout, abstained from appealing to first principles. We will not appeal to them now. We recur again to the parallel case of the Revolution. What essential distinction can be drawn between the execution of the father and the deposition of the son? What constitutional maxim is there which applies to the former and not to the latter? The king can do no wrong. If so, James was as innocent as Charles could have been. The minister, only, ought to be responsible for the acts of the sovereign. If so, why not impeach Jeffreys[20] and retain James? The person of a king is sacred. Was the person of James considered sacred at the Boyne? To discharge cannon against an army in which a king is known to be posted is to approach pretty near to regicide. Charles, too, it should always be remembered, was put to death by men who had been exasperated by the hostilities of several years, and who had never been bound to him by any other tie than that which was common to them with all their fellow-citizens. Those who drove James from his throne, who seduced his army, who alienated his friends, who first imprisoned him in his palace and then turned him out of it, who broke in upon his very slumbers by imperious messages, who pursued him with fire and sword from one part of the empire to another, who hanged, drew, and quartered his adherents, and attainted his innocent heir, were his nephew and his two daughters. When we reflect on all these things, we are at a loss to conceive how the same persons who, on the 5th of November, thank God for wonderfully conducting his servant William, and for making all opposition fall before him until he became our king and governor, can, on the 30th of January, contrive to be afraid that the blood of the Royal Martyr may be visited on themselves and their children.

We disapprove, we repeat, of the execution of Charles; not because the constitution exempts the king from responsibility, for we know that all such maxims, however excellent, have their exceptions; nor because we feel any peculiar interest in his character, for we think that his sentence describes him with perfect justice as "a tyrant, a traitor, a murderer, and a public enemy"; but because we are convinced that the measure was most injurious to the cause of freedom. He whom it removed was a captive and a hostage; his heir, to whom the allegiance of every Royalist was instantly transferred, was at large. The Presbyterians could never have been perfectly reconciled to the father; they had no such rooted enmity to the son. The great body of the people, also, contemplated that proceeding with feelings which, however unreasonable, no government could safely venture to outrage.

But though we think the conduct of the Regicides blamable, that of Milton appears to us in a very different light. The deed was done. It could not be undone. The evil was incurred, and the object was to render it as small as possible. We censure the chiefs of the army for not yielding to the popular opinion, but we cannot censure Milton for wishing to change that opinion. The very feeling which would have restrained us from committing the act would have led us, after it had been committed, to defend it against the ravings of servility and superstition. For the sake of public liberty, we wish that the thing had not been done while the people disapproved of it. But, for the sake of public liberty, we should also have wished the people to approve of it when it was done. If anything more were wanting to the justification of Milton, the book of Salmasius[21] would furnish it. That miserable performance is now with justice considered only as a beacon to word-catchers who wish to become statesmen. The celebrity of the man who refuted it, the *"Æneæ magni dextra,"*[22] gives it all its fame with the present generation. In that age the state of things was different. It was not then fully understood how vast an interval separates the mere classical scholar from the political philosopher. Nor can it be doubted that a treatise which, bearing the name of so eminent a critic, attacked the fundamental principles of all free governments, must, if suffered to remain unanswered, have produced a most pernicious effect on the public mind.

We wish to add a few words relative to another subject, on which the enemies of Milton delight to dwell—his conduct during the administration of the Protector.[23] That an enthusiastic votary of

[19] those judges who condemned King Charles I to death.

[20] George Jeffreys (1648-1689), a notoriously cruel judge.

[21] Claudius Salmasius (1588-1653), a French classical scholar who wrote a book defending the absolutism of Charles I.

[22] The right hand of the great Æneas.

[23] Oliver Cromwell, who was made Lord Protector of England.

liberty should accept office under a military usurper seems, no doubt, at first sight, extraordinary. But all the circumstances in which the country was then placed were extraordinary. The ambition of Oliver was of no vulgar kind. He never seems to have coveted despotic power. He at first fought sincerely and manfully for the Parliament, and never deserted it till it had deserted its duty. If he dissolved it by force, it was not till he found that the few members who remained after so many deaths, secessions, and expulsions were desirous to appropriate to themselves a power which they held only in trust, and to inflict upon England the curse of a Venetian oligarchy. But, even when thus placed by violence at the head of affairs, he did not assume unlimited power. He gave the country a constitution far more perfect than any which had at that time been known in the world. He reformed the representative system in a manner which has extorted praise even from Lord Clarendon.[24] For himself he demanded, indeed, the first place in the Commonwealth, but with powers scarcely so great as those of a Dutch stadtholder or an American president. He gave the Parliament a voice in the appointment of ministers, and left to it the whole legislative authority, not even reserving to himself a voice on its enactments; and he did not require that the chief magistracy should be hereditary in his family. Thus far, we think, if the circumstances of the time and the opportunities which he had of aggrandizing himself be fairly considered, he will not lose by comparison with Washington or Bolivar. Had his moderation been met by corresponding moderation, there is no reason to think that he would have overstepped the line which he had traced for himself. But when he found that his Parliaments questioned the authority under which they met, and that he was in danger of being deprived of the restricted power which was absolutely necessary to his personal safety, then it must be acknowledged he adopted a more arbitrary policy.

Yet, though we believe that the intentions of Cromwell were at first honest, though we believe that he was driven from the noble course which he had marked out for himself by the almost irresistible force of circumstances, though we admire, in common with all men of all parties, the ability and energy of his splendid administration, we are not pleading for arbitrary and lawless power, even in his hands. We know that a good constitution is infinitely better than the best despot. But we suspect that, at the time of which we speak, the violence of religious and political enmities rendered a stable and happy settlement next to impossible. The choice lay, not between Cromwell and liberty, but between Cromwell and the Stuarts. That Milton chose well no man can doubt who fairly compares the events of the Protectorate with those of the thirty years which succeeded it, the darkest and most disgraceful in the English annals. Cromwell was evidently laying, though in an irregular manner, the foundations of an admirable system. Never before had religious liberty and the freedom of discussion been enjoyed in a greater degree. Never had the national honor been better upheld abroad, or the seat of justice better filled at home. And it was rarely that any opposition which stopped short of open rebellion provoked the resentment of the liberal and magnanimous usurper. The institutions which he had established, as set down in the Instrument of Government and the Humble Petition and Advice,[25] were excellent. His practice, it is true, too often departed from the theory of these institutions. But had he lived a few years longer, it is probable that his institutions would have survived him, and that his arbitrary practice would have died with him. His power had not been consecrated by ancient prejudices. It was upheld only by his great personal qualities. Little, therefore, was to be dreaded from a second Protector, unless he were also a second Oliver Cromwell. The events which followed his decease are the most complete vindication of those who exerted themselves to uphold his authority. His death dissolved the whole frame of society. The army rose against the Parliament, the different corps of the army against each other. Sect raved against sect. Party plotted against party. The Presbyterians, in their eagerness to be revenged on the Independents sacrificed their own liberty, and deserted all their old principles. Without casting one glance on the past, or requiring one stipulation for the future, they threw down their freedom at the feet of the most frivolous and heartless of tyrants.

Then came those days, never to be recalled without a blush, the days of servitude without loyalty and sensuality without love; of dwarfish talents and gigantic vices; the paradise of cold hearts and narrow minds; the golden age of the coward,

[24] Edward Hyde (1608-1674), author of the *History of the Rebellion*.

[25] The former was the deed by which Parliament gave powers to Cromwell in 1653; the latter replaced this in 1657.

the bigot, and the slave. The king cringed to his rival[26] that he might trample on his people; sank into a viceroy of France, and pocketed with complacent infamy her degrading insults and her more degrading gold. The caresses of harlots and the jests of buffoons regulated the policy of the State. The government had just ability enough to deceive, and just religion enough to persecute. The principles of liberty were the scoff of every grinning courtier, and the Anathema Maranatha[27] of every fawning dean. In every high place, worship was paid to Charles and James, Belial and Moloch;[28] and England propitiated those obscene and cruel idols with the blood of her best and bravest children. Crime succeeded to crime, and disgrace to disgrace, till the race, accursed of God and man, was a second time driven forth to wander on the face of the earth, and to be a byword and a shaking of the head to the nations.

Most of the remarks which we have hitherto made on the public character of Milton apply to him only as one of a large body. We shall proceed to notice some of the peculiarities which distinguished him from his contemporaries. And for that purpose it is necessary to take a short survey of the parties into which the political world was at that time divided. We must premise that our observations are intended to apply only to those who adhered, from a sincere preference, to one or to the other side. In days of public commotion every faction, like an Oriental army, is attended by a crowd of campfollowers, a useless and heartless rabble, who prowl round its line of march in the hope of picking up something under its protection, but desert it in the day of battle, and often join to exterminate it after a defeat. England, at the time of which we are treating, abounded with fickle and selfish politicians, who transferred their support to every government as it rose; who kissed the hand of the king in 1640, and spat in his face in 1649; who shouted with equal glee when Cromwell was inaugurated in Westminster Hall, and when he was dug up to be hanged at Tyburn; who dined on calves' heads or on broiled rumps,[29] and cut down oak branches[30] or stuck them up, as circumstances altered, without the slightest shame or repugnance. These we leave out of the account. We take our estimate of parties from those who really deserve to be called partisans.

We would speak first of the Puritans, the most remarkable body of men, perhaps, which the world has ever produced. The odious and ridiculous parts of their character lie on the surface. He that runs may read them; nor have there been wanting attentive and malicious observers to point them out. For many years after the Restoration they were the theme of unmeasured invective and derision. They were exposed to the utmost licentiousness of the press and of the stage, at the time when the press and the stage were most licentious. They were not men of letters; they were, as a body, unpopular; they could not defend themselves; and the public would not take them under its protection. They were therefore abandoned, without reserve, to the tender mercies of the satirists and dramatists. The ostentatious simplicity of their dress, their sour aspect, their nasal twang, their stiff posture, their long graces, their Hebrew names, the scriptural phrases which they introduced on every occasion, their contempt of human learning, their detestation of polite amusements, were indeed fair game for the laughers. But it is not from the laughers alone that the philosophy of history is to be learned. And he who approaches this subject should carefully guard against the influence of that potent ridicule which has already misled so many excellent writers.

> *"Ecco il fonte del riso, ed ecco il rio*
> *Che mortali perigli in se contiene:*
> *Hor qui tener a fren nostro desio,*
> *Ed esser cauti molto a noi conviene."*[31]

Those who roused the people to resistance; who directed their measures through a long series of eventful years; who formed, out of the most unpromising materials, the finest army that Europe had ever seen; who trampled down king, church, and aristocracy; who, in the short intervals of domestic sedition and rebellion, made the name of England terrible to every nation on the face of the earth,—were no vulgar fanatics. Most of their absurdities were mere external badges, like the signs of freemasonry or the dresses of friars. We regret that these badges were not more attractive. We regret that a body to whose courage and talents

[26] Louis XIV of France.

[27] a double curse.

[28] Cf. Vol. I, pp. 452 ff.

[29] "Calves Head" was a club which dined on January 30 to celebrate the execution of Charles I; "rump" has reference to the Rump Parliament of 1648.

[30] Charles hid in an oak tree after his escape from the battle of Worcester.

[31] This is the fount of laughter, and this is the stream that contains within itself deadly perils; it behooves us here to hold our desire in check and to be very careful. —Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered.*

mankind has owed inestimable obligations, had not the lofty elegance which distinguished some of the adherents of Charles I, or the easy good-breeding for which the court of Charles II was celebrated. But, if we must make our choice, we shall, like Bassanio in the play,[32] turn from the specious caskets which contain only the death's-head and the fool's-head, and fix on the plain leaden chest which conceals the treasure.

The Puritans were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging in general terms an overruling Providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being, for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know Him, to serve Him, to enjoy Him, was with them the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the pure worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on the intolerable brightness, and to commune with Him face to face. Hence originated their contempt for terrestrial distinctions. The difference between the greatest and the meanest of mankind seemed to vanish when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from Him on whom their own eyes were constantly fixed. They recognized no title to superiority but His favor; and, confident of that favor, they despised all the accomplishments and all the dignities of the world. If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands; their diadems, crowns of glory which should never fade away. On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down with contempt; for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language, nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. The very meanest of them was a being to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged, on whose slightest action the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest; who had been destined, before heaven and earth were created, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away. Events which short-sighted politicians ascribed to earthly causes had been ordained on his account. For his sake empires had risen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake the Almighty had proclaimed His will by the pen of the Evangelist and the harp of the prophet. He had been wrested by no common deliverer from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony, by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened, that the rocks had been rent, that the dead had risen, that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God.

Thus the Puritan was made up of two different men: the one all self-abasement, penitence, gratitude, passion; the other proud, calm, inflexible, sagacious. He prostrated himself in the dust before his Maker, but he set his foot on the neck of his king. In his devotional retirement, he prayed with convulsions, and groans, and tears. He was half maddened by glorious or terrible illusions. He heard the lyres of angels or the tempting whispers of fiends. He caught a gleam of the Beatific Vision, or woke screaming from dreams of everlasting fire. Like Vane,[33] he thought himself intrusted with the sceptre of the millennial year. Like Fleetwood,[34] he cried in the bitterness of his soul that God had hid His face from him. But when he took his seat in the council, or girt on his sword for war, these tempestuous workings of the soul had left no perceptible trace behind them. People who saw nothing of the godly but their uncouth visages, and heard nothing from them but their groans and their whining hymns, might laugh at them. But those had little reason to laugh who encountered them in the hall of debate or in the field of battle. These fanatics brought to civil and military affairs a coolness of judgment and an immutability of purpose which some writers have thought inconsistent with their religious zeal, but which were in fact the necessary effects of it. The intensity of their feelings on one subject made them tranquil on every other. One overpowering sentiment had subjected to itself pity and hatred, ambition and fear. Death had lost its terrors and pleasure its charms. They had their smiles and

[32] Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*.

[33] Sir Henry Vane (1612-1662), leader of the extreme Puritans.

[34] Charles Fleetwood (d. 1692), son-in-law of Cromwell.

their tears, their raptures and their sorrows, but not for the things of this world. Enthusiasm had made them Stoics, had cleared their mind from every vulgar passion and prejudice, and raised them above the influence of danger and of corruption. It sometimes might lead them to pursue unwise ends, but never to choose unwise means. They went through the world, like Sir Artegal's iron man Talus[35] with his flail, crushing and trampling down oppressors, mingling with human beings, but having neither part nor lot in human infirmities; insensible to fatigue, to pleasure, and to pain; not to be pierced by any weapon, not to be withstood by any barrier.

Such we believe to have been the character of the Puritans. We perceive the absurdity of their manners. We dislike the sullen gloom of their domestic habits. We acknowledge that the tone of their minds was often injured by straining after things too high for mortal reach; and we know that, in spite of their hatred of Popery, they too often fell into the worst vices of that bad system—intolerance and extravagant austerity; that they had their anchorites and their crusades, their Dunstans,[36] and their De Montforts,[37] their Dominics[38] and their Escobars.[39] Yet, when all circumstances are taken into consideration, we do not hesitate to pronounce them a brave, a wise, an honest, and a useful body.

The Puritans espoused the cause of civil liberty mainly because it was the cause of religion. There was another party, by no means numerous, but distinguished by learning and ability, which acted with them on very different principles. We speak of those whom Cromwell was accustomed to call the Heathen, men who were, in the phraseology of that time, doubting Thomases or careless Gallios[40] with regard to religious subjects, but passionate worshipers of freedom. Heated by the study of ancient literature, they set up their country as their idol, and proposed to themselves the heroes of Plutarch as their examples. They seem to have borne some resemblance to the Brissotines[41] of the French Revolution. But it is not very easy to draw the line of distinction between them and their devout associates, whose tone and manner they sometimes found it convenient to affect, and sometimes, it is probable, imperceptibly adopted.

We now come to the Royalists. We shall attempt to speak of them, as we have spoken of their antagonists, with perfect candor. We shall not charge upon a whole party the profligacy and baseness of the horse boys, gamblers, and bravoes, whom the hope of license and plunder attracted from all the dens of Whitefriars to the standard of Charles, and who disgraced their associates by excesses which, under the stricter discipline of the parliamentary armies, were never tolerated. We will select a more favorable specimen. Thinking as we do that the cause of the king was the cause of bigotry and tyranny, we yet cannot refrain from looking with complacency on the character of the honest old Cavaliers. We feel a national pride in comparing them with the instruments which the despots of other countries are compelled to employ—with the mutes who throng their ante-chambers, and the Janissaries[42] who mount guard at their gates. Our Royalist countrymen were not heartless, dangling courtiers, bowing at every step, and simpering at every word. They were not mere machines for destruction, dressed up in uniforms, caned into skill, intoxicated into valor, defending without love, destroying without hatred. There was a freedom in their subserviency, a nobleness in their very degradation. The sentiment of individual independence was strong within them. They were indeed misled, but by no base or selfish motive. Compassion and romantic honor, the prejudices of childhood and the venerable names of history, threw over them a spell potent as that of Duessa; and, like the Red Cross Knight,[43] they thought that they were doing battle for an injured beauty while they defended a false and loathsome sorceress. In truth, they scarcely entered at all into the merits of the political question. It was not for a treacherous king or an intolerant church that they fought, but for the old banner which had waved in so many battles over the heads of their fathers, and for the altars at which they had received the hands of their brides. Though nothing could be more erroneous than their political opinions they possessed, in a far greater degree than their adversaries those

[35] See Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, V, 1.

[36] St. Dunstan (924-988), Archbishop of Canterbury.

[37] Simon de Montfort (1150-1218) carried on a cruel crusade against the Albigenses.

[38] St. Dominic (1170-1221), founder of the Dominican friars.

[39] Antonio Escobar y Mendoza (1589-1669), Spanish Jesuit.

[40] For his indifference in the conflict between Paul and the Jews, see *Acts*, 18:12-17.

[41] the followers of Jean Pierre Brissot.

[42] the Turkish standing army and bodyguard of the sultan.

[43] Cf. Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, book I.

qualities which are the grace of private life. With many of the vices of the Round Table, they had also many of its virtues—courtesy, generosity, veracity, tenderness, and respect for women. They had far more both of profound and of polite learning than the Puritans. Their manners were more engaging, their tempers more amiable, their tastes more elegant, and their households more cheerful.

Milton did not strictly belong to any of the classes which we have described. He was not a Puritan. He was not a freethinker. He was not a Royalist. In his character the noblest qualities of every party were combined in harmonious union. From the Parliament and from the court, from the conventicle[44] and from the Gothic cloister, from the gloomy and sepulchral circles of the Roundheads, and from the Christmas revel of the hospitable Cavalier, his nature selected and drew to itself whatever was great and good, while it rejected all the base and pernicious ingredients by which those finer elements were defiled. Like the Puritans, he lived

"As ever in his great Taskmaster's eye."[45]

Like them, he kept his mind continually fixed on an Almighty Judge and an eternal reward. And hence he acquired their contempt of external circumstances, their fortitude, their tranquillity, their inflexible resolution. But not the coolest skeptic or the most profane scoffer was more perfectly free from the contagion of their frantic delusions, their savage manners, their ludicrous jargon, their scorn of science, and their aversion to pleasure. Hating tyranny with a perfect hatred, he had nevertheless all the estimable and ornamental qualities which were almost entirely monopolized by the party of the tyrant. There was none who had a stronger sense of the value of literature, a finer relish for every elegant amusement, or a more chivalrous delicacy of honor and love. Though his opinions were democratic, his tastes and his associations were such as harmonize best with monarchy and aristocracy. He was under the influence of all the feelings by which the gallant Cavaliers were misled. But of those feelings he was the master and not the slave. Like the hero[46] of Homer, he enjoyed all the pleasures of fascination; but he was not fascinated. He listed to the song of the Sirens, yet he glided by without being seduced to their fatal shore. He tasted the cup of Circe, but he bore about him a sure antidote against the effects of its bewitching sweetness. The illusions which captivated his imagination never impaired his reasoning powers. The statesman was proof against the splendor, the solemnity, and the romance which enchanted the poet. Any person who will contrast the sentiments expressed in his treatises on Prelacy with the exquisite lines on ecclesiastical architecture and music in the "Penseroso,"[47] which was published about the same time, will understand our meaning. This is an inconsistency which, more than anything else, raises his character in our estimation, because it shows how many private tastes and feelings he sacrificed in order to do what he considered his duty to mankind. It is the very struggle of the noble Othello. His heart relents, but his hand is firm. He does naught in hate, but all in honor. He kisses the beautiful deceiver before he destroys her.

That from which the public character of Milton derives its great and peculiar splendor still remains to be mentioned. If he exerted himself to overthrow a foresworn king and a persecuting hierarchy, he exerted himself in conjunction with others. But the glory of the battle which he fought for the species of freedom which is the most valuable, and which was then the least understood, the freedom of the human mind, is all his own. Thousands and tens of thousands among his contemporaries raised their voices against ship money and the Star Chamber. But there were few indeed who discerned the more fearful evils of moral and intellectual slavery, and the benefits which would result from the liberty of the press[48] and the unfettered exercise of private judgment. These were the objects which Milton justly conceived to be the most important. He was desirous that the people should think for themselves as well as tax themselves, and should be emancipated from the dominion of prejudice as well as from that of Charles. He knew that those who, with the best intentions, overlooked these schemes of reform, and contented themselves with pulling down the king and imprisoning the malignants, acted like the heedless brothers in his own poem,[49] who, in their eagerness to disperse the train of the sorcerer, neglected the means of liberating the captive. They thought only of conquering when they should have thought of disenchanting.

[44] a secret religious meeting in defiance of the laws of the Established Church.

[45] Cf. Milton's sonnet, Vol. I, p. 423.

[46] Odysseus.

[47] Cf. Vol. I, p. 425.

[48] See *Areopagitica*, Vol. I, pp. 483-7.

[49] *Comus*.

"Oh, ye mistook, ye should have snatched his wand,
And bound him fast; without his rod reversed,
And backward mutters of dissevering power,
We cannot free the Lady that sits here
In stony fetters fixed, and motionless."

To reverse the rod, to spell the charm backward, to break the ties which bound a stupefied people to the seat of enchantment, was the noble aim of Milton. To this all his public conduct was directed. For this he joined the Presbyterians; for this he forsook them. He fought their perilous battle, but he turned away with disdain from their insolent triumph. He saw that they, like those whom they had vanquished, were hostile to the liberty of thought. He therefore joined the Independents, and called upon Cromwell to break the secular chain, and to save free conscience from the paw of the Presbyterian wolf. With a view to the same great object, he attacked the licensing system,[50] in that sublime treatise which every statesman should wear as a sign upon his hand and as frontlets between his eyes. His attacks were, in general, directed less against particular abuses than against those deeply seated errors on which almost all abuses are founded—the servile worship of eminent men and the irrational dread of innovation.

That he might shake the foundations of these debasing sentiments more effectually, he always selected for himself the boldest literary services. He never came up in the rear when the outworks had been carried and the breach entered. He pressed into the forlorn hope. At the beginning of the changes, he wrote with incomparable energy and eloquence against the bishops. But, when his opinion seemed likely to prevail, he passed on to other subjects, and abandoned prelacy to the crowd of writers who now hastened to insult a falling party. There is no more hazardous enterprise than that of bearing the torch of truth into those dark and infected recesses in which no light has ever shone. But it was the choice and the pleasure of Milton to penetrate the noisome vapors, and to brave the terrible explosion. Those who most disapprove of his opinions must respect the hardihood with which he maintained them. He, in general, left to others the credit of expounding and defending the popular parts of his religious and political creed. He took his own stand upon those which the great body of his countrymen reprobated as criminal, or derided as paradoxical. He stood up for divorce and regicide.[51] He attacked the prevailing systems of education.[52] His radiant and beneficent career resembled that of the god of light and fertility:

"Nitor in adversum; nec me, qui cætera, vincit
Impetus, et rapido contrarius evehor orbi." [53]

It is to be regretted that the prose writings of Milton should in our time be so little read. As compositions, they deserve the attention of every man who wishes to become acquainted with the full power of the English language. They abound with passages compared with which the finest declamations of Burke sink into insignificance. They are a perfect field of cloth of gold. The style is stiff with gorgeous embroidery. Not even in the earlier books of the *Paradise Lost* has the great poet ever risen higher than in those parts of his controversial works in which his feelings, excited by conflict, find a vent in bursts of devotional and lyric rapture. It is, to borrow his own majestic language, "a sevenfold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies."

We had intended to look more closely at these performances, to analyze the peculiarities of the diction, to dwell at some length on the sublime wisdom of the *Areopagitica* and the nervous rhetoric of the *Iconoclast*, and to point out some of those magnificent passages which occur in the treatise *Of Reformation* and the *Animadversions on the Remonstrant*. But the length to which our remarks have already extended renders this impossible.

We must conclude. And yet we can scarcely tear ourselves away from the subject. The days immediately following the publication of this relic of Milton appear to be peculiarly set apart and consecrated to his memory. And we shall scarcely be censured if, on this his festival, we be found lingering near his shrine, how worthless soever may be the offering which we bring to it. While this book lies on our table, we seem to be contemporaries of the writer. We are transported a hundred and fifty years back. We can almost fancy that we are visiting him in his small lodging;

[50] In *Areopagitica*.

[51] in the *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643); and *Eikonoklastes* (1649).

[52] in *Of Education* (1644).

[53] I contend against opposition; nor does that force which conquers all things else conquer me, and I ride on in a contrary way to the rapid heavens.—Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, II, 72, 73.

that we see him sitting at the old organ beneath the faded green hangings; that we can catch the quick twinkle of his eyes, rolling in vain to find the day; that we are reading in the lines of his noble countenance the proud and mournful history of his glory and his affliction. We image to ourselves the breathless silence in which we should listen to his slightest word; the passionate veneration with which we should kneel to kiss his hand and weep upon it; the earnestness with which we should endeavor to console him, if indeed such a spirit could need consolation, for the neglect of an age unworthy of his talents and his virtues; the eagerness with which we should contest with his daughters, or with his Quaker friend Ellwood,[54] the privilege of reading Homer to him, or of taking down the immortal accents which flowed from his lips.

These are perhaps foolish feelings. Yet we cannot be ashamed of them; nor shall we be sorry if what we have written shall in any degree excite them in other minds. We are not much in the habit of idolizing either the living or the dead. And we think that there is no more certain indication of a weak and ill-regulated intellect than that propensity which, for want of a better name, we will venture to christen Boswellism. But there are a few characters which have stood the closest scrutiny and the severest tests, which have been tried in the furnace and have proved pure, which have been weighed in the balance and have not been found wanting, which have been declared sterling by the general consent of mankind, and which are visibly stamped with the image and superscription of the Most High. These great men we trust that we know how to prize, and of these was Milton. The sight of his books, the sound of his name, are pleasant to us. His thoughts resemble those celestial fruits and flowers which the Virgin Martyr[55] of Massinger sent down from the gardens of Paradise to the earth, and which were distinguished from the productions of other soils, not only by superior bloom and sweetness, but by miraculous efficacy to invigorate and to heal. They are powerful, not only to delight, but to elevate and purify. Nor do we envy the man who can study either the life or the writings of the great poet and patriot without aspiring to emulate, not indeed the sublime works with which his genius has enriched our literature, but the zeal with which he labored for the public good, the fortitude with which he endured every private calamity, the lofty disdain with which he looked down on temptations and dangers, the deadly hatred which he bore to bigots and tyrants, and the faith which he so sternly kept with his country and with his fame.

(1825)

John Henry Newman

(1801-1890)

In all the currents and cross-currents of English religious life in the nineteenth century no figure is so outstanding as that of the Oxford preacher whose progress from evangelicalism, through various intermediate stages, to the cardinalate of the Roman Catholic Church engaged the attention of his whole generation. John Henry Newman was born in London on February 21, 1801, the son of a banker. As a boy he was quiet, imaginative, and devoted to reading. His religious experiences began in 1816, when he was "converted" to a strong faith in the existence of God. But the strict Calvinism of the group which he had joined could have brought little satisfaction to the sweet-tempered youth; it is indeed interesting to remark that at this time Newman accepted the anti-Papist dicta of his friends. In the same year he entered Trinity College, Oxford. Because of the failure of his father's bank, he was compelled to live on the meager scholarships he won. After an unsuccessful move toward a legal career, he decided upon taking holy orders. In 1822 he was elected a Fellow of Oriel College, Oxford.

He now came under the influence of the liberal Whately, read Butler's *Analogy*, and

[54] Thomas Ellwood (1629-1713), who gives an account of Milton in his *Autobiography*.
[55] in Massinger's play of that name.

developed a preference for "intellectual excellence to moral." Undergoing a constant self-scrutiny, in which he lost his evangelical convictions, he accepted the curacy of St. Clements, Oxford (1824), and thus began his clerical life. During the next few years he occupied various positions in the university town until, in 1831-32, he became Preacher before the University. All this while he had been developing a greater antipathy toward the rationalistic and "liberal" tendencies in the Anglican Church.

With his friend, Hurrell Froude, he took a Mediterranean tour to seek for better physical health and to clarify his ideas. At Rome he was convinced that the religion practiced there was idolatrous. In June 1833, en route to Marseilles, he was becalmed, and wrote *Lead, Kindly Light* (cf. *below*). During this year he also composed most of his *Lyra Apostolica*. Back in England, he hailed the sermon preached at Oxford on "National Apostasy" as the inception of a new movement to revive the spirituality and authority of the Church Fathers. Into this "Oxford Movement" Newman threw himself with great zest, and began to issue his pamphlets, *Tracts for the Times,* in which he tried to establish a basis, midway between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, for doctrine and discipline in the Church. The *Tracts* sold with great rapidity, and people flocked to Oxford to hear Newman's Sunday sermons on reason and faith. By 1839 he was at the height of his influence at Oxford, and his followers used to cry: "Credo in Newmannum." The next four years found him shifting his ground very rapidly. His untiring efforts to prove the tenability of the Anglican dogma had brought great doubts to his mind. Numbers of his disciples had already joined the Roman Catholic Church. In 1842 he retired with a few faithful followers to Littlemore, there to lead an almost monastic life. The next year he published an anonymous retraction of all he had said and written against the Roman Catholic Church. On October 9, 1845, he became a Roman Catholic, and the following year was ordained a priest and granted the D.D. degree by the Pope. He joined the order of the Oratorians, and returned to England to settle at the Oratory at Egbaston, near Birmingham, where he remained as head for more than thirty years. He also established the London Oratory.

In 1850 he delivered his brilliant series of sermons on *The Present Position of Catholics in England.* In the fifth of these he accused Dr. Achilli, an ex-friar who was strongly anti-Catholic, of gross immorality. He thus became involved in a libel suit, and after a long trial was fined £100 and ordered to pay £14,000 of costs. These large sums were raised by popular subscription in England and America, and a property was bought for him on the Lickey Hills at Rednal, where today he lies buried. He was now invited to become the rector of the new Catholic University at Dublin (1852). Though he kept this position for only four years, he here delivered some of his most famous lectures—those on *The Idea of a University* (cf. *below*).

The most dramatic event in Newman's life was his quarrel with Charles Kingsley. The latter, in a review which appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* for January 1864, had said: "Truth for its own sake had never been a virtue with the Roman clergy. Father Newman informs us it need not be, and on the whole ought not to be." Newman exchanged letters with Kingsley, who made a partial half-apology, and then rendered matters worse with a pamphlet, *What, Then, Does Dr. Newman Mean?* This was Newman's great opportunity, and he seized it by writing his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (cf. *below*), which first appeared as a series of pamphlets in 1864. It is a magnificent religious autobiography, simple and sincere, which routed his enemies, made manifest his integrity, and restored him to high popular favor.

In 1865 he published his beautiful poem, *The Dream of Gerontius* (cf. *below*), "the happiest effort to represent the unseen world since the time of Dante." In 1870 he reinforced the *Apologia* with his *Grammar of Assent.* By 1878, when he was made Honorary Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford, he was universally revered and esteemed. The highest honor, except the papacy itself, was accorded him by the church of his adoption when he

was made cardinal in 1879. During the last eleven years of his life as church dignitary, he produced practically no literary work. He died on August 11, 1890.

The Oxford Movement had revived the sermon as a literary form, and Newman's efforts did much to give it a new lease on literary life. It must be remembered that he did little writing unconnected with his activities as a religious leader. He brought to his sermons a taste for classical balance and delicate rhythm which make his prose style the most elegant of the nineteenth century. Its gravity, high purpose, and revelation of his own beautifully mild character have won it many admirers.

Newman's prose was collected in two series: *Essays, Critical and Historical* (2 vols., 1897), and *Historical Sketches* (3 vols., 1896-97). His poetry has been often reprinted. The letters were issued in 1897, 1917, and 1933. Among many biographies and critical studies, most notable are those by G. G. Atkins (1931), F. L. Cross (1933), J. F. Cronin (1935), G. H. Harper (1933), J. L. May (1930), F. W. Newman (1891), J. E. Ross (1931), A. R. Waller and G. H. S. Barrow (1901), W. Ward (2 vols., 1912), and A. Whyte (1901).

The Idea of a University

The nine lectures which form *The Idea of a University* were delivered at Dublin from May 10 to June 7, 1852. They were composed under extremely adverse circumstances. Though Pope Pius IX had sanctioned the formation of a new Catholic university in Ireland, the poverty of the Irish people made it difficult to raise the necessary funds. Moreover, the Irish bishops were by no means agreed that the country needed a Catholic university. Everywhere Newman turned, he encountered indifference, jealousy, and even hostility. Despite these discouragements and the uncomfortable fact that he was the invited head of a university that was still in the realm of the projected, Newman's lectures were a success. As J. L. May describes them, they presented "a theory of university education so liberal, so enlightened, and so far-seeing that they serve today . . . as guiding lights for all who would thread their way successfully through the multitude of conflicting . . . theories of what education really is."

Discourse V. *Liberal Knowledge Its Own End*

A University may be considered with reference either to its Students or to its Studies; and the principle, that all Knowledge is a whole and the separate Sciences parts of one, which I have hitherto been using in behalf of its studies, is equally important when we direct our attention to its students. Now then I turn to the students, and shall consider the education which, by virtue of this principle, a University will give them; and thus I shall be introduced, Gentlemen, to the second question, which I proposed to discuss, viz., whether and in what sense its teaching, viewed relatively to the taught, carries the attribute of Utility along with it.

1

I have said that all branches of knowledge are connected together, because the subject-matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself, as being the acts and the work of the Creator. Hence it is that the Sciences, into which our knowledge may be said to be cast, have multiplied bearings one on another, and an internal sympathy, and admit, or rather demand, comparison and adjustment. They complete, correct, balance, each other. This consideration, if well-founded, must be taken into account, not only as regards the attainment of truth, which is their common end, but as regards the influence which they exercise upon those whose education consists in the study of them. I have said already, that to give undue prominence to one is to be unjust to another; to neglect or supersede these is to divert those from their proper object. It is to unsettle the boundary lines between science and science, to disturb their action, to destroy the harmony which binds them together. Such a proceeding will have a corresponding effect when introduced into a place of education. There is no science but tells a different tale, when viewed

as a portion of a whole, from what it is likely to suggest when taken by itself, without the safeguard, as I may call it, of others.

Let me make use of an illustration. In the combination of colors, very different effects are produced by a difference in their selection and juxtaposition; red, green, and white change their shades, according to the contrast to which they are submitted. And, in like manner, the drift and meaning of a branch of knowledge varies with the company in which it is introduced to the student. If his reading is confined simply to one subject, however such division of labor may favor the advancement of a particular pursuit, a point into which I do not here enter, certainly it has a tendency to contract his mind. If it is incorporated with others, it depends on those others as to the kind of influence which it exerts upon him. Thus the Classics, which in England are the means of refining the taste, have in France subserved the spread of revolutionary and deistical doctrines. In Metaphysics, again, Butler's *Analogy of Religion* which has had so much to do with the conversion of members of the University of Oxford, appeared to Pitt and others, who had received a different training, to operate only in the direction of infidelity. And so again, Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, as I think he tells us in the narrative of his life, felt the science of Mathematics to indispose the mind to religious belief, while others see in its investigations the best defence of the Christian Mysteries. In like manner, I suppose, Arcesilas[1] would not have handled logic as Aristotle, nor Aristotle have criticized poets as Plato; yet reasoning and poetry are subject to scientific rules.

It is a great point then to enlarge the range of studies which a University professes, even for the sake of the students; and, though they cannot pursue every subject which is open to them, they will be the gainers by living among those and under those who represent the whole circle. This I conceive to be the advantage of a seat of universal learning, considered as a place of education. An assemblage of learned men, zealous for their own sciences, and rivals of each other, are brought, by familiar intercourse and for the sake of intellectual peace, to adjust together the claims and relations of their respective subjects of investigation. They learn to respect, to consult, to aid each other. Thus is created a pure and clear atmosphere of thought, which the student also breathes, though in his own case he only pursues a few sciences out of the multitude. He profits by an intellectual tradition, which is independent of particular teachers, which guides him in his choice of subjects, and duly interprets for him those which he chooses. He apprehends the great outlines of knowledge, the principles on which it rests, the scale of its parts, its lights and its shades, its great points and its little, as he otherwise cannot apprehend them. Hence it is that his education is called "Liberal." A habit of mind is formed which lasts through life, of which the attributes are, freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom; or what in a former Discourse I have ventured to call a philosophical habit. This then I would assign as the special fruit of the education furnished at a University, as contrasted with other places of teaching or modes of teaching. This is the main purpose of a University in its treatment of its students.

And now the question is asked me, What is the *use* of it? And my answer will constitute the main subject of the Discourses which are to follow.

2

Cautious and practical thinkers, I say, will ask of me, what, after all, is the gain of this Philosophy, of which I make such account, and from which I promise so much. Even supposing it to enable us to give the degree of confidence exactly due to every science respectively, and to estimate precisely the value of every truth which is anywhere to be found, how are we better for this master view of things, which I have been extolling? Does it not reverse the principle of the division of labor? will practical objects be obtained better or worse by its cultivation? to what then does it lead? where does it end? what does it do? how does it profit? what does it promise? Particular sciences are respectively the basis of definite arts, which carry on to results tangible and beneficial the truths which are the subjects of the knowledge attained; what is the Art of this science of sciences? what is the fruit of such a Philosophy? what are we proposing to effect, what inducements do we hold out to the Catholic community, when we set about the enterprise of founding a University?

I am asked what is the end of University Education, and of the Liberal or Philosphical Knowledge which I conceive it to impart: I answer, that

[1] Greek skeptical philosopher (316?-241? B.C.).

what I have already said has been sufficient to show that it has a very tangible, real, and sufficient end, though the end cannot be divided from that knowledge itself. Knowledge is capable of being its own end. Such is the constitution of the human mind, that any kind of knowledge, if it be really such, is its own reward. And if this is true of all knowledge, it is true also of that special Philosophy, which I have made to consist in a comprehensive view of truth in all its branches, of the relations of science to science, of their mutual bearings, and their respective values. What the worth of such an acquirement is, compared with other objects which we seek—wealth or power or honor or the conveniences and comforts of life, I do not profess here to discuss; but I would maintain, and mean to show, that it is an object, in its own nature so really and undeniably good, as to be the compensation of a great deal of thought in the compassing, and a great deal of trouble in the attaining.

Now, when I say that Knowledge is, not merely a means to something beyond it, or the preliminary of certain arts into which it naturally resolves, but an end sufficient to rest in and to pursue for its own sake, surely I am uttering no paradox, for I am stating what is both intelligible in itself, and has ever been the common judgment of philosophers and the ordinary feeling of mankind. I am saying what at least the public opinion of this day ought to be slow to deny, considering how much we have heard of late years, in opposition to Religion, of entertaining, curious, and various knowledge. I am but saying what whole volumes have been written to illustrate, viz., by a "selection from the records of Philosophy, Literature, and Art, in all ages and countries, of a body of examples, to show how the most unpropitious circumstances have been unable to conquer an ardent desire for the acquisition of knowledge." That further advantages accrue to us and redound to others by its possession, over and above what it is in itself, I am very far indeed from denying; but, independent of these, we are satisfying a direct need of our nature in its very acquisition; and, whereas our nature, unlike that of the inferior creation, does not at once reach its perfection, but depends, in order to it, on a number of external aids and appliances, Knowledge, as one of the principal of these, is valuable for what its very presence in us does for us after the manner of a habit, even though it be turned to no further account, nor subserve any direct end.

3

Hence it is that Cicero, in enumerating the various heads of mental excellence, lays down the pursuit of Knowledge for its own sake, as the first of them. "This pertains most of all to human nature," he says, "for we are all of us drawn to the pursuit of Knowledge; in which to excel we consider excellent, whereas to mistake, to err, to be ignorant, to be deceived, is both an evil and a disgrace." And he considers Knowledge the very first object to which we are attracted, after the supply of our physical wants. After the calls and duties of our animal existence, as they may be termed, as regards ourselves, our family, and our neighbors, follows, he tells us, "the search after truth. Accordingly, as soon as we escape from the pressure of necessary cares, forthwith we desire to see, to hear, and to learn; and consider the knowledge of what is hidden or is wonderful a condition of our happiness."

This passage, though it is but one of many similar passages in a multitude of authors, I take for the very reason that it is so familiarly known to us; and I wish you to observe, Gentlemen, how distinctly it separates the pursuit of Knowledge from those ulterior objects to which certainly it can be made to conduce, and which are, I suppose, solely contemplated by the persons who would ask of me the use of a University or Liberal Education. So far from dreaming of the cultivation of Knowledge directly and mainly in order to our physical comfort and enjoyment, for the sake of life and person, of health, of the conjugal and family union, of the social tie and civil security, the great Orator implies, that it is only after our physical and political needs are supplied, and when we are "free from necessary duties and cares," that we are in a condition for "desiring to see, to hear, and to learn." Nor does he contemplate in the least degree the reflex or subsequent action of Knowledge, when acquired, upon those material goods which we set out by securing before we seek it; on the contrary, he expressly denies its bearing upon social life altogether, strange as such a procedure is to those who live after the rise of the Baconian[2] philosophy, and he cautions us against such a cultivation of it as will interfere with our duties to our fellow-creatures. "All these methods," he says, "are engaged in the investigation of truth; by the pursuit of which to be carried

[2] Francis Bacon (cf. Vol. I, pp. 358 ff.) is largely responsible for the experimental method of modern science.

off from public occupations is a transgression of duty. For the praise of virtue lies altogether in action; yet intermissions often occur, and then we recur to such pursuits; not to say that the incessant activity of the mind is vigorous enough to carry us on in the pursuit of knowledge, even without any exertion of our own." The idea of benefiting society by means of "the pursuit of science and knowledge" did not enter at all into the motives which he would assign for their cultivation.

This was the ground of the opposition which the elder Cato made to the introduction of Greek Philosophy among his countrymen, when Carneades[3] and his companions, on occasion of their embassy, were charming the Roman youth with their eloquent expositions of it. The fit representative of a practical people, Cato estimated everything by what it produced; whereas the Pursuit of Knowledge promised nothing beyond Knowledge itself. He despised that refinement or enlargement of mind of which he had no experience.

4

Things, which can bear to be cut off from everything else and yet persist in living, must have life in themselves; pursuits, which issue in nothing, and still maintain their ground for ages, which are regarded as admirable, though they have not as yet proved themselves to be useful, must have their sufficient end in themselves, whatever it turn out to be. And we are brought to the same conclusion by considering the force of the epithet, by which the knowledge under consideration is popularly designated. It is common to speak of "*liberal* knowledge," of the "*liberal* arts and studies," and of a "*liberal* education," as the especial characteristic or property of a University and of a gentleman; what is really meant by the word? Now, first, in its grammatical sense it is opposed to *servile*; and by "servile work" is understood, as our catechisms inform us, bodily labor, mechanical employment, and the like, in which the mind has little or no part. Parallel to such works are those arts, if they deserve the name, of which the poet speaks, which owe their origin and their method to hazard, not to skill; as, for instance, the practice and operations of an empiric. As far as this contrast may be considered as a guide into the meaning of the word, liberal knowledge and liberal pursuits are exercises of mind, of reason, of reflection.

[3] Greek skeptical philosopher (213?-129 B.C.).

But we want something more for its explanation, for there are bodily exercises which are liberal, and mental exercises which are not so. For instance, in ancient times the practitioners in medicine were commonly slaves; yet it was an art as intellectual in its nature, in spite of the pretence, fraud, and quackery with which it might then, as now, be debased, as it was heavenly in its aim. And so in like manner, we contrast a liberal education with a commercial education or a professional; yet no one can deny that commerce and the professions afford scope for the highest and most diversified powers of mind. There is then a great variety of intellectual exercises, which are not technically called "liberal"; on the other hand, I say, there are exercises of the body which do receive that appellation. Such, for instance, was the palæstra,[4] in ancient times; such the Olympic games,[5] in which strength and dexterity of body as well as of mind gained the prize. In Xenophon[6] we read of the young Persian nobility being taught to ride on horseback and to speak the truth; both being among the accomplishments of a gentleman. War, too, however rough a profession, has ever been accounted liberal, unless in cases when it becomes heroic, which would introduce us to another subject.

Now comparing these instances together, we shall have no difficulty in determining the principle of this apparent variation in the application of the term which I am examining. Manly games, or games of skill, or military prowess, though bodily, are, it seems, accounted liberal; on the other hand, what is merely professional, though highly intellectual, nay, though liberal in comparison of trade and manual labor, is not simply called liberal, and mercantile occupations are not liberal at all. Why this distinction? because that alone is liberal knowledge, which stands on its own pretensions, which is independent of sequel, expects no complement, refuses to be *informed* (as it is called) by any end, or absorbed into any art, in order duly to present itself to our contemplation. The most ordinary pursuits have this specific character, if they are self-sufficient and complete; the highest lose it, when they minister to something beyond them. It is absurd to balance, in point of worth and importance, a treatise on reducing fractures with a game of cricket or a

[4] gymnastic school.

[5] Cf. Vol. II, p. 14.

[6] *The Cyropaedia* of Xenophon, a Greek writer of history and philosophy (430?-357? B.C.).

fox-chase; yet of the two the bodily exercise has that quality which we call "liberal," and the intellectual has it not. And so of the learned professions altogether, considered merely as professions; although one of them be the most popularly beneficial, and another the most politically important, and the third the most intimately divine of all human pursuits, yet the very greatness of their end, the health of the body, or of the commonwealth, or of the soul, diminishes, not increases, their claim to the appellation "liberal," and that still more, if they are cut down to the strict exigencies of that end. If, for instance, Theology, instead of being cultivated as a contemplation, be limited to the purposes of the pulpit or be represented by the catechism, it loses—not its usefulness, not its divine character, not its meritoriousness (rather it increases these qualities by such charitable condescension)—but it does lose the particular attribute which I am illustrating; just as a face worn by tears and fasting loses its beauty, or a laborer's hand loses its delicateness;—for Theology thus exercised is not simple knowledge, but rather is an art or a business making use of Theology. And thus it appears that even what is supernatural need not be liberal, nor need a hero be a gentleman, for the plain reason that one idea is not another idea. And in like manner the Baconian Philosophy, by using its physical sciences in the service of man, does thereby transfer them from the order of Liberal Pursuits to, I do not say the inferior, but the distinct class of the Useful. And, to take a different instance, hence again, as is evident, whenever personal gain is the motive, still more distinctive an effect has it upon the character of a given pursuit; thus racing, which was a liberal exercise in Greece, forfeits its rank in times like these, so far as it is made the occasion of gambling.

All that I have been now saying is summed up in a few characteristic words of the great Philosopher. "Of possessions," he says, "those rather are useful, which bear fruit; those *liberal, which tend to enjoyment.* By fruitful, I mean, which yield revenue; by enjoyable, where *nothing accrues of consequence beyond the use.*"[6a]

5

Do not suppose, Gentlemen, that in thus appealing to the ancients, I am throwing back the world two thousand years, and fettering Philosophy with the reasonings of paganism. While the world lasts, will Aristotle's doctrine on these matters last, for he is the oracle of nature and of truth. While we are men, we cannot help, to a great extent, being Aristotelians, for the great Master does but analyze the thoughts, feelings, views, and opinions of human kind. He has told us the meaning of our own words and ideas, before we were born. In many subject-matters, to think correctly, is to think like Aristotle; and we are his disciples whether we will or no, though we may not know it. Now, as to the particular instance before us, the word "liberal" as applied to Knowledge and Education, expresses a specific idea, which ever has been, and ever will be, while the nature of man is the same, just as the idea of the Beautiful is specific, or of the Sublime, or of the Ridiculous, or of the Sordid. It is in the world now, it was in the world then; and, as in the case of the dogmas of faith, it is illustrated by a continuous historical tradition, and never was out of the world, from the time it came into it. There have indeed been differences of opinion from time to time, as to what pursuits and what arts came under that idea, but such differences are but an additional evidence of its reality. That idea must have a substance in it, which has maintained its ground amid these conflicts and changes, which has ever served as a standard to measure things withal, which has passed from mind to mind unchanged, when there was so much to color, so much to influence any notion or thought whatever, which was not founded in our very nature. Were it a mere generalization, it would have varied with the subjects from which it was generalized; but though its subjects vary with the age, it varies not itself. The palæstra may seem a liberal exercise to Lycurgus,[7] and illiberal to Seneca;[8] coach-driving and prize-fighting may be recognized in Elis,[9] and be condemned in England; music may be despicable in the eyes of certain moderns, and be in the highest place with Aristotle and Plato—(and the case is the same in the particular application of the idea of Beauty, or of Goodness, or of Moral Virtue, there is a difference of tastes, a difference of judgments)—still these variations imply, instead of discrediting, the archetypal idea, which is but a previous hypothesis or condition, by means of which issue is joined between contending opinions, and without which there would be nothing to dispute about.

I consider, then, that I am chargeable with no

[6a] Aristot., *Rhet.* I, 5. (Newman.)

[7] Lycurgus (c. 396-325 B.C.), who reconstructed the gymnasium in the Lyceum.

[8] Roman philosopher (4 B.C.- 65 A.D.).

[9] the district in Greece where the Olympian games were held

paradox, when I speak of a Knowledge which is its own end, when I call it liberal knowledge, or a gentleman's knowledge, when I educate for it, and make it the scope of a University. And still less am I incurring such a charge, when I make this acquisition consist, not in Knowledge in a vague and ordinary sense, but in that Knowledge which I have especially called Philosophy or, in an extended sense of the word, Science; for whatever claims Knowledge has to be considered as a good, these it has in a higher degree when it is viewed not vaguely, not popularly, but precisely and transcendently as Philosophy. Knowledge, I say, is then especially liberal, or sufficient for itself, apart from every external and ulterior object, when and so far as it is philosophical, and this I proceed to show.

6

Now bear with me, Gentlemen, if what I am about to say, has at first sight a fanciful appearance. Philosophy, then, or Science, is related to Knowledge in this way:—Knowledge is called by the name of Science or Philosophy, when it is acted upon, informed, or if I may use a strong figure, impregnated by Reason. Reason is the principle of that intrinsic fecundity of Knowledge, which, to those who possess it, is its especial value, and which dispenses with the necessity of their looking abroad for any end to rest upon external to itself. Knowledge, indeed, when thus exalted into a scientific form, is also power; not only is it excellent in itself, but whatever such excellence may be, it is something more, it has a result beyond itself. Doubtless; but that is a further consideration, with which I am not concerned. I only say that, prior to its being a power, it is a good; that it is, not only an instrument, but an end. I know well it may resolve itself into an art, and terminate in a mechanical process, and in tangible fruit; but it also may fall back upon that Reason, which informs it, and resolve itself into Philosophy. In one case it is called Useful Knowledge, in the other Liberal. The same person may cultivate it in both ways at once; but this again is a matter foreign to my subject; here I do but say that there are two ways of using Knowledge, and in matter of fact those who use it in one way are not likely to use it in the other, or at least in a very limited measure. You see, then, here are two methods of Education; the end of the one is, to be philosophical, of the other to be mechanical; the one rises towards general ideas, the other is exhausted upon what is particular and external. Let me not be thought to deny the necessity, or to decry the benefit, of such attention to what is particular and practical, as belongs to the useful or mechanical arts; life could not go on without them; we owe our daily welfare to them; their exercise is the duty of the many, and we owe to the many a debt of gratitude for fulfilling that duty. I only say that Knowledge, in proportion as it tends more and more to be particular, ceases to be Knowledge. It is a question whether Knowledge can in any proper sense be predicated of the brute creation; without pretending to metaphysical exactness of phraseology, which would be unsuitable to an occasion like this, I say, it seems to me improper to call that passive sensation, or perception of things which brutes seem to possess, by the name of Knowledge. When I speak of Knowledge, I mean something intellectual, something which grasps what it perceives through the senses; something which takes a view of things; which sees more than the senses convey; which reasons upon what it sees, and while it sees; which invests it with an idea. It expresses itself, not in a mere enunciation but by an enthymeme: it is of the nature of science from the first, and in this consists its dignity. The principle of real dignity in Knowledge, its worth, its desirableness, considered irrespectively of its results, is this germ within it of a scientific or a philosophical process. This is how it comes to be an end in itself; this is why it admits of being called Liberal. Not to know the relative disposition of things is the state of slaves or children; to have mapped out the Universe is the boast, or at least the ambition, of Philosophy.

Moreover, such knowledge is not a mere extrinsic or accidental advantage, which is ours to-day and another's to-morrow, which may be got up from a book, and easily forgotten again, which we can command or communicate at our pleasure, which we can borrow for the occasion, carry about in our hand, and take into the market; it is an acquired illumination, it is a habit, a personal possession, and an inward endowment. And this is the reason, why it is more correct, as well as more usual, to speak of a University as a place of education, than of instruction, though, when knowledge is concerned, instruction would at first sight have seemed the more appropriate word. We are instructed, for instance, in manual exercises, in the fine and useful arts, in trades, and in ways of business; for these are methods, which have little or no effect upon the mind itself, are contained in rules committed to memory, to tradition, or to use, and bear upon an

end external to themselves. But education is a higher word; it implies an action upon our mental nature, and the formation of a character; it is something individual and permanent, and is commonly spoken of in connection with religion and virtue. When, then, we speak of the communication of Knowledge as being Education, we thereby really imply that that Knowledge is a state or condition of mind; and since cultivation of mind is surely worth seeking for its own sake, we are thus brought once more to the conclusion, which the word "Liberal" and the word "Philosophy" have already suggested, that there is a Knowledge, which is desirable, though nothing come of it, as being of itself a treasure, and a sufficient remuneration of years of labor.

7

This, then, is the answer which I am prepared to give to the question with which I opened this Discourse. Before going on to speak of the object of the Church in taking up Philosophy, and the uses to which she puts it, I am prepared to maintain that Philosophy is its own end, and, as I conceive, I have now begun proving it. I am prepared to maintain that there is a knowledge worth possessing for what it is, and not merely for what it does; and what minutes remain to me to-day I shall devote to the removal of some portion of the indistinctness and confusion with which the subject may in some minds be surrounded.

It may be objected then, that, when we profess to seek Knowledge for some end or other beyond itself, whatever it be, we speak intelligibly; but that, whatever men may have said, however obstinately the idea may have kept its ground from age to age, still it is simply unmeaning to say that we seek Knowledge for its own sake, and for nothing else; for that it ever leads to something beyond itself, which therefore is its end, and the cause why it is desirable;—moreover, that this end is twofold, either of this world or of the next; that all knowledge is cultivated either for secular objects or for eternal; that if it is directed to secular objects, it is called Useful Knowledge, if to eternal, Religious or Christian Knowledge;—in consequence, that if, as I have allowed, this Liberal Knowledge does not benefit the body or estate, it ought to benefit the soul; but if the fact be really so, that it is neither a physical or a secular good on the one hand, nor a moral good on the other, it cannot be a good at all, and is not worth the trouble which is necessary for its acquisition.

And then I may be reminded that the professors of this Liberal or Philosophical Knowledge have themselves, in every age, recognized this exposition of the matter, and have submitted to the issue in which it terminates; for they have ever been attempting to make men virtuous; or, if not, at least have assumed that refinement of mind was virtue, and that they themselves were the virtuous portion of mankind. This they have professed on the one hand; and on the other, they have utterly failed in their professions, so as ever to make themselves a proverb among men, and a laughing-stock both to the grave and the dissipated portion of mankind, in consequence of them. Thus they have furnished against themselves both the ground and the means of their own exposure, without any trouble at all to any one else. In a word, from the time that Athens was the University of the world, what has Philosophy taught men, but to promise without practising, and to aspire without attaining? What has the deep and lofty thought of its disciples ended in but eloquent words? Nay, what has its teaching ever meditated, when it was boldest in its remedies for human ill, beyond charming us to sleep by its lessons, that we might feel nothing at all? like some melodious air, or rather like those strong and transporting perfumes, which at first spread their sweetness over everything they touch, but in a little while do but offend in proportion as they once pleased us. Did Philosophy support Cicero[10] under the disfavor of the fickle populace, or nerve Seneca to oppose an imperial tyrant?[11] It abandoned Brutus,[12] as he sorrowfully confessed, in his greatest need, and it forced Cato,[13] as his panegyrist strangely boasts, into the false position of defying heaven. How few can be counted among its professors, who, like Polemo,[14] were thereby converted from a profligate course, or like Anaxagoras,[15] thought the world well lost in exchange for its possession? The philosopher in *Rasselas*[16] taught a superhuman doctrine, and then succumbed without an effort to a trial of human affection.

"He discoursed," we are told, "with great energy on the government of the passions. His look was

[10] Cicero, the great Roman orator and statesman (106-43 B.C.), lost his life in the disorders of the revolt against Julius Caesar.

[11] the Emperor Nero.

[12] the leader of the conspiracy against Julius Caesar in 44 B.C.

[13] Roman statesman, general and writer (234-149 B.C.).

[14] Athenian philosopher (d. 273 B.C.).

[15] Greek philosopher (500?-428? B.C.).

[16] Cf. Vol. I, pp. 761 ff.

venerable, his action graceful, his pronunciation clear, and his diction elegant. He showed, with great strength of sentiment and variety of illustration, that human nature is degraded and debased, when the lower faculties predominate over the higher. He communicated the various precepts given, from time to time, for the conquest of passion, and displayed the happiness of those who had obtained the important victory, after which man is no longer the slave of fear, nor the fool of hope. . . . He enumerated many examples of heroes immovable by pain or pleasure, who looked with indifference on those modes or accidents to which the vulgar give the names of good and evil."

Rasselas in a few days found the philosopher in a room half darkened, with his eyes misty, and his face pale. "Sir," said he, "you have come at a time when all human friendship is useless; what I suffer cannot be remedied, what I have lost cannot be supplied. My daughter, my only daughter, from whose tenderness I expected all the comforts of my age, died last night of a fever." "Sir," said the prince, "mortality is an event by which a wise man can never be surprised; we know that death is always near, and it should therefore always be expected." "Young man," answered the philosopher, "you speak like one who has never felt the pangs of separation." "Have you, then, forgot the precept," said Rasselas, "which you so powerfully enforced? . . . consider that external things are naturally variable, but truth and reason are always the same." "What comfort," said the mourner, "can truth and reason afford me? Of what effect are they now, but to tell me that my daughter will not be restored?"

8

Better, far better, to make no professions, you will say, than to cheat others with what we are not, and to scandalize them with what we are. The sensualist, or the man of the world, at any rate is not the victim of fine words, but pursues a reality and gains it. The Philosophy of Utility, you will say, Gentlemen, has at least done its work; and I grant it,—it aimed low, but it has fulfilled its aim. If that man of great intellect[17] who has been its Prophet in the conduct of life played false to his own professions, he was not bound by his philosophy to be true to his friend or faithful in his trust. Moral virtue was not the line in which he undertook to instruct men; and though, as the poet calls him, he were the "meanest" of mankind, he was so in what may be called his private capacity, and without any prejudice to the theory of induction. He had a right to be so, if he chose, for anything that the Idols of the den or the theatre had to say to the contrary. His mission was the increase of physical enjoyment and social comfort[17a]; and most wonderfully, most awfully has he fulfilled his conception and his design. Almost day by day have we fresh and fresh shoots, and buds, and blossoms, which are to ripen into fruit, on that magical tree of Knowledge which he planted, and to which none of us perhaps, except the very poor, but owes, if not his present life, at least his daily food, his health, and general well-being. He was the divinely provided minister of temporal benefits to all of us so great, that, whatever I am forced to think of him as a man, I have not the heart, from mere gratitude, to speak of him severely. And, in spite of the tendencies of his philosophy, which are, as we see at this day, to depreciate, or to trample on Theology, he has himself, in his writings, gone out of his way, as if with a prophetic misgiving of those tendencies, to insist on it as the instrument of that beneficent Father,[18] who, when He came on earth in visible form, took on Him first and most prominently the office of assuaging the bodily wounds of human nature. And truly, like the old mediciner in the tale, "he sat diligently at his work, and hummed, with cheerful countenance, a pious song;" and then in turn "went out singing into the meadows so gaily, that those who had seen him from afar might well have thought it was a youth gathering flowers for his beloved, instead of an old physician gathering healing herbs in the morning dew."[19]

Alas, that men, in the action of life or in their heart of hearts, are not what they seem to be in their moments of excitement, or in their trances or intoxications of genius—so good, so noble, so serene! Alas, that Bacon too in his own way should after all be but the fellow of those heathen philosophers who in their disadvantages had some excuse for their inconsistency, and who surprise us rather in what they did say than in what they did not do! Alas, that he too, like Socrates or Seneca, must be stripped of his holy-day coat, which looks so fair, and should be but a mockery amid his most majestic gravity of

[17] Francis Bacon; cf. Vol. I, p. 358.

[17a] It will be seen that on the whole I agree with Lord Macaulay in his Essay on Bacon's Philosophy. I do not know whether he would agree with me. (Newman.)

[18] Cf. Bacon's *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, IV, 2.

[19] from *The Unknown Patient* by Friedrich Fouqué (1777-1843), German author.

phrase; and, for all his vast abilities, should, in the littleness of his own moral being, but typify the intellectual narrowness of his school! However, granting all this, heroism after all was not his philosophy: I cannot deny he has abundantly achieved what he proposed. His is simply a Method whereby bodily discomforts and temporal wants are to be most effectually removed from the greatest number; and already, before it has shown any signs of exhaustion, the gifts of nature, in their most artificial shapes and luxurious profusion and diversity, from all quarters of the earth, are, it is undeniable, by its means brought even to our doors, and we rejoice in them.

9

Useful Knowledge then, I grant, has done its work; and Liberal Knowledge as certainly has not done its work—supposing, that is, as the objectors assume, its direct end, like Religious Knowledge, is to make men better; but this I will not for an instant allow, and unless I allow it, those objectors have said nothing to the purpose. I admit, rather I maintain, what they have been urging, for I consider Knowledge to have its end in itself. For all its friends, or its enemies, may say, I insist upon it, that it is as real a mistake to burden it with virtue or religion as with the mechanical arts. Its direct business is not to steel the soul against temptation, or to console it in affliction, any more than to set the loom in motion, or to direct the steam carriage; be it ever so much the means or the condition of both material and moral advancement, still, taken by and in itself, it as little mends our hearts as it improves our temporal circumstances. And if its eulogists claim for it such a power, they commit the very same kind of encroachment on a province not their own as the political economist who should maintain that his science educated him for casuistry or diplomacy. Knowledge is one thing, virtue is another; good sense is not conscience, refinement is not humility, nor is largeness and justness of view faith. Philosophy, however enlightened, however profound, gives no command over the passions, no influential motives, no vivifying principles. Liberal Education makes not the Christian, not the Catholic, but the gentleman. It is well to be a gentleman, it is well to have a cultivated intellect, a delicate taste, a candid, equitable, dispassionate mind, a noble and courteous bearing in the conduct of life;—these are the connatural qualities of a large knowledge; they are the objects of a University; I am advocating, I shall illustrate and insist upon them; but still, I repeat, they are no guarantee for sanctity or even for conscientiousness, they may attach to the man of the world, to the profligate, to the heartless—pleasant, alas, and attractive as he shows when decked out in them. Taken by themselves, they do but seem to be what they are not; they look like virtue at a distance, but they are detected by close observers, and on the long run; and hence it is that they are popularly accused of pretence and hypocrisy, not, I repeat, from their own fault, but because their professors and their admirers persist in taking them for what they are not, and are officious in arrogating for them a praise to which they have no claim. Quarry the granite rock with razors, or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then may you hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against these giants, the passion and the pride of man.

Surely we are not driven to theories of this kind in order to vindicate the value and dignity of Liberal Knowledge. Surely the real grounds on which its pretensions rest are not so very subtle or abstruse, so very strange or improbable. Surely it is very intelligible to say, and that is what I say here, that Liberal Education, viewed in itself, is simply the cultivation of the intellect as such, and its object is nothing more or less than intellectual excellence. Every thing has its own perfection, be it higher or lower in the scale of things; and the perfection of one is not the perfection of another. Things animate, inanimate, visible, invisible, all are good in their kind, and have a *best* of themselves, which is an object of pursuit. Why do you take such pains with your garden or your park? You see to your walks and turf and shrubberies; to your trees and drives; not as if you meant to make an orchard of the one, or corn or pasture land of the other, but because there is a special beauty in all that is goodly in wood, water, plain, and slope, brought all together by art into one shape, and grouped into one whole. Your cities are beautiful, your palaces, your public buildings, your territorial mansions, your churches; and their beauty leads to nothing beyond itself. There is a physical beauty and a moral: there is a beauty of person, there is a beauty of our moral being, which is natural virtue; and in like manner there is a beauty, there is a perfection, of the intellect. There is an ideal perfection in these various subject-matters, towards which individual instances are seen to rise, and which are the standards for all instances whatever. The Greek divinities and demi-

gods, as the statuary has molded them, with their symmetry of figure, and their high forehead and their regular features, are the perfection of physical beauty. The heroes, of whom history tells, Alexander, or Cæsar, or Scipio, or Saladin, are the representatives of that magnanimity or self-mastery which is the greatness of human nature. Christianity too has its heroes, and in the supernatural order, and we call them Saints. The artist puts before him beauty of feature and form; the poet, beauty of mind; the preacher, the beauty of grace: then intellect too, I repeat, has its beauty, and it has those who aim at it. To open the mind, to correct it, to refine it, to enable it to know, and to digest, master, rule, and use its knowledge, to give it power over its own faculties, application, flexibility, method, critical exactness, sagacity, resource, address, eloquent expression, is an object as intelligible (for here we are inquiring, not what the object of a Liberal Education is worth, nor what use the Church makes of it, but what it is in itself), I say, an object as intelligible as the cultivation of virtue, while, at the same time, it is absolutely distinct from it.

10

This indeed is but a temporal object, and a transitory possession: but so are other things in themselves which we make much of and pursue. The moralist will tell us that man, in all his functions, is but a flower which blossoms and fades, except so far as a higher principle breathes upon him, and makes him and what he is immortal. Body and mind are carried on into an eternal state of being by the gifts of Divine Munificence; but at first they do but fail in a failing world; and if the powers of intellect decay, the powers of the body have decayed before them, and, as an Hospital or an Almshouse, though its end be ephemeral, may be sanctified to the service of religion, so surely may a University, even were it nothing more than I have as yet described it. We attain to heaven by using this world well, though it is to pass away; we perfect our nature, not by undoing it, but by adding to it what is more than nature, and directing it towards aims higher than its own.

(1852)

From *Apologia pro Vita Sua*

Newman wrote his *Apologia* with intensity, sometimes for as many as twenty-two hours at a stretch. It must have cost him much to pen it, for he was not only defending himself against Kingsley's attacks, but living over his Oxford days. A friend records that Newman was frequently in tears over the "well nigh impossibly painful task of public confession." But the *Apologia* is accurate and never bitter, self-indulgent, or egoistical. Kingsley was forced to acknowledge that he had "crossed swords with one who was too strong for him."

Chapter V. *The Infallibility of the Church*

Starting, then, with the being of a God (which, as I have said, is as certain to me as the certainty of my own existence, though when I try to put the grounds of that certainty into logical shape I find a difficulty in doing so in mood and figure to my satisfaction), I look out of myself into the world of men, and there I see a sight which fills me with unspeakable distress. The world seems simply to give the lie to that great truth, of which my whole being is so full; and the effect upon me is, in consequence, as a matter of necessity, as confusing as if it denied that I am in existence myself. If I looked into a mirror and did not see my face, I should have the sort of feeling which actually comes upon me when I look into this living, busy world and see no reflection of its Creator. This is to me one of those great difficulties of this absolute primary truth, to which I referred just now. Were it not for this voice, speaking so clearly in my conscience and my heart, I should be an atheist or a pantheist or a polytheist when I looked into the world. I am speaking for myself only, and I am far from denying the real force of the arguments in proof of a God, drawn from the general facts of human society and the course of history; but these do not warm me or enlighten me; they do not take away the winter of my desolation, or make the buds unfold and the leaves grow within me, and my moral

being rejoice. The sight of the world is nothing else than the prophet's scroll, full of "lamentations and mourning and woe."[1]

To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, and many races of man, their starts, their fortunes, their mutual alienation, their conflicts; and then their ways, habits, governments, forms of worship; their enterprises, their aimless courses, their random achievements and acquirements; the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts, the tokens so faint and broken of a superintending design, the blind evolution of what turn out to be great powers or truths, the progress of things as if from unreasoning elements, not towards final causes; the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration, the curtain hung over his futurity; the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish; the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary, hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race so fearfully yet exactly described in the apostle's words, "having no hope and without God in the world,"—all this is a vision to dizzy and appal, and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery which is absolutely beyond human solution.

What shall be said to this heart-piercing, reason-bewildering fact? I can only answer that either there is no Creator, or this living society of men is in a true sense discarded from His presence. Did I see a boy of good make and mind, with the tokens on him of a refined nature, cast upon the world without provision, unable to say whence he came, his birthplace or his family connections, I should conclude that there was some mystery connected with his history, and that he was one of whom, from one cause or other, his parents were ashamed. Thus only should I be able to account for the contrast between the promise and the condition of his being. And so I argue about the world:—*If* there be a God, *since* there is a God, the human race is implicated in some terrible aboriginal calamity. It is out of joint with the purposes of its Creator. This is a fact, a fact as true as the fact of its existence; and thus the doctrine of what is theologically called original sin becomes to me almost as certain as that the world exists, and as the existence of God.

And now, supposing it were the blessed and loving will of the Creator to interfere in this anarchical condition of things, what are we to suppose would be the methods which might be necessarily or naturally involved in His purpose of mercy? Since the world is in so abnormal a state, surely it would be no surprise to me if the interposition were of necessity equally extraordinary—or what is called miraculous. But that subject does not directly come into the scope of my present remarks. Miracles as evidence involve a process of reason, or an argument; and of course I am thinking of some mode of interference which does not immediately run into argument. I am rather asking what must be the face-to-face antagonist by which to withstand and baffle the fierce energy of passion and the all-corroding, all-dissolving skepticism of the intellect in religious inquiries? I have no intention at all of denying that truth is the real object of our reason, and that if it does not attain to truth, either the premise or the process is in fault; but I am not speaking here of right reason, but of reason as it acts in fact and concretely in fallen man. I know that even the unaided reason, when correctly exercised, leads to a belief in God, in the immortality of the soul, and in a future retribution; but I am considering the faculty of reason actually and historically, and in this point of view I do not think I am wrong in saying that its tendency is towards a simple unbelief in matters of religion. No truth, however sacred, can stand against it in the long run; and hence it is that in the pagan world, when our Lord came, the last traces of the religious knowledge of former times were all but disappearing from those portions of the world in which the intellect had been active, and had had a career.

And in these latter days, in like manner, outside the Catholic Church things are tending—with far greater rapidity than in that old time, from the circumstance of the age—to atheism in one shape or other. What a scene, what a prospect, does the whole of Europe present at this day! and not only Europe, but every government and every civilization through the world, which is under the influence of the European mind! Especially (for it most concerns us) how sorrowful, in the view of religion, even taken in its most elementary, most attenuated form, is the spectacle presented to us by the educated intellect of England, France, and Germany! Lovers of their country and of their race, religious men, external to the Catholic Church, have attempted various expedients to arrest fierce, wilful human nature in its onward course and to bring it into subjection. The necessity of some form of religion for the interests of humanity has been

[1] *Ezekiel*, 2:10.

generally acknowledged; but where was the concrete representative of things invisible, which would have the force and the toughness necessary to be a breakwater against the deluge? Three centuries ago the establishment of religion, material, legal, and social, was generally adopted as the best expedient for the purpose, in those countries which separated from the Catholic Church; and for a long time it was successful; but now the crevices of those establishment are admitting the enemy. Thirty years ago education was relied upon; ten years ago there was a hope that wars would cease forever, under the influence of commercial enterprise and the reign of the useful and fine arts; but will any one venture to say that there is anything anywhere on this earth which will afford a fulcrum for us, whereby to keep the earth from moving onwards?

The judgment which experience passes, whether on establishments or on education, as a means of maintaining religious truth in this anarchical world, must be extended even to Scripture, though Scripture be divine. Experience proves surely that the Bible does not answer a purpose for which it was never intended. It may be accidentally the means of the conversion of individuals; but a book, after all, cannot make a stand against the wild, living intellect of man, and in this day it begins to testify, as regards its own structure and contents, to the power of that universal solvent which is so successfully acting upon religious establishments.

Supposing, then, it to be the will of the Creator to interfere in human affairs, and to make provisions for retaining in the world a knowledge of Himself so definite and distinct as to be proof against the energy of human skepticism, in such a case,—I am far from saying that there was no other way,—but there is nothing to surprise the mind if He should think fit to introduce a power into the world, invested with the prerogative of infallibility in religious matters. Such a provision would be a direct, immediate, active, and prompt means of withstanding the difficulty; it would be an instrument suited to the need; and when I find that this is the very claim of the Catholic Church, not only do I feel no difficulty in admitting the idea, but there is a fitness in it which recommends it to my mind. And thus I am brought to speak of the Church's infallibility as a provision adapted by the mercy of the Creator to preserve religion in the world, and to restrain that freedom of thought which of course in itself is one of the greatest of our natural gifts, and to rescue it from its own suicidal excesses. And let it be observed that, neither here nor in what follows, shall I have occasion to speak directly of Revelation in its subject-matter, but in reference to the sanction which it gives to truths which may be known independently of it—as it bears upon the defence of natural religion. I say that a power possessed of infallibility in religious teaching is happily adapted to be a working instrument, in the course of human affairs, for smiting hard and throwing back the immense energy of the aggressive, capricious, untrustworthy intellect:—and in saying this, as in the other things that I have to say, it must still be recollected that I am all along bearing in mind my main purpose, which is a defence of myself.

I am defending myself here from a plausible charge brought against Catholics, as will be seen better as I proceed. The charge is this: that I, as a Catholic, not only make profession to hold doctrines which I cannot possibly believe in my heart, but that I also believe in the existence of a power on earth which at its own will imposes upon men any new set of *credenda*,[2] when it pleases, by a claim to infallibility; in consequence, that my own thoughts are not my own property; that I cannot tell that to-morrow I may not have to give up what I hold to-day; and that the necessary effect of such a condition of mind must be a degrading bondage, or a bitter inward rebellion relieving itself in secret infidelity, or the necessity of ignoring the whole subject of religion in a sort of disgust, and of mechanically saying everything that the Church says, and leaving to others the defence of it. As, then, I have above spoken of the relation of my mind towards the Catholic creed, so now I shall speak of the attitude which it takes up in the view of the Church's infallibility.

And, first, the initial doctrine of the infallible teacher must be an emphatic protest against the existing state of mankind. Mankind had rebelled against his Maker. It was this that caused the divine interposition, and to proclaim it must be the first act of the divinely-accredited messenger. The Church must denounce rebellion as of all possible evils the greatest. She must have no terms with it; if she would be true to her Master, she must ban and anathematize it. This is the meaning of a statement of mine which has furnished matter for one of those special accusations to which I am at present replying: I have, however, no fault at all to confess in regard to it; I have nothing to withdraw, and in consequence I here deliberately repeat it. I said, "The Catholic Church holds it better for the sun

[2] doctrines to be believed.

and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions on it to die of starvation in extremest agony, as far as temporal affliction goes, than that one soul, I will not say should be lost, but should commit one single venial sin, should tell one wilful untruth, or should steal one poor farthing without excuse." I think the principle here enunciated to be the mere preamble in the formal credentials of the Catholic Church, as an act of Parliament might begin with a "Whereas." It is because of the intensity of the evil which has possession of mankind, that a suitable antagonist has been provided against it; and the initial act of that divinely-commissioned power is of course to deliver her challenge and to defy the enemy. Such a preamble, then, gives a meaning to her position in the world, and an interpretation to her whole course of teaching and action.

In like manner she has ever put forth, with most energetic distinctness, those other great elementary truths which either are an explanation of her mission or give a character to her work. She does not teach that human nature is irreclaimable, else wherefore should she be sent? not that it is to be shattered and reversed, but to be extricated, purified, and restored; not that it is a mere mass of hopeless evil, but that it has the promise upon it of great things, and even now, in its present state of disorder and excess, has a virtue and a praise proper to itself. But in the next place, she knows and she preaches that such a restoration as she aims at effecting in it must be brought about, not simply through certain outward provisions of preaching and teaching, even though they be her own, but from an inward spiritual power or grace imparted directly from above, and of which she is the channel. She has it in charge to rescue human nature from its misery, but not simply by restoring it on its own level, but by lifting it up to a higher level than its own. She recognizes in it real moral excellence though degraded, but she cannot set it free from earth except by exalting it towards heaven. It was for this end that a renovating grace was put into her hands; and therefore, from the nature of the gift, as well as from the reasonableness of the case, she goes on, as a further point, to insist that all true conversion must begin with the first springs of thought, and to teach that each individual man must be in his own person one whole and perfect temple of God, while he is also one of the living stones which build up a visible religious community. . . . (1864)

From *The Dream of Gerontius*

Although Cardinal Newman's prose has overshadowed his verse, he was the author of many fine poems. Of them only *Lead, Kindly Light,* written on his return from Italy, is well known. His most ambitious poetical work, *The Dream of Gerontius,* maintains a high level of lyric utterance. A series of connected stanzas, in which the rhythm changes with the thought, the poem, presented in dialogue, is a meditation on death and on the state of the soul after death. It is an inspired expression of Newman's hard-won Catholicism.

GERONTIUS

Jesu, Maria—I am near to death,
And Thou art calling me; I know it now—
Not by the token of this faltering breath,
This chill at heart, this dampness on my brow,
(Jesu, have mercy! Mary, pray for me!)—
'Tis this new feeling, never felt before,
(Be with me, Lord, in my extremity!)
That I am going, that I am no more.
'Tis this strange innermost abandonment,
(Lover of souls! great God! I look to Thee,)
This emptying out of each constituent
And natural force, by which I come to be.

Pray for me, O my friends; a visitant
Is knocking his dire summons at my door,
The like of whom, to scare me and to daunt,
Has never, never come to me before;
'Tis death,—O loving friends, your prayers!—'tis he! . . .
As though my very being had given way,
As though I was no more a substance now,
And could fall back on nought to be my stay,
(Help, loving Lord! Thou my sole Refuge, Thou,)
And turn no whither, but must needs decay
And drop from out the universal frame
Into that shapeless, scopeless, blank abyss,

That utter nothingness, of which I came:
This is it that has come to pass in me;
O horror! this it is, my dearest, this;
So pray for me, my friends, who have not strength
to pray. . . .

I can no more; for now it comes again,
That sense of ruin, which is worse than pain,
That masterful negation and collapse
Of all that makes me man; as though I bent
Over the dizzy brink
Of some sheer infinite descent;
Or worse, as though
Down, down for ever I was falling through
The solid framework of created things,
And needs must sink and sink
Into the vast abyss. And, crueller still,
A fierce and restless fright begins to fill
The mansion of my soul. And, worse and worse,
Some bodily form of ill
Floats on the wind, with many a loathsome curse
Tainting the hallowed air, and laughs, and flaps
Its hideous wings,
And makes me wild with horror and dismay.
O Jesu, help! pray for me Mary, pray!
Some angel, Jesu! such as came to Thee
In Thine own agony. . . .
Mary, pray for me. Joseph, pray for me.
Mary, pray for me. . . .

Soul of Gerontius

I went to sleep; and now I am refreshed.
A strange refreshment: for I feel in me
An inexpressive lightness, and a sense
Of freedom, as I were at length myself,
And ne'er had been before. How still it is!
I hear no more the busy beat of time,
No, nor my fluttering breath, nor struggling pulse;
Nor does one moment differ from the next.
I had a dream; yes:—some one softly said
"He's gone"; and then a sigh went round the
room.
And then I surely heard a priestly voice
Cry "Subvenite"[1]; and they knelt in prayer.
I seem to hear him still; but thin and low,
And fainter and more faint the accents come,
As at an ever-widening interval.
Ah! whence is this? What is this severance?
This silence pours a solitariness
Into the very essence of my soul;
And the deep rest, so soothing and so sweet,
Hath something too of sternness and of pain,
For it drives back my thoughts upon their spring
By a strange introversion, and perforce
I now begin to feed upon myself,
Because I have nought else to feed upon.

Am I alive or dead? I am not dead,
But in the body still; for I possess
A sort of confidence which clings to me,
That each particular organ holds its place
As heretofore, combining with the rest
Into one symmetry, that wraps me round,
And makes me man; and surely I could move,
Did I but will it, every part of me.
And yet I cannot to my sense bring home,
By very trial, that I have the power.
'Tis strange; I cannot stir a hand or foot,
I cannot make my fingers or my lips
By mutual pressure witness each to each,
Nor by the eyelid's instantaneous stroke
Assure myself I have a body still.
Nor do I know my very attitude,
Nor if I stand, or lie, or sit, or kneel.

So much I know, not knowing how I know,
That the vast universe, where I have dwelt,
Is quitting me, or I am quitting it.
Or I or it is rushing on the wings
Of light or lightning on an onward course,
And we e'en now are million miles apart.
Yet . . . is this peremptory severance
Wrought out in lengthening measurements of
space,
Which grow and multiply by speed and me?
Or am I traversing infinity
By endless subdivision, hurrying back
From finite towards infinitesimal,
Thus dying out of the expansed world? . . .

Angel

. . . Praise to His Name!
The eager spirit has darted from my hold,
And, with the intemperate energy of love,
Flies to the dear feet of Emmanuel;
But, ere it reach them, the keen sanctity,
Which with its effluence, like a glory, clothes
And circles round the Crucified, has seized,
And scorched, and shrivelled it; and now it lies
Passive and still before the awful Throne.
O happy, suffering soul! for it is safe,
Consumed, yet quickened, by the glance of God.

[1] come to our assistance.

SOUL

Take me away, and in the lowest deep
  There let me be,
And there in hope the lone night-watches keep,
  Told out for me.
There, motionless and happy in my pain,
  Lone, not forlorn,—
There will I sing my sad perpetual strain,
  Until the morn.
There will I sing, and soothe my stricken breast,
  Which ne'er can cease
To throb, and pine, and languish, till possest
  Of its Sole Peace.
There will I sing my absent Lord and Love:—
  Take me away,
That sooner I may rise, and go above,
And see Him in the truth of everlasting day.

ANGEL

Now let the golden prison ope its gates,
Making sweet music, as each fold revolves
Upon its ready hinge. And ye great powers,
Angels of Purgatory, receive from me
My charge, a precious soul, until the day,
When, from all bond and forfeiture released,
I shall reclaim it for the courts of light. . . .

ANGEL

Softly and gently, dearly-ransomed soul,
  In my most loving arms I now enfold thee.
And, o'er the penal waters, as they roll,
  I poise thee, and I lower thee, and hold thee.

And carefully I dip thee in the lake,
  And thou, without a sob or a resistance,
Dost through the flood thy rapid passage take,
  Sinking deep, deeper into the dim distance.

Angels, to whom the willing task is given,
  Shall tend, and nurse, and lull thee, as thou liest;
And Masses on the earth, and prayers in heaven,
  Shall aid thee at the Throne of the Most Highest.

Farewell, but not for ever! brother dear,
  Be brave and patient on thy bed of sorrow;
Swiftly shall pass thy night of trial here,
  And I will come and wake thee on the morrow.

THE END (1865)

The Pillar of the Cloud

Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
  Lead Thou me on!
The night is dark, and I am far from home—
  Lead Thou me on!
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene—one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
  Shouldst lead me on.
I loved to choose and see my path; but now
  Lead Thou me on!
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
Pride ruled my will; remember not past years.

So long Thy power hath blessed me, sure it still
  Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
  The night is gone;
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

(1833)

William Makepeace Thackeray

(1811-1863)

Though Thackeray is usually with justice thought of as a major novelist (cf. p. 445, *above*), he was at his best as an essayist. It might indeed be said that the *Roundabout Papers* (1863), from which *Tunbridge Toys* (cf. *below*) is taken, has been surpassed by no other Victorian collection of familiar essays.

He was born on July 11, 1811, at Calcutta, the only son of Richmond Thackeray, whose family had figured imposingly in the building of England's empire in the East. The elder Thackeray died when the boy was four years of age. In 1817 the lad was sent to school in England, but he much preferred drawing to the studies enforced upon him. His mother remarried, and Thackeray, who now attended Charterhouse School (1822-28), was very happy in his stepfather. In 1829 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where he became friends with Tennyson and FitzGerald. He visited Paris and Weimar the next year, and studied law, which he presently dropped as too uninteresting.

While contributing to *Fraser's Magazine,* he studied art in Paris (1834). Two years later he published his first book, *Flore et Zéphyr* (1836), with his own illustrations. During the same year he married Isabella Shawe, who a few years later became mentally deranged after the birth of their third daughter. In the meantime, his stepfather's business having failed, Thackeray undertook to discharge with him all his debts—a burden that he was not to be free of for ten years.

He began to write steadily: for *Fraser's* he composed the *Yellowplush Papers* (1837-38) and *Barry Lyndon* (1844); to *Punch* he contributed *Tickletoby's Lectures on English History* and *Snobs of England* (1846-47). His *Paris Sketch Book* appeared in 1840, and his first Christmas Book, *Mrs. Perkins' Ball,* in 1846. But great success came only with *Vanity Fair* (1848). He was lionized in Paris, wrote the satirical parodies known as *Punch's Prize Novelists,* published *Pendennis* (1850), and lectured successfully on *The English Humorists* in England, Scotland, and America (1852-53). *Henry Esmond* was published in 1852 and *The Newcomes* in 1855. In the latter year he delivered his lectures on *The Four Georges* and four years later published *The Virginians* (1859).

After a considerable amount of traveling, he became editor of the *Cornhill Magazine,* to which he contributed the essays later collected as the *Roundabout Papers.* Montaigne's *Essays* (cf. Vol. I, p. 353) was his bedside book, and when wakeful he would allow it, as he put it, to "prattle me to sleep again." It was not until the end of his career, however, that Thackeray found the serene egoism of his French master. Great as Thackeray is as a novelist, the *Roundabout Papers* lead one to believe that he had discovered his truest medium almost too late. He died a broken man at fifty-two, and his insane wife survived him by thirty years. Yet, though his marriage had early turned to tragedy, Thackeray could say: "I would do it again, for behold, Love is the crown and completion of all earthly good."

The best editions of Thackeray are the Biographical (13 vols., 1898-99), the Centenary Biographical (26 vols., 1911)—both equipped with introductions by his daughter, and the *Oxford Thackeray* (17 vols., 1908), which was edited by G. Saintsbury. Excellent biographies have been written by G. U. Ellis (1933), M. Elwin (1932), and L. Melville (1927). Valuable critical studies of Thackeray's work have been made by J. Hannay (1869), G. Saintsbury (1931), and N. W. Stephenson (1931).

Tunbridge Toys

I wonder whether those little silver pencil-cases with a movable almanac at the butt-end are still favorite implements with boys, and whether pedlars still hawk them about the country? Are there pedlars and hawkers still, or are rustics and children grown too sharp to deal with them? Those pencil-cases, as far as my memory serves me, were not of much use. The screw, upon which the movable almanac turned, was constantly getting loose. The 1 of the table would work from its moorings, under Tuesday or Wednesday, as the case might be, and you would find, on examination, that Th. or W. was the 23½ of the month (which was absurd on the face of the thing), and in a word your cherished pencil-case an utterly unreliable time-keeper. Nor was this a matter of wonder. Consider the position of a pencil-case in a boy's pocket. You had hardbake[1] in it; marbles, kept in your purse when the money was all gone; your mother's purse, knitted so fondly and supplied with a little bit of gold, long since—prodigal little son!—scattered amongst the swine—I mean amongst brandy-balls, open tarts, three-cornered puffs, and similar abominations. You had a top and string; a knife; a piece of cobbler's wax; two or three bullets; a "Little Warbler"; and I, for my part, remember, for a considerable period, a brass-barrelled pocket-pistol (which would fire beautifully, for with it I shot off a button from Butt Major's jacket);—with all these things, and ever so many more, clinking and rattling in your pockets, and your hands, of course, keeping them in perpetual movement, how could you expect your movable almanac not to be twisted out of its place now and again—your pencil-case to be bent—your liquorice water not to leak out of your bottle over the cobbler's wax, your bull's eyes not to ram up the lock and barrel of your pistol, and so forth?

In the month of June, thirty-seven years ago, I bought one of those pencil-cases from a boy whom I shall call Hawker, and who was in my form. Is he dead? Is he a millionaire? Is he a bankrupt now? He was an immense screw at school, and I believe to this day that the value of the thing for which I owed and eventually paid three-and-sixpence,[2] was in reality not one-and-nine.[3]

I certainly enjoyed the case at first a good deal, and amused myself with twiddling round the movable calendar. But this pleasure wore off. The jewel, as I said, was not paid for, and Hawker, a large and violent boy, was exceedingly unpleasant as a creditor. His constant remark was, "When are you going to pay me that three-and-six-pence? What sneaks your relations must be! They come to see you. You go out to them on Saturdays and Sundays, and they never give you anything! Don't tell *me*, you little humbug!" and so forth. The truth is that my relations were respectable; but my parents were making a tour in Scotland; and my friends in London, whom I used to go and see, were most kind to me, certainly, but somehow never tipped me. That term, of May to August 1823, passed in agonies, then, in consequence of my debt to Hawker. What was the pleasure of a calendar pencil-case in comparison with the doubt and torture of mind occasioned by the sense of the debt, and the constant reproach in that fellow's scowling eyes and gloomy coarse reminders? How was I to pay off such a debt out of sixpence a week? ludicrous! Why did not some one come to see me, and tip me? Ah! my dear sir, if you have any little friends at school, go and see them, and do the natural thing by them. You won't miss the sovereign.[4] You don't know what a blessing it will be to them. Don't fancy they are too old—try 'em. And they will remember you, and bless you in future days; and their gratitude shall accompany your dreary after-life; and they shall meet you kindly when thanks for kindness are scant. Oh mercy! shall I ever forget that sovereign you gave me, Captain Bob? or the agonies of being in debt to Hawker? In that very term, a relation of mine was going to India. I actually was fetched from school in order to take leave of him. I am afraid I told Hawker of this circumstance. I own I speculated upon my friend's giving me a pound. A pound? Pooh! A relation going to India, and deeply affected at parting from his darling kinsman, might give five pounds to the dear fellow! . . . There was Hawker when I came back—of course there he was. As he looked in my scared face, his turned livid with rage. He muttered curses, terrible from the lips of so young a boy. My relation, about to cross the ocean to fill a lucrative appointment, asked me with much interest about my progress at school, heard me construe a passage of Eutropius, the pleasing Latin work on which I was then engaged; gave me a God bless you, and sent me back to school; upon my word

[1] a sweetmeat of sugar or molasses and almonds.
[2] about eighty-five cents.
[3] about forty-three cents.
[4] a gold coin worth about five dollars.

of honor, without so much as a half-crown![5] It is all very well, my dear sir, to say that boys contract habits of expecting tips from their parents' friends, that they become avaricious, and so forth. Avaricious! fudge! Boys contract habits of tart and toffee-eating, which they do not carry into after life. On the contrary, I wish I *did* like 'em. What raptures of pleasure one could have now for five shillings, if one could but pick it off the pastry-cook's tray! No. If you have any little friends at school, out with your half-crowns, my friend, and impart to those little ones the little fleeting joys of their age.

Well, then. At the beginning of August 1823, Bartlemytide[6] holidays came, and I was to go to my parents, who were at Tunbridge Wells.[7] My place in the coach was taken by my tutor's servants—"Bolt-in-Tun," Fleet Street, seven o'clock in the morning, was the word. My tutor, the Reverend Edward P——, to whom I hereby present my best compliments, had a parting interview with me: gave me my little account for my governor: the remaining part of the coach-hire; five shillings for my own expenses; and some five-and-twenty shillings on an old account which had been overpaid, and was to be restored to my family.

Away I ran and paid Hawker his three-and-six. Ouf! what a weight it was off my mind! (He was a Norfolk boy, and used to go home from Mrs. Nelson's "Bell Inn," Aldgate—but that is not to the point.) The next morning, of course, we were an hour before the time. I and another boy shared a hackney-coach, two-and-six; porter for putting luggage on coach, threepence. I had no more money of my own left. Rasherwell, my companion, went into the "Bolt-in-Tun" coffee-room, and had a good breakfast. I couldn't: because, though I had five-and-twenty shillings of my parents' money, I had none of my own, you see.

I certainly intended to go without breakfast, and still remember how strongly I had that resolution in my mind. But there was that hour to wait. A beautiful August morning—I am very hungry. There is Rasherwell "tucking" away in the coffee-room. I pace the street, as sadly almost as if I had been coming to school, not going thence. I turn into a court by mere chance—I vow it was by mere chance—and there I see a coffee-shop with a placard in the window. "Coffee, Twopence, Round of buttered toast, Twopence." And here am I, hungry, penniless, with five-and-twenty shillings of my parents' money in my pocket.

What would you have done? You see I had had my money, and spent it in that pencil-case affair. The five-and-twenty shillings were a trust—by me to be handed over.

But then would my parents wish their only child to be actually without breakfast? Having this money and being so hungry, so *very* hungry, mightn't I take ever so little? Mightn't I at home eat as much as I chose?

Well, I went into the coffee-shop, and spent fourpence. I remember the taste of the coffee and toast to this day—a peculiar, muddy, not-sweet-enough, most fragrant coffee—a rich, rancid, yet not-buttered-enough, delicious toast. The waiter had nothing. At any rate, fourpence, I know, was the sum I spent. And the hunger appeased, I got on the coach a guilty being.

At the last stage,—what is its name? I have forgotten in seven-and-thirty years,—there is an inn with a little green and trees before it; and by the trees there is an open carriage. It is our carriage. Yes, there are Prince and Blucher, the horses; and my parents in the carriage. Oh! how I had been counting the days until this one came! Oh! how happy had I been to see them yesterday! But there was that fourpence. All the journey down the toast had choked me, and the coffee poisoned me.

I was in such a state of remorse about the fourpence, that I forgot the maternal joy and caresses, the tender paternal voice. I pulled out the twenty-four shillings and eightpence with a trembling hand.

"Here's your money," I gasp out, "which Mr. P—— owes you, all but fourpence. I owed three-and-sixpence to Hawker out of my money for a pencil-case, and I had none left, and I took fourpence of yours, and had some coffee at a shop."

I suppose I must have been choking whilst uttering this confession.

"My dear boy," says the governor, "why didn't you go and breakfast at the hotel?"

"He must be starved," says my mother.

I had confessed; I had been a prodigal; I had been taken back to my parents' arms again. It was not a very great crime as yet, or a very long career of prodigality; but don't we know that a boy who takes a pin which is not his own, will take a thousand pounds when occasion serves, bring his parents' grey heads with sorrow to the grave, and carry his own to the gallows? Witness the career

[5] a silver coin worth about sixty-two cents.
[6] the Feast of St. Bartholomew, August 24.
[7] a watering-place thirty-one miles southeast of London.

of Dick Idle, upon whom our friend Mr. Sala has been discoursing. Dick only began by playing pitch-and-toss[8] on a tombstone: playing fair, for what we know: and even for that sin he was promptly caned by the beadle. The bamboo was ineffectual to cane that reprobate's bad courses out of him. From pitch-and-toss he proceeded to manslaughter if necessary: to highway robbery; to Tyburn and the rope there. Ah! Heaven be thanked, my parents' heads are still above the grass, and mine still out of the noose.

As I look up from my desk, I see Tunbridge Wells Common and the rocks, the strange familiar place which I remember forty years ago. Boys saunter over the green with stumps and cricket-bats. Other boys gallop by on the riding-master's hacks. I protest it is "Cramp, Riding Master," as it used to be in the reign of George IV, and that Centaur Cramp must be at least a hundred years old. Yonder comes a footman with a bundle of novels from the library. Are they as good as *our* novels? Oh! how delightful they were! Shades of Valancour, awful ghost of Manfroni,[9] how I shudder at your appearance! Sweet image of Thaddeus of Warsaw, how often has this almost infantile hand tried to depict you in a Polish cap and richly embroidered tights! And as for Corinthian Tom in light blue pantaloons and hessians, and Jerry Hawthorn from the country, can all the fashion, can all the splendor of real life which these eyes have subsequently beheld, can all the wit I have heard or read in later times, compare with your fashion, with your brilliancy, with your delightful grace, and sparkling vivacious rattle?

Who knows? They *may* have kept those very books at the library still—at the well-remembered library on the Pantiles, where they sell that delightful, useful Tunbridge ware. I will go and see. I wend my way to the Pantiles, the queer little old-world Pantiles, where, a hundred years since, so much good company came to take its pleasure. Is it possible, that in the past century, gentlefolks of the first rank (as I read lately in a lecture on George II in the *Cornhill Magazine*) assembled here and entertained each other with gaming, dancing, fiddling, and tea? There are fiddlers, harpers, and trumpeters performing at this moment in a weak little old balcony, but where is the fine company? Where are the earls, duchesses, bishops, and magnificent embroidered gamesters? A half-dozen of children and their nurses are listening to the musicians; an old lady or two in a poke bonnet passes; and for the rest, I see but an uninteresting population of native tradesmen. As for the library, its window is full of pictures of burly theologians, and their works, sermons, apologues, and so forth. Can I go in and ask the young ladies at the counter for "Manfroni, or the One-handed Monk," and "Life in London, or the Adventures of Corinthian Tom, Jeremiah Hawthorn, Esquire, and their friend Bob Logic"?—absurd. I turn away abashed from the casement—from the Pantiles—no longer Pantiles—but Parade. I stroll over the Common and survey the beautiful purple hills around, twinkling with a thousand bright villas, which have sprung up over this charming ground since first I saw it. What an admirable scene of peace and plenty! What a delicious air breathes over the heath, blows the cloud-shadows across it, and murmurs through the full-clad trees! Can the world show a land fairer, richer, more cheerful? I see a portion of it when I look up from the window at which I write. But fair scene, green woods, bright terraces gleaming in sunshine, and purple clouds swollen with summer rain—nay, the very pages over which my head bends—disappear from before my eyes. They are looking backwards, back into forty years off, into a dark room, into a little house hard by on the Common here, in the Bartlemytide holidays. The parents have gone to town for two days: the house is all his own, his own and a grim old maidservant's, and a little boy is seated at night in the lonely drawing-room, poring over "Manfroni, or the One-handed Monk," so frightened that he scarcely dares to turn round.

(1860)

[8] a game in which the victor in pitching coins at a mark tosses all the pitched coins in the air and wins those that fall heads up.

[9] novels popular in Thackeray's youth.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

(1809-1892)

Alfred Tennyson was born in the rectory of Somersby, Lincolnshire, the fourth son of the Rev. George Tennyson's large family. The misty wolds, spacious fields, and gray hillsides of the Lincolnshire countryside, sometimes swept by the faint murmur of the sea or overcast by threatening clouds—sights and sounds which recur in his poetry —made a profound impression on the sensitive boy. From 1816 to 1820 he attended the Grammar School at Louth. But his dislike of the place gained him permission to return to the rectory to study under his father's tutelage. Home life was intimate, and literary productivity common among the children. His brothers Frederick and Charles both wrote verse, but it was Alfred who was understood to be the poet. When still a child he was imitating Pope, Thomson, Scott, and Moore; at fourteen he was striving for the gloomy rhetorical effects of Byron. In 1827 he and Charles published a volume, *Poems by Two Brothers,* which also included a few by Frederick. The next year Charles and Alfred entered Trinity College, Cambridge, for which their father had prepared them.

Tennyson's excessive shyness, unusual in so handsome a youth, blighted his first year at college. Under pressure from his father, he revised an old poem, named it *Timbuctoo,* and won the Newdigate Prize for 1829 with it. Unequal to the strain of presenting it publicly, he relied upon a fellow student to read it for him. In his second year he joined a debating society, the "Apostles," with the members of which he became a great favorite, a prestige that did much to encourage him in his writing. The most significant of his relationships at Cambridge, however, was the warm friendship he formed with Arthur Henry Hallam, son of the historian, a vivacious lad who helped draw Tennyson out of his shell of reserve and whose certainty on religious questions evoked the admiration of his friend, then sunk in doubts of agnosticism. In 1830 Tennyson issued a volume, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical,* containing a few excellent and a number of puerile pieces. During the summer of the same year, Hallam and he made a brief trip to Portugal to take the revolutionists there the funds which had been raised for the cause.

His father's illness ended his career at the university in February 1831. A few weeks later the elder Tennyson died. The poet remained in the bosom of his family for the next six years. Thus far, outside of the stir raised among the "Apostles," he was largely unknown to the literary world. Rewriting the poems already printed and composing new ones, he prepared a volume which appeared in 1832 as *Poems by Alfred Tennyson.* In it were early versions of such beautiful works as *The Lady of Shalott* (cf. *below*), *Œnone* (cf. *below*), *The Palace of Art* (cf. *below*), and *The Lotos-Eaters.* The influence of Spenser and the romantics was patent in every line. Like Keats, he had tried to "load every rift" of his subject "with ore." Here too was the romantic heritage of absorption in distant times and lands. But the disciplining works of Homer (cf. Vol. I, p. 341), Theocritus (cf. Vol. I, p. 243), Ovid, Catullus (cf. Vol. I, p. 376), and Virgil (cf. Vol. I, p. 247) were better known to him than to the romantic poets of the earlier years of the century. Homer inspired *The Lotos-Eaters,* and there is something authentically Sicilian in *Œnone.* But despite the manifold signs of a great poet in these poems, the volume of 1832 was attacked by the critics. Lockhart, in the *Quarterly Review,* set the tone of its reception by his derisive welcome to "another and a brighter star of that galaxy or Milky Way of poetry of which the Lamented Keats was the harbinger." The sale of the edition was small, but the hostility of the reviewers was so general as to make Tennyson quite notorious. If none of this mockery was justified, some criticism was, however, certainly in order. There was in some of the poems an excess of what Saintsbury calls the "mawkishness and gush which Keats

had learnt from Leigh Hunt." And even those masterpieces we have named had not attained that perfection which Tennyson was later to give them.

That this discouraging attention was partly responsible for the ten years' silence the poet maintained is undoubtedly true. But there were other reasons. He had recently fallen in love with Emily Sellwood, and his small income and her parents' disapproval made marriage impossible to a man of his ethics. In fact, he was in his early forties before he felt justified in undertaking the responsibilities of matrimony. But the greatest shock of his life came in September 1833, when Arthur Hallam died. His grief over the loss of his best and dearest friend was with him for many years, as is proved by the series of elegies he composed upon Hallam, arranged in 1850 as the poem *In Memoriam* (cf. *below*). In these stanzas, while searching for a faith that could bring him consolation, he voiced the doubts and hopes of his generation.

His long silence, however, was only public. The attacks of the reviewers and Hallam's death moved him to immerse himself in literature, philosophy, geology, and astronomy. Carlyle's vivid description of him during this period, as "a man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom, carrying a bit of Chaos about him, in short, which he is manufacturing into Cosmos," is graphic. By 1842 he had evidently achieved his Cosmos, for in that year he appeared in print again with two volumes of *Poems*, containing *Morte d'Arthur* (cf. *below*), *Ulysses* (cf. *below*), *Locksley Hall* (cf. *below*), *Break, Break, Break*, and revisions of many earlier pieces. The years of incubation now justified themselves, for Tennyson came into his own. He was at once recognized as a master technician, a poet at home in all lands of the imagination and equal to all the esthetic requirements of his art. He was thereafter read avidly in England, the colonies, and America. Even Wordsworth, ever slow to recognize abilities in others, called him "the first of our living poets."

But whatever satisfaction this success must have brought Tennyson, happiness was not yet for him. He had parted with his small inheritance to invest it in a financial scheme the failure of which left him penniless. His mental reaction to this newest defeat required the attendance of a physician for months. In 1845, however, the government came to his rescue with a pension of £200 a year. With his confidence restored, he began to write again, and in 1847 published *The Princess* (cf. *below*), a "medley" on the question of higher education for women. Soon after the appearance of *In Memoriam* (1850) Tennyson married Miss Sellwood, and in November of the same year he was appointed to the Laureateship to succeed Wordsworth.

The forty-two years of life still remaining to Tennyson were rich in happiness, security, and poetic accomplishment. His worries over, he issued a steady stream of poetry, uniformly of high quality: *Maud* (1855), *Idylls of the King* (1859, 1869, 1872, 1885), *Enoch Arden* (1864), *Ballads and Poems* (1880), *Tiresias* (1885), *Locksley Hall Sixty Years After* (1886), *Demeter* (1889), and *The Death of Œnone* (1892). In addition to these he wrote the dramatic trilogy, *Queen Mary* (1875), *Harold* (1877), and *Becket* (1884); and also *The Cup* (1881), *The Promise of May* (1882), and *The Foresters* (1892)—all of which are excellent "closet dramas," though they had a momentary stage success because they were performed by great actors. In 1885 Oxford bestowed upon him the degree of D. C. L., and in 1883 he accepted the honor of a peerage from the Queen. Tennyson had purchased an estate at Farringford on the Isle of Wight; but his fame was now so extensive that, in order to escape the crowds of adulators who invaded his privacy, he built his home, "Aldworth," at Blackdown in Surrey (1870). Among his close friends he came to number Browning, Huxley, Ruskin, Prince Albert, and Gladstone.

There was a period in our own century when it was fashionable to sneer at Tennyson because of his "Victorianism." It is true that Tennyson tried to understand his time while many of his fellow poets were busy escaping from it. It is also true that his was not a profound intellect, and that he was not able to penetrate very deeply below the surfaces of things. The facile prophecies of *Locksley Hall* no longer exhilarate a century that has seen

a World War; the accomplishment of women puts to shame the conservatism of *The Princess*; and the then-thought profundities of *In Memoriam* now sound rather hollow. He was not a seer, was too easily disturbed by the confusion in which real social progress is always involved, and given to easy compromise. He was perhaps unconscious of revealing his limitations as a thinker when he said in *In Memoriam*:

> *But for the unquiet heart and brain*
> *A use in measured language lies;*
> *The sad mechanic exercise*
> *Like dull narcotics, numbing pain.*
>
> *In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er. . . .*

And it is for his words, rather than for his ideas, that the world will always turn to Tennyson. No English poet excels him, despite occasional lapses, in mastery over the resources of his art. He is at his best when his genius for music and painting in language is all that is required of the subject. For this reason he has been most wisely loved for his lyrics, which are beyond praise for their perfection.

The standard edition of Tennyson was made by Hallam, Lord Tennyson (1898-99). W. J. Rolfe's one-volume edition (1898) is convenient. Excellent studies, biographical and critical, have been written by A. C. Benson (1904), S. A. Brooke (1894), O. Elton (1924), H. I'A. Fausset (1923), H. Nicholson (1922), and H. Tennyson (1897 and 1911).

The Lady of Shalott

Tennyson took the idea for this poem from Malory's account of the love of Elaine for Launcelot in the *Morte Darthur*. Later he expanded the story as part of the *Idylls of the King*. The pictorial power of Tennyson is wonderfully exhibited in this, one of the most perfect of literary ballads.

Part 1

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold[1] and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
To many-towered Camelot;[2]
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veiled,
Slide the heavy barges trailed
By slow horses; and unhailed
The shallop flitteth silken-sailed
Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to towered Camelot;
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott."

Part 2

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colors gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.

[1] upland plain.
[2] the seat of King Arthur's court, in Cornwall.

She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror[3] clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot;
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,[4]
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-haired page in crimson clad,
Goes by to towered Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot;
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed:
"I am half-sick of shadows," said
The Lady of Shalott.

Part 3

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A redcross knight for ever kneeled
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glittered free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.[5]

[3] The mirror hangs before her so as to reflect the finished tapestry which she weaves from the reverse side.
[4] an easy-paced horse.
[5] the Milky Way.

The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazoned baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armor rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewelled shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burned like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot;
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glowed;
On burnished hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flowed
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flashed into the crystal mirror,
"Tirra lirra," by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She looked down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror cracked from side to side;
"The curse is come upon me," cried
The Lady of Shalott.

Part 4

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over towered Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse—
Like some bold seër in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance

Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot;
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darkened wholly,
Turned to towered Camelot;
For ere she reached upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,
A gleaming shape she floated by,
A corse between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they crossed themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, "She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott."

(pub. 1832)

Œnone

To tell the famous story of the Judgment of Paris, Tennyson chose a highly original and dramatic point of view. We learn of that fatal interview through the musical lament of Paris's deserted love, Œnone, and at the end hear forebodings of catastrophe hovering over Troy, as yet unsacked by the Greeks. The description of Aphrodite is achieved through such art as a painter might envy. Tennyson took the occasion to put into the mouth of Athena much of his own philosophy.

There lies a vale in Ida,[1] lovelier
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
The swimming vapor slopes athwart the glen,
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
The long brook falling thro' the cloven ravine
In cataract after cataract to the sea.
Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
Stands up and takes the morning; but in front
The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
Troas and Ilion's columned citadel,
The crown of Troas.
Hither came at noon
Mournful Œnone, wandering forlorn
Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck
Floated her hair or seemed to float in rest.
She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine,
Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade
Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.

"O mother Ida, many-fountained[2] Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
For now the noonday quiet holds the hill;
The grasshopper is silent in the grass;
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead.
The purple flowers droop, the golden bee
Is lily-cradled; I alone awake.
My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
And I am all aweary of my life.

"O mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Hear me, O Earth, hear me, O Hills, O Caves
That house the cold crowned snake! O mountain brooks,

[1] Mount Ida, near Troy, where Paris, son of King Priam, passed his time as a shepherd. Here he lived with Œnone until he was visited by three goddesses to discover which of them was most beautiful. After Aphrodite promised him the love of Helen he deserted Œnone.

[2] Homer's epithet for Mount Ida.

I am the daughter of a River-God,
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls
Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,[3]
A cloud that gathered shape: for it may be
That, while I speak of it, a little while
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

"O mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
I waited underneath the dawning hills,
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,
And dewy-dark aloft the mountain pine.
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
Leading a jet-black goat white-horned, white-hooved,
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

"O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Far-off the torrent called me from the cleft;
Far up the solitary morning smote
The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes
I sat alone; white-breasted like a star
Fronting the dawn he moved; a leopard skin
Drooped from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
Clustered about his temples like a God's;
And his cheek brightened as the foam-bow brightens
When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart
Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm
Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,
That smelt ambrosially, and while I looked
And listened, the full-flowing river of speech
Came down upon my heart.

"'My own Œnone,
Beautiful-browed Œnone, my own soul,
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingraven
"For the most fair," would seem to award it thine,
As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
Of movement, and the charm of married brows.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
And added 'This was cast upon the board,
When all the full-faced presence of the Gods
Ranged in the halls of Peleus[4]; whereupon
Rose feud, with question unto whom 'twere due;
But light-foot Iris[5] brought it yester-eve,
Delivering, that to me, by common voice
Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,
Pallas and Aphrodite, claiming each
This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave
Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
It was the deep midnoon; one silvery cloud
Had lost his way between the piney sides
Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came,
Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,
And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,
Violet, amaracus, and asphodel,
Lotos and lilies; and a wind arose,
And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,
This way and that, in many a wild festoon
Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'.

"O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
On the tree-tops, a crested peacock[6] lit,
And o'er him flowed a golden cloud, and leaned
Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
Then first I heard the voice of her[7] to whom
Coming thro' Heaven, like a light that grows
Larger and clearer, with one mind the Gods
Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made
Proffer of royal power, ample rule
Unquestioned, overflowing revenue
Wherewith to embellish state, 'from many a vale
And river-sundered champaign clothed with corn,
Or labored mines undrainable of ore.
Honor,' she said, 'and homage, tax and toll,
From many an inland town and haven large,
Mast-thronged beneath her shadowing citadel
In glassy bays among her tallest towers.'

"O mother Ida, harken ere I die.

[3] The walls of Troy were raised by the music of Apollo.

[4] At the wedding feast of Peleus and Thetis, the Goddess of Discord, who had not been invited, threw into the assembly a golden apple inscribed "To the Fairest." When the three goddesses, Hera, Pallas Athena, and Aphrodite, each claimed it, Zeus sent them to Paris and ordered him to decide.

[5] a messenger of the gods.

[6] Hera's sacred bird.

[7] Hera.

Still she spake on and still she spake of power,
'Which in all action is the end of all;
Power fitted to the season; wisdom-bred
And throned of wisdom—from all neighbor crowns
Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand
Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon from me,
From me, heaven's queen, Paris, to thee king-born,
A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power
Only, are likest gods, who have attained
Rest in a happy place and quiet seats,
Above the thunder, with undying bliss
In knowledge of their own supremacy.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
Out at arm's length, so much the thought of power
Flattered his spirit; but Pallas where she stood
Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs
O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear
Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
The while, above, her full and earnest eye
Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek
Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.

"'Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power, (power of herself
Would come uncalled for), but to live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear;
And, because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Again she said: 'I woo thee not with gifts.
Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
So shalt thou find me fairest.
Yet, indeed,
If gazing on divinity disrobed
Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
Unbiased by self-profit, oh! rest thee sure
That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,
So that my vigor, wedded to thy blood,
Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,
To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,
Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
Sinewed with action, and the full-grown will,
Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,
Commeasure perfect freedom.'
"Here she ceased,
And Paris pondered, and I cried, 'O Paris,
Give it to Pallas!' but he heard me not,
Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me!

"O mother Ida, many-fountained Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Idalian Aphrodite beautiful,
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian[8] wells,
With rosy slender fingers backward drew
From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
Ambrosial golden round her lucid throat
And shoulder; from the violets her light foot
Shone rosy-white and o'er her rounded form
Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
Half-whispered in his ear, 'I promise thee
The fairest and most loving wife in Greece.'[9]
She spoke and laughed; I shut my sight for fear:
But when I looked, Paris had raised his arm,
And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes,
As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
And I was left alone within the bower;
And from that time to this I am alone,
And I shall be alone until I die.

"Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?
My love hath told me so a thousand times.
Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,
When I past by, a wild and wanton pard,
Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail
Crouched fawning in the weed. Most loving is she?
Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms
Were wound about thee, and my hot lips prest
Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew
Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains
Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
They came, they cut away my tallest pines,
My dark tall pines, that plumed the craggy ledge
High over the blue gorge, and all between
The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
Fostered the callow eaglet—from beneath

[8] Idalium and Paphos in Cyprus were sacred to Aphrodite.
[9] Helen, wife of Menelaus of Sparta.

Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn
The panther's roar came muffled, while I sat
Low in the valley. Never, never more
Shall lone Œnone see the morning mist
Sweep thro' them; never see them overlaid
With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,
Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I wish that somewhere in the ruined folds,
Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,
Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her,
The Abominable,[10] that uninvited came
Into the fair Peleian banquet-hall,
And cast the golden fruit upon the board,
And bred this change; that I might speak my mind
And tell her to her face how much I hate
Her presence, hated both of Gods and men.

"O mother, hear me yet before I die
Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,
In this great valley, under this green hill,
Ev'n on this hand, and sitting on this stone?
Sealed it with kisses? watered it with tears?
O happy tears, and how unlike to these!
O happy heaven, how canst thou see my face?
O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight?
O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,
There are enough unhappy on this earth,
Pass by the happy souls, that love to live;
I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
Weigh heavy on my eyelids; let me die.

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
Do shape themselves within me, more and more,
Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills,
Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see
My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
Conjectures of the features of her child
Ere it is born. Her child!—a shudder comes
Across me: never child be born of me,
Unblest, to vex me with his father's eyes!

"O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me
Walking the cold and starless road of death
Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
With the Greek woman. I will rise and go
Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth
Talk with the wild Cassandra,[11] for she says
A fire dances before her, and a sound
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.[12]
What this may be I know not, but I know
That, wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
All earth and air seem only burning fire."

(pub. 1832)

[10] Eris, the goddess of discord.

[11] daughter of Priam, king of Troy and beloved by Apollo who, being repulsed by her, gave her power of prophecy, but caused her never to be believed.

[12] foretelling the war resulting from the carrying off of Helen.

The Palace of Art

Spedding described this poem as an allegory on "the condition of mind which, in love of beauty and the triumphant consciousness of knowledge and intellectual supremacy, in the intense enjoyment of its own power and glory, has lost sight of its relation to man and God." The poet may very well have thus posed an abstract situation which, considering the function of the artist, never actually exists. However, even if this be the case, the magnificence of Tennyson's picture-gallery in itself has justified the poem.

I built my soul a lordly pleasure-house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell.
I said, "O Soul, make merry and carouse,
Dear soul, for all is well."

A huge crag-platform, smooth as burnished brass,
I chose. The ranged ramparts bright
From level meadow-bases of deep grass
Suddenly scaled the light.

Thereon I built it firm. Of ledge or shelf
The rock rose clear, or winding stair.
My soul would live alone unto herself
In her high palace there.

And "while the world runs round and round," I said,
"Reign thou apart, a quiet king,
Still as, while Saturn whirls, his steadfast shade
Sleeps on his luminous ring."

To which my soul made answer readily:

"Trust me, in bliss I shall abide
In this great mansion, that is built for me,
So royal-rich and wide."

. . . . . .

Four courts I made, East, West and South and North,
In each a squared lawn, wherefrom
The golden gorge of dragons spouted forth
A flood of fountain-foam.

And round the cool green courts there ran a row
Of cloisters, branched like mighty woods,
Echoing all night to that sonorous flow
Of spouted fountain-floods;

And round the roofs a gilded gallery
That lent broad verge to distant lands,
Far as the wild swan wings, to where the sky
Dipt down to sea and sands.

From those four jets four currents in one swell
Across the mountain streamed below
In misty folds, that floating as they fell
Lit up a torrent-bow.

And high on every peak a statue seemed
To hang on tiptoe, tossing up
A cloud of incense of all odor steamed
From out a golden cup.

So that she thought, "And who shall gaze upon
My palace with unblinded eyes,
While this great bow will waver in the sun,
And that sweet incense rise?"

For that sweet incense rose and never failed,
And, while day sank or mounted higher,
The light aërial gallery, golden-railed,
Burnt like a fringe of fire.

Likewise the deep-set windows, stained and traced,
Would seem slow-flaming crimson fires
From shadowed grots of arches interlaced,
And tipt with frost-like spires.

. . . . . .

Full of long-sounding corridors it was,
That over-vaulted grateful gloom,
Thro' which the livelong day my soul did pass,
Well-pleased, from room to room.

Full of great rooms and small the palace stood,
All various, each a perfect whole
From living Nature, fit for every mood
And change of my still soul.

For some were hung with arras green and blue,
Showing a gaudy summer morn,
Where with puffed cheek the belted hunter blew
His wreathed bugle-horn.

One seemed all dark and red—a tract of sand,
And some one pacing there alone,
Who paced for ever in a glimmering land,
Lit with a low large moon.

One showed an iron coast and angry waves.
You seemed to hear them climb and fall
And roar rock-thwarted under bellowing caves,
Beneath the windy wall.

And one, a full-fed river winding slow
By herds upon an endless plain,
The ragged rims of thunder brooding low,
With shadow-streaks of rain.

And one, the reapers at their sultry toil.
In front they bound the sheaves. Behind
Were realms of upland, prodigal in oil,[1]
And hoary to the wind.

And one, a foreground black with stones and slags;
Beyond, a line of heights; and higher
All barred with long white cloud the scornful crags;
And highest, snow and fire.

And one, an English home—gray twilight poured
On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,
A haunt of ancient Peace.

Nor these alone, but every landscape fair,
As fit for every mood of mind,
Or gay, or grave, or sweet, or stern, was there,
Not less than truth designed.

. . . . . .

Or the maid-mother by a crucifix,
In tracts of pasture sunny-warm,
Beneath branch-work of costly sardonyx
Sat smiling, babe in arm.

Or in a clear-walled city on the sea,
Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair

[1] olive trees.

Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;[2]
An angel looked at her.

Or thronging all one porch of Paradise,
A group of Houris bowed to see
The dying Islamite, with hands and eyes
That said, We wait for thee.

Or mythic Uther's deeply-wounded son[3]
In some fair space of sloping greens
Lay, dozing in the vale of Avalon,
And watched by weeping queens.

Or hollowing one hand against his ear,
To list a foot-fall, ere he saw
The wood-nymph,[4] stayed the Ausonian king to hear
Of wisdom and of law.

Or over hills with peaky tops engrailed,
And many a tract of palm and rice,
The throne of Indian Cama[5] slowly sailed
A summer fanned with spice.

Or sweet Europa's[6] mantle blew unclasped,
From off her shoulder backward borne;
From one hand drooped a crocus; one hand grasped
The mild bull's golden horn.

Or else flushed Ganymede,[7] his rosy thigh
Half-buried in the Eagle's down,
Sole as a flying star shot thro' the sky
Above the pillared town.

Nor these alone: but every legend fair
Which the supreme Caucasian mind
Carved out of Nature for itself, was there,
Not less than life, designed.

. . . . . .

[2] St. Cecilia, patron saint of music and reputed inventor of the organ. Cf. Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*, Vol. I, p. 534.

[3] King Arthur. Cf. Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, Vol. I, pp. 179 ff.

[4] the wood-nymph Egeria instructed King Numa Pompilius of Rome (Ausonia).

[5] the Hindu god of love.

[6] carried off by Zeus who had assumed the form of a bull.

[7] Trojan boy carried off to Olympus by Zeus who had assumed the form of an eagle. He became cup-bearer to the gods.

Then in the towers I placed great bells that swung,
Moved of themselves, with silver sound;
And with choice paintings of wise men I hung
The royal daïs round.

For there was Milton like a seraph strong,
Beside him Shakespeare bland and mild;
And there the world-worn Dante grasped his song,
And somewhat grimly smiled.

And there the Ionian father[8] of the rest;
A million wrinkles carved his skin;
A hundred winters snowed upon his breast,
From cheek and throat and chin.

Above, the fair hall-ceiling stately-set
Many an arch high up did lift,
And angels rising and descending met
With interchange of gift.

Below was all mosaic choicely planned
With cycles of the human tale
Of this wide world, the times of every land
So wrought, they will not fail.

The people here, a beast of burden slow,
Toiled onward, pricked with goads and stings;
Here played, a tiger, rolling to and fro
The heads and crowns of kings;

Here rose, an athlete, strong to break or bind
All force in bonds that might endure,
And here once more like some sick man declined,
And trusted any cure.

But over these she trod; and those great bells
Began to chime. She took her throne;
She sat betwixt the shining oriels,
To sing her songs alone.

And thro' the topmost oriels' colored flame
Two godlike faces gazed below;
Plato the wise, and large-browed Verulam,[9]
The first of those who know.

And all those names that in their motion were
Full-welling fountain-heads of change,
Betwixt the slender shafts were blazoned fair
In diverse raiment strange;

[8] Homer.

[9] Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam; cf. Vol. I, p. 358.

Thro' which the lights, rose, amber, emerald, blue,
Flushed in her temples and her eyes,
And from her lips, as morn from Memnon,[10] drew
Rivers of melodies.

No nightingale delighteth to prolong
Her low preamble all alone,
More than my soul to hear her echoed song
Throb thro' the ribbed stone;

Singing and murmuring in her feastful mirth,
Joying to feel herself alive,
Lord over Nature, Lord of the visible earth,
Lord of the senses five;

Communing with herself: "All these are mine,
And let the world have peace or wars,
'Tis one to me." She—when young night divine
Crowned dying day with stars,

Making sweet close of his delicious toils—
Lit light in wreaths and anadems,
And pure quintessences of precious oils
In hollowed moons of gems,

To mimic heaven; and clapt her hands and cried,
"I marvel if my still delight
In this great house so royal-rich and wide
Be flattered to the height.

"O all things fair to sate my various eyes!
O shapes and hues that please me well!
O silent faces of the Great and Wise,
My Gods, with whom I dwell!

"O God-like isolation which art mine,
I can but count thee perfect gain,
What time I watch the darkening droves of swine
That range on yonder plain.

"In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,
They graze and wallow, breed and sleep;
And oft some brainless devil enters in,
And drives them to the deep."[11]

Then of the moral instinct would she prate,
And of the rising from the dead,
As hers by right of full-accomplished Fate;
And at the last she said:

"I take possession of man's mind and deed.
I care not what the sects may brawl.
I sit as God holding no form of creed,
But contemplating all."

. . . . . .

Full oft the riddle of the painful earth
Flashed thro' her as she sat alone,
Yet not the less held she her solemn mirth,
And intellectual throne.

And so she throve and prospered; so three years
She prospered; on the fourth she fell,
Like Herod, when the shout was in his ears,
Struck thro' with pangs of hell.[12]

Lest she should fail and perish utterly,
God, before whom ever lie bare
The abysmal deeps of personality,
Plagued her with sore despair.

When she would think, where'er she turned her sight
The airy hand confusion wrought,
Wrote "Mene, mene,"[13] and divided quite
The kingdom of her thought.

Deep dread and loathing of her solitude
Fell on her, from which mood was born
Scorn of herself; again, from out that mood
Laughter at her self-scorn.

"What! is not this my place of strength," she said,
"My spacious mansion built for me,
Whereof the strong foundation-stones were laid
Since my first memory?"

But in dark corners of her palace stood
Uncertain shapes; and unawares
On white-eyed phantasms weeping tears of blood,
And horrible nightmares,

And hollow shades enclosing hearts of flame,
And, with dim fretted foreheads all,
On corpses three-months-old at noon she came,
That stood against the wall.

[10] the large statue near Thebes in Egypt which was supposed to give forth music when first struck by the morning rays.

[11] Cf. *Matthew*, 8:28-33, where the story is told of the herd of swine who were possessed by devils and ran down into the sea and perished.

[12] Cf. *Acts*, 12:21-23.

[13] The mysterious warning written on the wall at the Feast of Belshazzar, foretelling the end of his kingdom. Cf. *Daniel*, 5:24-27.

A spot of dull stagnation, without light
  Or power of movement, seemed my soul,
'Mid onward-sloping motions infinite
  Making for one sure goal;

A still salt pool, locked in with bars of sand,
  Left on the shore, that hears all night
The plunging seas draw backward from the land
  Their moon-led waters white;

A star that with the choral starry dance
  Joined not, but stood, and standing saw
The hollow orb of moving Circumstance
  Rolled round by one fixed law.

Back on herself her serpent pride had curled.
  "No voice," she shrieked in that lone hall,
"No voice breaks thro' the stillness of this world;
  One deep, deep silence all!"

She, mouldering with the dull earth's mouldering sod,
  Inwrapt tenfold in slothful shame,
Lay there exiled from eternal God,
  Lost to her place and name;

And death and life she hated equally,
  And nothing saw, for her despair,
But dreadful time, dreadful eternity,
  No comfort anywhere;

Remaining utterly confused with fears,
  And ever worse with growing time,
And ever unrelieved by dismal tears,
  And all alone in crime.

Shut up as in a crumbling tomb, girt round
  With blackness as a solid wall,
Far off she seemed to hear the dully sound
  Of human footsteps fall:

As in strange lands a traveller walking slow,
  In doubt and great perplexity,
A little before moon-rise hears the low
  Moan of an unknown sea;

And knows not if it be thunder, or a sound
  Of rocks thrown down, or one deep cry
Of great wild beasts; then thinketh, "I have found
  A new land, but I die."

She howled aloud, "I am on fire within,
  There comes no murmur of reply.
What is it that will take away my sin,
  And save me lest I die?"

So when four years were wholly finished,
  She threw her royal robes away.
"Make me a cottage in the vale," she said,
  "Where I may mourn and pray.

"Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are
  So lightly, beautifully built;
Perchance I may return with others there
  When I have purged my guilt."

(pub. 1832)

The Lotos-Eaters

The opening stanzas of this poem constitute another notable nineteenth-century example of the Spenserian stanza. The theme is derived from the *Odyssey*.

"Courage!" he[1] said, and pointed toward the land,
"This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."
In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;
And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land; far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flushed; and, dewed with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset lingered low adown
In the red West; thro' mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Bordered with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale;
A land where all things always seemed the same!

[1] Ulysses (Odysseus). Cf. *Odyssey*, book IX, for the account of the visit to this land.

And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;
And deep-asleep he seemed, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore
Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, "We will return no more;"
And all at once they sang, "Our island home[2]
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."

Choric Song

1

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tired eyelids upon tired eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

2

Why are we weighed upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown;
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
"There is no joy but calm!"—
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

3

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is wooed from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steeped at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweetened with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

4

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
Death is the end of life; ah, why
Should life all labor be?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last?
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen toward the grave
In silence—ripen, fall and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

5

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!
To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each other's whispered speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,

[2] Ithaca, a small island west of Greece.

And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy
Heaped over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

6

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears; but all hath suffered change;
For surely now our household hearths are cold,
Our sons inherit us, our looks are strange,
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten-years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The Gods are hard to reconcile;
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
There *is* confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labor unto aged breath,
Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

7

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)
With half-dropt eyelid still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine—
To watch the emerald-colored water falling
Thro' many a woven acanthus-wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretched out beneath the pine.

8

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak,
The Lotos blows by every winding creek;
All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone;
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust is blown.
We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Rolled to starboard, rolled to larboard, when the surge was seething free,
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains in the sea.
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurled
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curled
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world;
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and praying hands.
But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong;
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil;
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whispered—down in hell
Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labor in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and oar;
O, rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

(pub. 1832)

Morte d'Arthur[1]

This poem was later incorporated into *The Passing of Arthur* in the *Idylls of the King*.

So all day long the noise of battle rolled
Among the mountains by the winter sea,
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonness about their lord,
King Arthur; then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot,[2] as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin[3] sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride; for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I rowed across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king;
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known.
But now delay not; take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere;
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word."

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
"It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

So saying, from the ruined shrine he stept
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt;
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw; but at the last it seemed
Better to leave Excalibur concealed
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded king.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"Hast thou performed my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag."

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
"Thou hast betrayed thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseemed
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight;
For surer sign had followed, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief[4] and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word."

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fixed in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud:

"And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost forever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.

[1] Cf. Malory's account of the same incidents, Vol. I, p. 183, above.
[2] Arthur's capital.
[3] the magician in the legends of Arthur.
[4] beloved.

Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumors of a doubt? but were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, 'King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the lake;
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills.'
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence;
But now much honor and much fame were lost."
So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.
Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
"What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds."
To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
"Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widowed of the power in his eye
That bowed the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence;
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands."
Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutched the sword,
And strongly wheeled and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendor of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirled in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles[5] of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flashed and fell the brand Excalibur;
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,

[5] icebergs.

And caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.
Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
"Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out; what is it thou hast heard, or seen?"
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I looked again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere."
And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
"My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die."
So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.
But, as he walked, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sighed the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, "Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die."
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walked,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clashed his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clanged round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.
Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,

Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
A cry that shivered to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.
Then murmured Arthur, "Place me in the barge,"
And to the barge they came. There those three queens
Put forth their hands, and took the king, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shattered casque, and chafed his hands,
And called him by his name, complaining loud
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood; for all his face was white
And colorless, and like the withered moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dashed with drops
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne—were parched with dust;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mixed with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shattered column lay the king;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.
Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere:
"Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds."
And slowly answered Arthur from the barge:
"The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within himself make pure! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."
So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some fullbreasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Looked one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

(pub. 1842)

Ulysses

This is one of the poet's most admired poems. The fiction of the discontent of Ulysses after having returned safely to his wife and home is derived not from the *Odyssey* but from Dante's *Inferno* (Canto XXVI).

It little profits that an idle king,[1]
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Matched with an aged wife, I mete and dole

[1] Ulysses is represented as having finished his travels as described in the Odyssey. He is now living idly on his island of barren crags with his aged wife, Penelope.

Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel. I will drink
Life to the lees. All times I have enjoyed
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades[2]
Vexed the dim sea. I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men,
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honored of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met.
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untraveled world, whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
As though to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains. But every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the scepter and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfill
This labor, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and through soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centered in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.
There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail;
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toiled, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil;
Death closes all. But something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,[3]
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

(pub. 1842)

[2] A group of stars associated with the rainy season.

Locksley Hall

Oliver Elton says of this dramatic monologue that it "is not only glorious in its cadence and its dreary landscape, but is also very frank and youthful, and engaging even in its absurdities." Absurdities there are in the poem, but they are such as might be expected of the impulsive young man who is the speaker. If criticism is to be brutally frank, it must be admitted that some of the passages in the poem are themselves as poetically dreary as the landscape; many others, however, are justly famous for their beauty.

Comrades, leave me here a little, while as yet 'tis early morn;
Leave me here, and when you want me, sound upon the bugle-horn.

'Tis the place, and all around it, as of old, the curlews call,
Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over Locksley Hall;

Locksley Hall, that in the distance overlooks the sandy tracts,
And the hollow ocean-ridges roaring into cataracts.

[3] the Islands of the Blessed, where heroes went after death.

Many a night from yonder ivied casement, ere I went to rest,
Did I look on great Orion[1] sloping slowly to the west.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising thro' the mellow shade,
Glitter like a swarm of fire-flies tangled in a silver braid.

Here about the beach I wandered, nourishing a youth sublime
With the fairy tales of science, and the long result of time;

When the centuries behind me like a fruitful land reposed;
When I clung to all the present for the promise that it closed;

When I dipt into the future far as human eye could see,
Saw the vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be.——

In the spring a fuller crimson comes upon the robin's breast;
In the spring the wanton lapwing gets himself another crest;

In the spring a livelier iris changes on the burnished dove;
In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.

Then her cheek was pale and thinner than should be for one so young,
And her eyes on all my motions with a mute observance hung.

And I said, "My cousin Amy, speak, and speak the truth to me,
Trust me, cousin, all the current of my being sets to thee."

On her pallid cheek and forehead came a color and a light,
As I have seen the rosy red flushing in the northern night.

And she turned—her bosom shaken with a sudden storm of sighs—
All the spirit deeply dawning in the dark of hazel eyes—

Saying, "I have hid my feelings, fearing they should do me wrong;"
Saying, "Dost thou love me, cousin?" weeping, "I have loved thee long."

Love took up the glass of Time, and turned it in his glowing hands;
Every moment, lightly shaken, ran itself in golden sands.

Love took up the harp of Life, and smote on all the chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, passed in music out of sight.

Many a morning on the moorland did we hear the copses ring,
And her whisper thronged my pulses with the fullness of the spring.

Many an evening by the waters did we watch the stately ships,
And our spirits rushed together at the touching of the lips.

O my cousin, shallow-hearted! O my Amy, mine no more!
O the dreary, dreary moorland! O the barren, barren shore!

Falser than all fancy fathoms, falser than all songs have sung,
Puppet to a father's threat, and servile to a shrewish tongue!

Is it well to wish thee happy?—having known me—to decline
On a range of lower feelings and a narrower heart than mine!

Yet it shall be; thou shalt lower to his level day by day,
What is fine within thee growing coarse to sympathize with clay.

As the husband is, the wife is; thou art mated with a clown,

[1] Orion and the Pleiads are among the brightest of the groups of stars.

And the grossness of his nature will have weight to drag thee down.

He will hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force,
Something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse.

What is this? his eyes are heavy; think not they are glazed with wine.
Go to him, it is thy duty; kiss him, take his hand in thine.

It may be my lord is weary, that his brain is overwrought;
Soothe him with thy finer fancies, touch him with thy lighter thought.

He will answer to the purpose, easy things to understand—
Better thou wert dead before me, tho' I slew thee with my hand!

Better thou and I were lying, hidden from the heart's disgrace,
Rolled in one another's arms, and silent in a last embrace.

Cursed be the social wants that sin against the strength of youth!
Cursed be the social lies that warp us from the living truth!

Cursed be the sickly forms that err from honest Nature's rule!
Cursed be the gold that gilds the straitened forehead of the fool!

Well—'tis well that I should bluster!—Hadst thou lest unworthy proved—
Would to God—for I had loved thee more than ever wife was loved.

Am I mad, that I should cherish that which bears but bitter fruit?
I will pluck it from my bosom, tho' my heart be at the root.

Never, tho' my mortal summers to such length of years should come
As the many-wintered crow that leads the clanging rookery home.

Where is comfort? in division of the records of the mind?
Can I part her from herself, and love her, as I knew her, kind?

I remember one that perished; sweetly did she speak and move;
Such a one do I remember, whom to look at was to love.

Can I think of her as dead, and love her for the love she bore?
No—she never loved me truly; love is love for evermore.

Comfort? comfort scorned of devils! this is truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

Drug thy memories, lest thou learn it, lest thy heart be put to proof,
In the dead unhappy night, and when the rain is on the roof.

Like a dog, he hunts in dreams, and thou art staring at the wall,
Where the dying night-lamp flickers, and the shadows rise and fall.

Then a hand shall pass before thee, pointing to his drunken sleep,
To thy widowed marriage-pillows, to the tears that thou wilt weep.

Thou shalt hear the "Never, never," whispered by the phantom years,
And a song from out the distance in the ringing of thine ears;

And an eye shall vex thee, looking ancient kindness on thy pain.
Turn thee, turn thee on thy pillow; get thee to thy rest again.

Nay, but Nature brings thee solace; for a tender voice will cry.
'Tis a purer life than thine, a lip to drain thy trouble dry.

Baby lips will laugh me down; my latest rival brings thee rest.
Baby fingers, waxen touches, press me from the mother's breast.

O, the child too clothes the father with a dearness not his due.
Half is thine and half is his; it will be worthy of the two.

O, I see thee old and formal, fitted to thy petty part,
With a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart.

"They were dangerous guides the feelings—she herself was not exempt—
Truly, she herself had suffered"—Perish in thy self-contempt!

Overlive it—lower yet—be happy! wherefore should I care?
I myself must mix with action, lest I wither by despair.

What is that which I should turn to, lighting upon days like these?
Every door is barred with gold, and opens but to golden keys.

Every gate is thronged with suitors, all the markets overflow.
I have but an angry fancy; what is that which I should do?

I had been content to perish, falling on the foeman's ground,
When the ranks are rolled in vapor, and the winds are laid with sound.

But the jingling of the guinea helps the hurt that Honor feels,
And the nations do but murmur, snarling at each other's heels.

Can I but relive in sadness? I will turn that earlier page.
Hide me from my deep emotion, O thou wondrous Mother-Age!

Make me feel the wild pulsation that I felt before the strife,
When I heard my days before me, and the tumult of my life;

Yearning for the large excitement that the coming years would yield,
Eager-hearted as a boy when first he leaves his father's field,

And at night along the dusky highway near and nearer drawn,
Sees in heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn;

And his spirit leaps within him to be gone before him then,
Underneath the light he looks at, in among the throngs of men;

Men, my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new;
That which they have done but earnest of the things that they shall do.

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;

Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight, dropping down with costly bales;

Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rained a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;

Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunder storm;

Till the war-drum throbbed no longer, and the battle flags were furled
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

There the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law.

So I triumphed, ere my passion sweeping thro' me left me dry,
Left me with the palsied heart, and left me with the jaundiced eye;

Eye, to which all order festers, all things here are out of joint.
Science moves, but slowly, slowly, creeping on from point to point;

Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion, creeping nigher,
Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying fire.

Yet I doubt not thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns.

What is that to him that reaps not harvest of his youthful joys,
Tho' the deep heart of existence beat for ever like a boy's?

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and I linger on the shore,
And the individual withers, and the world is more and more.

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and he bears a laden breast,
Full of sad experience, moving toward the stillness of his rest.

Hark, my merry comrades call me, sounding on the bugle-horn,
They to whom my foolish passion were a target for their scorn.

Shall it not be scorn to me to harp on such a moldered string?
I am shamed thro' all my nature to have loved so slight a thing.

Weakness to be wroth with weakness! woman's pleasure, woman's pain—
Nature made them blinder motions bounded in a shallower brain.

Woman is the lesser man, and all thy passions, matched with mine,
Are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine—

Here at least, where nature sickens, nothing. Ah, for some retreat
Deep in yonder shining Orient, where my life began to beat,

Where in wild Mahratta-battle fell my father evil-starred;—
I was left a trampled orphan, and a selfish uncle's ward.

Or to burst all links of habit—there to wander far away,
On from island unto island at the gateways of the day.

Larger constellations burning, mellow moons and happy skies,
Breadths of tropic shade and palms in cluster, knots of Paradise.

Never comes the trader, never floats an European flag,
Slides the bird o'er lustrous woodland, swings the trailer from the crag;

Droops the heavy-blossomed bower, hangs the heavy-fruited tree—
Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres of sea.

There methinks would be enjoyment more than in this march of mind,
In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake mankind.

There the passions cramped no longer shall have scope and breathing-space;
I will take some savage woman, she shall rear my dusky race.

Iron-jointed, supple-sinewed, they shall dive, and they shall run,
Catch the wild goat by the hair, and hurl their lances in the sun;

Whistle back the parrot's call, and leap the rainbows of the brooks,
Not with blinded eyesight poring over miserable books—

Fool, again the dream, the fancy! but I *know* my words are wild,
But I count the gray barbarian lower than the Christian child.

I, to herd with narrow foreheads, vacant of our glorious gains,
Like a beast with lower pleasures, like a beast with lower pains!

Mated with a squalid savage—what to me were sun or clime?
I the heir of all the ages, in the foremost files of time—

I that rather held it better men should perish one by one,
Than that earth should stand at gaze like Joshua's moon in Ajalon![2]

Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range,
Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change.

Thro' the shadow of the globe we sweep into the younger day;
Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.[3]

Mother-Age,—for mine I knew not,—help me as when life begun;
Rift the hills, and roll the waters, flash the lightnings, weigh the sun.

O, I see the crescent promise of my spirit hath not set.
Ancient founts of inspiration well thro' all my fancy yet.

Howsoever these things be, a long farewell to Locksley Hall!
Now for me the woods may wither, now for me the roof-tree fall.

Comes a vapor from the margin, blackening over heath and holt,
Cramming all the blast before it, in its breast a thunderbolt.

Let it fall on Locksley Hall, with rain or hail, or fire or snow;
For the mighty wind arises, roaring seaward, and I go.

(pub. 1842)

Break, Break, Break

This lyric was composed "in a Lincolnshire lane at five o'clock in the morning between blossoming hedges."

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O, well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

(pub. 1842)

Songs from *The Princess*

These songs are justly considered to be among the finest in our literature. It is, perhaps, possible to enjoy them more thus detached from the main body of the larger work; *The Princess*, for all its element of comedy, is vexing in its shortsighted conviction that woman, because of her biological function, is necessarily unfit for the larger enterprises of the world.

Tennyson's wonderful artistry is nowhere better illustrated than in the third, sixth, and seventh songs, where the lyric mood is perfectly sustained despite the absence of rhyme.

[2] Cf. *Joshua*, 10:12-13, for the story of his causing the moon to stand still in Ajalon.
[3] China.

1

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
Wind of the western sea!
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon, and blow,
Blow him again to me;
While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps.

Sleep and rest, sleep and rest,
Father will come to thee soon;
Rest, rest, on mother's breast,
Father will come to thee soon;
Father will come to his babe in the nest,
Silver sails all out of the west
Under the silver moon;
Sleep, my little one, sleep, my pretty one, sleep.

2

The splendor falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story;
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O, hark, O, hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O, sweet and far from cliff and scar
The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river;
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

3

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depth of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy autumn-fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the underworld,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge;
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;
O Death in Life, the days that are no more.

4

Home they brought her warrior dead;
She nor swooned, nor uttered cry.
All her maidens, watching, said,
"She must weep or she will die."

Then they praised him, soft and low,
Called him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend and noblest foe;
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
Lightly to the warrior stept,
Took the face-cloth from the face;
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee—
Like summer tempest came her tears—
"Sweet my child, I live for thee."

5

Ask me no more: the moon may draw the sea;
The cloud may stoop from heaven and take the shape,
With fold to fold, of mountain or of cape;
But O too fond, when have I answered thee?
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: what answer should I give?
I love not hollow cheek or faded eye:
Yet, O my friend, I will not have thee die!
Ask me no more, lest I should bid thee live;
Ask me no more.

Ask me no more: thy fate and mine are sealed;
I strove against the stream and all in vain;
Let the great river take me to the main.
No more, dear love, for at a touch I yield;
Ask me no more.

6

Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white;
Nor waves the cypress in the palace walk;
Nor winks the gold fin in the porphyry font.
The fire-fly wakens; waken thou with me.

Now droops the milkwhite peacock like a ghost,
And like a ghost she glimmers on to me.

Now lies the Earth all Danaë[1] to the stars,
And all thy heart lies open unto me.

Now slides the silent meteor on, and leaves
A shining furrow, as thy thoughts in me.

Now folds the lily all her sweetness up,
And slips into the bosom of the lake.
So fold thyself, my dearest, thou, and slip
Into my bosom and be lost in me.

7

Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain height:
What pleasure lives in height (the shepherd sang)
In height and cold, the splendor of the hills?
But cease to move so near the heavens, and cease
To glide a sunbeam by the blasted pine,
To sit a star upon the sparkling spire;
And come, for Love is of the valley, come,
For Love is of the valley, come thou down
And find him; by the happy threshold, he,
Or hand in hand with Plenty in the maize,
Or red with spirited purple of the vats,
Or foxlike in the vine; nor cares to walk
With Death and Morning on the Silver Horns,
Nor wilt thou snare him in the white ravine,
Nor find him dropt upon the firths of ice,
That huddling slant in furrow-cloven falls
To roll the torrent out of dusky doors.
But follow; let the torrent dance thee down
To find him in the valley; let the wild
Lean-headed Eagles yelp alone, and leave
The monstrous ledges there to slope, and spill
Their thousand wreaths of dangling water-smoke,
That like a broken purpose waste in air.
So waste not thou, but come; for all the vales
Await thee; azure pillars of the hearth
Arise to thee; the children call, and I
Thy shepherd pipe, and sweet is every sound,
Sweeter thy voice, but every sound is sweet;
Myriads of rivulets hurrying thro' the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.

(pub. 1847-50)

From *In Memoriam A. H. H.*

Arthur Henry Hallam, Tennyson's intimate friend, who was engaged to marry the poet's sister, died in Vienna in 1833. This loss plunged Tennyson only deeper into the mood of depression into which he had begun to fall. Upon the appearance of a volume (1832) containing such exquisite creations as *The Lady of Shalott, Œnone,* and *The Lotos-Eaters,* he had been mercilessly attacked in the *Quarterly Review.* Broken-hearted at Hallam's death, too poor to marry the girl he loved, and advised even by Carlyle to give up writing poetry, Tennyson was utterly discouraged, and published nothing until 1842. But during these years he was still busy working, and he composed among other poems a series of elegies, recording his great grief over his bereavement. Until some time before their appearance in 1850, when he decided to arrange them as a single composition under the title of *In Memoriam,* he continued to add to their number. In order to give them unity he abandoned the order in which they had been written.

Despite their agreement in tone and metre, however, the various sections of *In Memoriam* fall into individual groups—an inevitable result of the manner in which

[1] The earth is compared to Danaë whom Zeus in the form of a shower of gold visited in her tower, where her father had confined her to keep her from access to men.

they had been conceived. This failure to achieve an artistic entity prevents *In Memoriam* from being ranked with *Lycidas* and *Adonais*, though it has been rather more widely admired by the general public. The quality of the verse itself, moreover, is uneven, for *In Memoriam* contains some of Tennyson's best and poorest poetry. Our selections from it have been made to exhibit this fact.

Flowing from the main idea, the poet's love for his friend, are reflections on "man and the world, on beauty and conduct, and on the power of thought by its own energy to overcome distance or death"—reflections, as Oliver Elton points out, also to be found in Shakespeare's sonnets. In addition, *In Memoriam* is a testimonial of the poet's religious belief, important for its reflecting a tendency of the age. It is an argument against the rejection of the soul's immortality. Without subscribing to any orthodoxy, Tennyson feels that upon the conviction of the soul's deathlessness all of mankind's hopes must be based.

I

I held it truth, with him[1] who sings
To one clear harp in divers tones,
That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

But who shall so forecast the years
And find in loss a gain to match?
Or reach a hand thro' time to catch
The far-off interest of tears?

Let Love clasp Grief lest both be drowned,
Let darkness keep her raven gloss.
Ah, sweeter to be drunk with loss,
To dance with Death, to beat the ground,

Than that the victor Hours should scorn
The long result of love, and boast,
"Behold the man that loved and lost,
But all he was is overworn."

2

Old yew, which graspest at the stones
That name the underlying dead,
Thy fibres net the dreamless head,
Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.

The seasons bring the flower again,
And bring the firstling to the flock;
And in the dusk of thee, the clock
Beats out the little lives of men.

O, not for thee the glow, the bloom,
Who changest not in any gale,
Nor branding summer suns avail
To touch thy thousand years of gloom;
And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
I seem to fail from out my blood
And grow incorporate into thee.

3

O Sorrow, cruel fellowship,
O Priestess in the vaults of Death,
O sweet and bitter in a breath,
What whispers from thy lying lip?

"The stars," she whispers, "blindly run;
A web is woven across the sky;
From out waste places comes a cry,
And murmurs from the dying sun;

"And all the phantom, Nature, stands—
With all her music in her tone,
A hollow echo of my own,—
A hollow form with empty hands."

And shall I take a thing so blind,
Embrace her as my natural good;
Or crush her, like a vice of blood,
Upon the threshold of the mind?

4

To Sleep I give my powers away;
My will is bondsman to the dark;
I sit within a helmless bark,
And with my heart I muse and say:

O heart, how fares it with thee now,
That thou shouldst fail from thy desire,
Who scarcely darest to inquire,
"What is it makes me beat so low?"

[1] Goethe, the great German poet (1749-1832).

Something it is which thou hast lost,
Some pleasure from thine early years.
Break, thou deep vase of chilling tears,
That grief hath shaken into frost!

Such clouds of nameless trouble cross
All night below the darkened eyes;
With morning wakes the will, and cries,
"Thou shalt not be the fool of loss."

5

I sometimes hold it half a sin
To put in words the grief I feel;
For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the Soul within.

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

In words, like weeds, I'll wrap me o'er,
Like coarsest clothes against the cold;
But that large grief which these enfold
Is given in outline and no more.

6

One writes, that "other friends remain,"
That "loss is common to the race"—
And common is the commonplace,
And vacant chaff well meant for grain.

That loss is common would not make
My own less bitter, rather more.
Too common! Never morning wore
To evening, but some heart did break.

O father, wheresoe'er thou be,
That pledgest now thy gallant son,
A shot, ere half thy draught be done,
Hath stilled the life that beat from thee.

O mother, praying God will save
Thy sailor,—while thy head is bowed,
His heavy-shotted hammock-shroud
Drops in his vast and wandering grave.

Ye know no more than I who wrought
At that last hour to please him well;
Who mused on all I had to tell,
And something written, something thought;
Expecting still his advent home;
And ever met him on his way
With wishes, thinking, "here to-day,"
Or, "here to-morrow will he come."

O, somewhere, meek unconscious dove,
That sittest ranging golden hair;
And glad to find thyself so fair,
Poor child, that waitest for thy love!

For now her father's chimney glows
In expectation of a guest;
And thinking "this will please him best,"
She takes a riband or a rose;

For he will see them on to-night;
And with the thought her color burns;
And, having left the glass, she turns
Once more to set a ringlet right;

And, even when she turned, the curse
Had fallen, and her future lord
Was drowned in passing thro' the ford,
Or killed in falling from his horse.

O, what to her shall be the end?
And what to me remains of good?
To her, perpetual maidenhood,
And unto me, no second friend.

7

Dark house,[2] by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasped no more—
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly thro' the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

8

A happy lover who has come
To look on her that loves him well,

[2] Hallam's house in Wimpole Street, London.

Who 'lights and rings the gateway bell,
And learns her gone and far from home;

He saddens, all the magic light
Dies off at once from bower and hall,
And all the place is dark, and all
The chambers emptied of delight:

So find I every pleasant spot
In which we two were wont to meet,
The fields, the chamber and the street,
For all is dark where thou art not.

Yet as that other, wandering there
In those deserted walks, may find
A flower beat with rain and wind,
Which once she fostered up with care;

So seems it in my deep regret,
O my forsaken heart, with thee
And this poor flower of poesy
Which little cared for fades not yet.

But since it pleased a vanished eye,
I go to plant it on his tomb,
That if it can it there may bloom,
Or dying, there at least may die.

9

Fair ship, that from the Italian shore
Sailest the placid ocean-plains
With my lost Arthur's loved remains,
Spread thy full wings, and waft him o'er.

So draw him home to those that mourn
In vain; a favorable speed
Ruffle thy mirror'd mast, and lead
Thro' prosperous floods his holy urn.

All night no ruder air perplex
Thy sliding keel, till Phosphor, bright
As our pure love, thro' early light
Shall glimmer on the dewy decks.

Sphere all your lights around, above;
Sleep, gentle heavens, before the prow;
Sleep, gentle winds, as he sleeps now,
My friend, the brother of my love;

My Arthur, whom I shall not see
Till all my widowed race be run;
Dear as the mother to the son,
More than my brothers are to me.

10

I hear the noise about thy keel;
I hear the bell struck in the night;
I see the cabin-window bright;
I see the sailor at the wheel.

Thou bring'st the sailor to his wife,
And travelled men from foreign lands;
And letters unto trembling hands;
And, thy dark freight, a vanished life.

So bring him: we have idle dreams:
This look of quiet flatters thus
Our home-bred fancies: O to us,
The fools of habit, sweeter seems

To rest beneath the clover sod,
That takes the sunshine and the rains,
Or where the kneeling hamlet drains
The chalice of the grapes of God:

Than if with thee the roaring wells
Should gulf him fathom-deep in brine;
And hands so often clasped in mine,
Should toss with tangle and with shells.

11

Calm is the morn without a sound,
Calm as to suit a calmer grief,
And only thro' the faded leaf
The chestnut pattering to the ground:

Calm and deep peace on this high wold,
And on these dews that drench the furze,
And all the silvery gossamers
That twinkle into green and gold:

Calm and still light on yon great plain
That sweeps with all its autumn bowers,
And crowded farms and lessening towers,
To mingle with the bounding main:

Calm and deep peace in this wide air,
These leaves that redden to the fall;
And in my heart, if calm at all,
If any calm, a calm despair:

Calm on the seas, and silver sleep,

And waves that sway themselves in rest,
And dead calm in that noble breast
Which heaves but with the heaving deep.

12

Lo, as a dove when up she springs
To bear thro' Heaven a tale of woe,
Some dolorous message knit below
The wild pulsation of her wings;

Like her I go; I cannot stay;
I leave this mortal ark behind,
A weight of nerves without a mind,
And leave the cliffs, and haste away

O'er ocean-mirrors rounded large,
And reach the glow of southern skies,
And see the sails at distance rise,
And linger weeping on the marge,

And saying, "Comes he thus, my friend?
Is this the end of all my care?"
And circle moaning in the air:
"Is this the end? Is this the end?"

And forward dart again, and play
About the prow, and back return
To where the body sits, and learn
That I have been an hour away.

13

Tears of the widower, when he sees
A late-lost form that sleep reveals,
And moves his doubtful arms, and feels
Her place is empty, fall like these;

Which weep a loss for ever new,
A void where heart on heart reposed;
And, where warm hands have prest and closed,
Silent, till I be silent too;

Which weep the comrade of my choice,
An awful thought, a life removed,
The human-hearted man I loved,
A Spirit, not a breathing voice.

Come Time, and teach me, many years,
I do not suffer in a dream;
For now so strange do these things seem,
Mine eyes have leisure for their tears;
My fancies time to rise on wing,
And glance about the approaching sails,
As tho' they brought but merchants' bales,
And not the burthen that they bring.

14

If one should bring me this report,
That thou hadst touched the land to-day,
And I went down unto the quay,
And found thee lying in the port;

And standing, muffled round with woe,
Should see thy passengers in rank
Come stepping lightly down the plank,
And beckoning unto those they know;

And if along with these should come
The man I held as half-divine;
Should strike a sudden hand in mine,
And ask a thousand things of home;

And I should tell him all my pain,
And how my life had drooped of late,
And he should sorrow o'er my state
And marvel what possessed my brain;

And I perceived no touch of change,
No hint of death in all his frame,
But found him all in all the same,
I should not feel it to be strange.

15

To-night the winds begin to rise
And roar from yonder dropping day:
The last red leaf is whirled away,
The rooks are blown about the skies;

The forest cracked, the waters curled,
The cattle huddled on the lea;
And wildly dashed on tower tree
The sunbeam strikes along the world:

And but for fancies, which aver
That all thy motions gently pass
Athwart a plane of molten glass,
I scarce could brook the strain and stir

That makes the barren branches loud;
And but for fear it is not so,
The wild unrest that lives in woe
Would dote and pore on yonder cloud

That rises upward always higher,
And onward drags the laboring breast,
And topples round the dreary west,
A looming bastion fringed with fire.

16

What words are these have fall'n from me?
Can calm despair and wild unrest
Be tenants of a single breast,
Or sorrow such a changeling be?

Or doth she only seem to take
The touch of change in calm or storm;
But knows no more of transient form
In her deep self, than some dead lake

That holds the shadow of a lark
Hung in the shadow of a heaven?
Or has the shock, so harshly given,
Confused me like the unhappy bark

That strikes by night a craggy shelf,
And staggers blindly ere she sink?
And stunned me from my power to think
And all my knowledge of myself;

And made me that delirious man
Whose fancy fuses old and new,
And flashes into false and true,
And mingles all without a plan?

17

Thou comest, much wept for: such a breeze
Compelled thy canvas, and my prayer
Was as the whisper of an air
To breathe thee over lonely seas.

For I in spirit saw thee move
Thro' circles of the bounding sky
Week after week: the days go by:
Come quick, thou bringest all I love.

Henceforth, wherever thou may'st roam,
My blessing, like a line of light,
Is on the waters day and night,
And like a beacon guards thee home.

So may whatever tempest mars
Mid-ocean, spare thee, sacred bark;
And balmy drops in summer dark
Slide from the bosom of the stars.

So kind an office hath been done,
Such precious relics brought by thee;
The dust of him I shall not see
Till all my widowed race be run.

18

'Tis well; 'tis something; we may stand
Where he in English earth is laid,
And from his ashes may be made
The violet of his native land.

'Tis little; but it looks in truth
As if the quiet bones were blest
Among familiar names to rest
And in the places of his youth.

Come then, pure hands, and bear the head
That sleeps or wears the mask of sleep,
And come, whatever loves to weep,
And hear the ritual of the dead.

Ah yet, ev'n yet, if this might be,
I, falling on his faithful heart,
Would breathing thro' his lips impart
The life that almost dies in me;

That dies not, but endures with pain,
And slowly forms the firmer mind,
Treasuring the look it cannot find,
The words that are not heard again.

19

The Danube to the Severn gave
The darkened heart that beat no more;
They laid him by the pleasant shore,
And in the hearing of the wave.

There twice a day the Severn fills;
The salt sea-water passes by,
And hushes half the babbling Wye,
And makes a silence in the hills.

The Wye is hushed nor moved along,
And hushed my deepest grief of all,
When filled with tears that cannot fall,
I brim with sorrow drowning song.

The tide flows down, the wave again
Is vocal in its wooded walls;
My deeper anguish also falls,
And I can speak a little then.

20

The lesser griefs that may be said,
That breathe a thousand tender vows,
Are but as servants in a house
Where lies the master newly dead;

Who speak their feeling as it is,
And weep the fullness from the mind:
"It will be hard," they say, "to find
Another service such as this."

My lighter moods are like to these,
That out of words a comfort win;
But there are other griefs within,
And tears that at their fountain freeze;

For by the hearth the children sit,
Cold in that atmosphere of Death,
And scarce endure to draw the breath,
Or like to noiseless phantoms flit:

But open converse is there none,
So much the vital spirits sink
To see the vacant chair, and think,
"How good! how kind! and he is gone."

21

I sing to him that rests below,
And, since the grasses round me wave,
I take the grasses of the grave,
And make them pipes whereon to blow.

The traveller hears me now and then,
And sometimes harshly will he speak;
"This fellow would make weakness weak,
And melt the waxen hearts of men."

Another answers, "Let him be,
He loves to make parade of pain,
That with his piping he may gain
The praise that comes to constancy."

A third is wroth, "Is this an hour
For private sorrow's barren song,
When more and more the people throng
The chairs and thrones of civil power?

"A time to sicken and to swoon,
When Science reaches forth her arms
To feel from world to world, and charms
Her secret from the latest moon?"

Behold, ye speak an idle thing:
Ye never knew the sacred dust:
I do but sing because I must,
And pipe but as the linnets sing:

And one is glad; her note is gay,
For now her little ones have ranged;
And one is sad; her note is changed,
Because her brood is stol'n away.

22

The path by which we twain did go,
Which led by tracts that pleased us well,
Thro' four sweet years arose and fell,
From flower to flower, from snow to snow:

And we with singing cheered the way,
And, crowned with all the season lent,
From April on to April went,
And glad at heart from May to May:

But where the path we walked began
To slant the fifth autumnal slope,
As we descended following Hope,
There sat the Shadow feared of man;

Who broke our fair companionship,
And spread his mantle dark and cold,
And wrapt thee formless in the fold,
And dull'd the murmur on thy lip,

And bore thee where I could not see
Nor follow, tho' I walk in haste,
And think, that somewhere in the waste
The Shadow sits and waits for me.

23

Now, sometimes in my sorrow shut,
Or breaking into song by fits,
Alone, alone, to where he sits,
The Shadow cloaked from head to foot,

Who keeps the keys of all the creeds,
I wander, often falling lame,
And looking back to whence I came,
Or on to where the pathway leads;

And crying, How changed from where it ran
Thro' lands where not a leaf was dumb;
But all the lavish hills would hum
The murmur of a happy Pan:

When each by turns was guide to each,
And Fancy light from Fancy caught,
And Thought leapt out to wed with Thought
Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech;

And all we met was fair and good,
And all was good that Time could bring,
And all the secret of the Spring
Moved in the chambers of the blood;

And many an old philosophy
On Argive heights divinely sang,
And round us all the thicket rang
To many a flute of Arcady.

24

And was the day of my delight
As pure and perfect as I say?
The very source and fount of Day
Is dashed with wandering isles of night.

If all was good and fair we met,
This earth had been the Paradise
It never look'd to human eyes
Since our first Sun arose and set.

And is it that the haze of grief
Makes former gladness loom so great?
The lowness of the present state,
That sets the past in this relief?

Or that the past will always win
A glory from its being far;
And orb into the perfect star
We saw not, when we moved therein?

25

I know that this was Life,—the track
Whereon with equal feet we fared;
And then, as now, the day prepared
The daily burden for the back.

But this it was that made me move
As light as carrier-birds in air;
I loved the weight I had to bear,
Because it needed help of Love:

Nor could I weary, heart or limb,
When mighty Love would cleave in twain
The lading of a single pain,
And part it, giving half to him.

26

Still onward winds the dreary way;
I with it; for I long to prove
No lapse of moons can canker Love,
Whatever fickle tongues may say.

And if that eye which watches guilt
And goodness, and hath power to see
Within the green the moulder'd tree,
And towers fall'n as soon as built—

Oh, if indeed that eye foresee
Or see (in Him is no before)
In more of life true life no more
And Love the indifference to be,

Then might I find, ere yet the morn
Breaks hither over Indian seas,
That Shadow waiting with the keys,
To shroud me from my proper scorn.

27

I envy not in any moods
The captive void of noble rage,
The linnet born within the cage,
That never knew the summer woods;

I envy not the beast that takes
His license in the field of time,
Unfettered by the sense of crime,
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,
The heart that never plighted troth
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it, when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

28

The time draws near the birth of Christ.
The moon is hid, the night is still;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets[8] round,

[8] The church-bells in the four villages surrounding Tennyson's home. Each church had four bells.

From far and near, on mead and moor,
Swell out and fail, as if a door
Were shut between me and the sound;

Each voice four changes on the wind,
That now dilate, and now decrease,
Peace and goodwill, goodwill and peace,
Peace and goodwill, to all mankind.

This year I slept and woke with pain,
I almost wished no more to wake,
And that my hold on life would break
Before I heard those bells again;

But they my troubled spirit rule,
For they controlled me when a boy;
They bring me sorrow touched with joy,
The merry, merry bells of Yule.

29

With such compelling cause to grieve
As daily vexes household peace,
And chains regret to his decease,
How dare we keep our Christmas-eve,

Which brings no more a welcome guest
To enrich the threshold of the night
With showered largess of delight
In dance and song and game and jest?

Yet go, and while the holly boughs
Entwine the cold baptismal font,
Make one wreath more for Use and Wont,
That guard the portals of the house;

Old sisters of a day gone by,
Gray nurses, loving nothing new—
Why should they miss their yearly due
Before their time? They too will die.

30

With trembling fingers did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth;
A rainy cloud possessed the earth,
And sadly fell our Christmas-eve.

At our old pastimes in the hall
We gamboled, making vain pretence
Of gladness, with an awful sense
Of one mute Shadow watching all.

We paused: the winds were in the beech;
We heard them sweep the winter land;
And in a circle hand-in-hand
Sat silent, looking each at each.

Then echo-like our voices rang;
We sung, tho' every eye was dim,
A merry song we sang with him
Last year; impetuously we sang.

We ceased; a gentler feeling crept
Upon us: surely rest is meet.
"They rest," we said, "their sleep is sweet,"
And silence followed, and we wept.

Our voices took a higher range;
Once more we sang: "They do not die
Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
Nor change to us, although they change;

"Rapt from the fickle and the frail
With gathered power, yet the same,
Pierces the keen seraphic flame
From orb to orb, from veil to veil."

Rise, happy morn, rise, holy morn,
Draw forth the cheerful day from night:
O Father, touch the east, and light
The light that shone when Hope was born.

. . . . .

43

If Sleep and Death be truly one,
And every spirit's folded bloom
Thro' all its intervital gloom
In some long trance should slumber on;

Unconscious of the sliding hour,
Bare of the body, might it last,
And silent traces of the past
Be all the color of the flower:

So then were nothing lost to man;
So that still garden of the souls
In many a figured leaf enrolls
The total world since life began;

And love will last as pure and whole
As when he loved me here in Time,
And at the spiritual prime
Rewaken with the dawning soul.

44

How fares it with the happy dead?
For here the man is more and more;
But he forgets the days before
God shut the doorways of his head.

The days have vanished, tone and tint,
And yet perhaps the hoarding sense
Gives out at times (he knows not whence)
A little flash, a mystic hint;

And in the long harmonious years
(If Death so taste Lethean springs)
May some dim touch of earthly things
Surprise thee ranging with thy peers.

If such a dreamy touch should fall,
O turn thee round, resolve the doubt:
My guardian angel will speak out
In that high place, and tell thee all.

45

The baby new to earth and sky,
What time his tender palm is prest
Against the circle of the breast,
Has never thought that "this is I":

But as he grows he gathers much,
And learns the use of "I," and "me,"
And finds "I am not what I see,
And other than the things I touch."

So rounds he to a separate mind
From whence clear memory may begin,
As thro' the frame that binds him in
His isolation grows defined.

This use may lie in blood and breath,
Which else were fruitless of their due,
Had man to learn himself anew
Beyond the second birth of Death.

46

We ranging down this lower track,
The path we came by, thorn and flower,
Is shadowed by the growing hour,
Lest life should fail in looking back.

So be it: there no shade can last
In that deep dawn behind the tomb,
But clear from marge to marge shall bloom
The eternal landscape of the past;

A lifelong tract of time reveal'd;
The fruitful hours of still increase;
Days ordered in a wealthy peace,
And those five years its richest field.

O Love, thy province were not large,
A bounded field, nor stretching far;
Look also, Love, a brooding star,
A rosy warmth from marge to marge.

47

That each, who seems a separate whole,
Should move his rounds, and fusing all
The skirts of self again, should fall
Remerging in the general Soul,

Is faith as vague as all unsweet:
Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside;
And I shall know him when we meet:

And we shall sit at endless feast,
Enjoying each the other's good:
What vaster dream can hit the mood
Of Love on earth? He seeks at least

Upon the last and sharpest height,
Before the spirits fade away,
Some landing-place, to clasp and say,
"Farewell! We lose ourselves in light."

48

If these brief lays, of Sorrow born,
Were taken to be such as closed
Grave doubts and answers here proposed,
Then these were such as men might scorn:

Her care is not to part and prove;
She takes, when harsher moods remit,
What slender shade of doubt may flit,
And makes it vassal unto love:

And hence, indeed, she sports with words,
But better serves a wholesome law,
And holds it sin and shame to draw
The deepest measure from the chords:

Nor dare she trust a larger lay,
But rather loosens from the lip
Short swallow-flights of song, that dip
Their wings in tears, and skim away.

49

From art, from nature, from the schools,
Let random influences glance,
Like light in many a shivered lance
That breaks about the dappled pools:

The lightest wave of thought shall lisp,
The fancy's tenderest eddy wreathe,
The slightest air of song shall breathe
To make the sullen surface crisp.

And look thy look, and go thy way,
But blame not thou the winds that make
The seeming-wanton ripple break,
The tender-pencil'd shadow play.

Beneath all fancied hopes and fears
Ay me, the sorrow deepens down,
Whose muffled motions blindly drown
The bases of my life in tears.

50

Be near me when my light is low,
When the blood creeps, and the nerves prick
And tingle; and the heart is sick,
And all the wheels of being slow.

Be near me when the sensuous frame
Is racked with pangs that conquer trust;
And Time, a maniac scattering dust,
And Life, a Fury slinging flame.

Be near me when my faith is dry,
And men the flies of latter spring,
That lay their eggs, and sting and sing
And weave their petty cells and die.

Be near me when I fade away,
To point the term of human strife,
And on the low dark verge of life
The twilight of eternal day.

51

Do we indeed desire the dead
Should still be near us at our side?
Is there no baseness we would hide?
No inner vileness that we dread?

Shall he for whose applause I strove,
I had such reverence for his blame,
See with clear eye some hidden shame
And I be lessened in his love?

I wrong the grave with fears untrue.
Shall love be blamed for want of faith?
There must be wisdom with great Death;
The dead shall look me thro' and thro'.

Be near us when we climb or fall;
Ye watch, like God, the rolling hours
With larger other eyes than ours,
To make allowance for us all.

52

I cannot love thee as I ought,
For love reflects the thing beloved;
My words are only words, and moved
Upon the topmost froth of thought.

"Yet blame not thou thy plaintive song,"
The Spirit of true love replied;
"Thou canst not move me from thy side,
Nor human frailty do me wrong.

"What keeps a spirit wholly true
To that ideal which he bears?
What record? not the sinless years[4]
That breathed beneath the Syrian blue;

"So fret not, like an idle girl,
That life is dashed with flecks of sin.
Abide; thy wealth is gathered in,
When Time hath sundered shell from pearl."

53

How many a father have I seen,
A sober man, among his boys,
Whose youth was full of foolish noise,
Who wears his manhood hale and green;

And dare we to this fancy give,
That had the wild oat not been sown,
The soil, left barren, scarce had grown
The grain by which a man may live?

[4] Christ's.

Oh, if we held the doctrine sound
For life outliving heats of youth,
Yet who would preach it as a truth
To those that eddy round and round?

Hold thou the good, define it well;
For fear divine Philosophy
Should push beyond her mark, and be
Procuress to the Lords of Hell.

54

O, yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shriveled in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last—far off—at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream; but what am I?
An infant crying in the night;
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.

55

The wish, that of the living whole
No life may fail beyond the grave,
Derives it not from what we have
The likest God within the soul?

Are God and Nature then at strife,
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life,

That I, considering everywhere
Her secret meaning in her deeds,
And finding that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear,

I falter where I firmly trod,
And falling with my weight of cares
Upon the great world's altar-stairs
That slope thro' darkness up to God,

I stretch lame hands of faith, and grope,
And gather dust and chaff, and call
To what I feel is Lord of all,
And faintly trust the larger hope.

. . . . .

77

What hope is here for modern rhyme
To him who turns a musing eye
On songs, and deeds, and lives, that lie
Foreshortened in the tract of time?

These mortal lullabies of pain
May bind a book, may line a box,
May serve to curl a maiden's locks;
Or when a thousand moons shall wane

A man upon a stall may find,
And, passing, turn the page that tells
A grief, then changed to something else,
Sung by a long-forgotten mind.

But what of that? My darkened ways
Shall ring with music all the same;
To breathe my loss is more than fame,
To utter love more sweet than praise.

78

Again at Christmas[5] did we weave
The holly round the Christmas hearth;
The silent snow possessed the earth,
And calmly fell our Christmas-eve.

The yule-clog sparkled keen with frost,
No wing of wind the region swept,
But over all things brooding slept
The quiet sense of something lost.

As in the winters left behind,
Again our ancient games had place,
The mimic picture's breathing grace,
And dance and song and hoodman-blind.

[5] The second Christmas after Hallam's death. See sections 30 and 105 for other Christmases.

Who showed a token of distress?
No single tear, no type of pain—
O sorrow, then can sorrow wane?
O grief, can grief be changed to less?

O last regret, regret can die!
No—mixt with all this mystic frame,
Her deep relations are the same,
But with long use her tears are dry.

79

"More than my brothers are to me"—
Let this not vex thee, noble heart!
I know thee of what force thou art
To hold the costliest love in fee.

But thou and I are one in kind,
As moulded like in nature's mint;
And hill and wood and field did print
The same sweet forms in either mind.

For us the same cold streamlet curled
Thro' all his eddying coves; the same
All winds that roam the twilight came
In whispers of the beauteous world.

At one dear knee we proffered vows,
One lesson from one book we learned,
Ere childhood's flaxen ringlet turned
To black and brown on kindred brows.

And so my wealth resembles thine,
But he was rich where I was poor,
And he supplied my want the more
As his unlikeness fitted mine.

80

If any vague desire should rise,
That holy Death ere Arthur died
Had moved me kindly from his side,
And dropt the dust on tearless eyes;

Then fancy shapes, as fancy can,
The grief my loss in him had wrought,
A grief as deep as life or thought,
But stayed in peace with God and man.

I make a picture in the brain;
I hear the sentence that he speaks;
He bears the burthen of the weeks,
But turns his burthen into gain.

His credit thus shall set me free;
And, influence-rich to soothe and save,
Unused example from the grave
Reached out dead hands to comfort me.

81

Could I have said while he was here,
"My love shall now no further range;
There cannot come a mellower change,
For now is love mature in ear,"

Love, then, had hope of richer store:
What end is here to my complaint?
This haunting whisper makes me faint,
"More years had made me love thee more."

But Death returns an answer sweet:
"My sudden frost was sudden gain,
And gave all ripeness to the grain,
It might have drawn from after-heat."

82

I wage not any feud with Death
For changes wrought on form and face;
No lower life that earth's embrace
May breed with him, can fright my faith.

Eternal process moving on,
From state to state the spirit walks;
And these are but the shattered stalks,
Or ruined chrysalis of one.

Nor blame I Death, because he bare
The use of virtue out of earth:
I know transplanted human worth
Will bloom to profit, otherwhere.

For this alone on Death I wreak
The wrath that garners in my heart;
He put our lives so far apart
We cannot hear each other speak.

83

Dip down upon the northern shore,
O sweet new-year delaying long;
Thou doest expectant nature wrong;
Delaying long, delay no more.

What stays thee from the clouded noons,
Thy sweetness from its proper place?
Can trouble live with April days,
Or sadness in the summer moons?

Bring orchids, bring the foxglove spire,
The little speedwell's darling blue,
Deep tulips dash'd with fiery dew,
Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire.

O thou, new-year, delaying long,
Delayest the sorrow in my blood,
That longs to burst a frozen bud
And flood a fresher throat with song.

. . . . .

96

You say, but with no touch of scorn,
Sweet-hearted, you, whose light-blue eyes
Are tender over drowning flies,
You tell me, doubt is Devil-born.

I know not: one indeed I knew
In many a subtle question versed,
Who touched a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true;

Perplext in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them; thus he came at length

To find a stronger faith his own,
And Power was with him in the night,
Which makes the darkness and the light,
And dwells not in the light alone,

But in the darkness and the cloud,
As over Sinaï's peaks of old,[6]
While Israel made their gods of gold,
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.

. . . . .

[6] Moses saw God in the cloud of fire and smoke on Mount Sinaï. Meantime the Israelites below, not seeing him, were worshiping a golden calf. See *Exodus*, 19:16-25; 32:1-6.

99

Risest thou thus, dim dawn, again,
So loud with voices of the birds,
So thick with lowings of the herds,
Day, when I lost the flower of men;

Who tremblest thro' thy darkling red
On yon swollen brook that bubbles fast
By meadows breathing of the past,
And woodlands holy to the dead;

Who murmurest in the foliaged eaves
A song that slights the coming care,
And Autumn laying here and there
A fiery finger on the leaves;

Who wakenest with thy balmy breath
To myriads on the genial earth,
Memories of bridal, or of birth,
And unto myriads more, of death.

O wheresoever those may be,
Betwixt the slumber of the poles,
To-day they count as kindred souls;
They knew me not, but mourn with me.

100

I climb the hill: from end to end
Of all the landscape underneath,
I find no place that does not breathe
Some gracious memory of my friend;

No grey old grange, or lonely fold,
Or low morass and whispering reed,
Or simple stile from mead to mead,
Or sheepwalk up the windy wold;

Nor hoary knoll of ash and haw
That hears the latest linnet trill,
Nor quarry trenched along the hill
And haunted by the wrangling daw;

Nor runlet tinkling from the rock;
Nor pastoral rivulet that swerves
To left and right thro' meadowy curves,
That feed the mothers of the flock;

But each has pleased a kindred eye,
And each reflects a kindlier day;
And, leaving these, to pass away,
I think once more he seems to die.

101

Unwatched, the garden bough shall sway,
The tender blossom flutter down,
Unloved, that beech will gather brown,
This maple burn itself away;

Unloved, the sun-flower, shining fair,
Ray round with flames her disk of seed,
And many a rose-carnation feed
With summer spice the humming air;

Unloved, by many a sandy bar,
The brook shall babble down the plain,
At noon or when the lesser wain
Is twisting round the polar star;

Uncared for, gird the windy grove,
And flood the haunts of hern and crake;
Or into silver arrows break
The sailing moon in creek and cove;

Till from the garden and the wild
A fresh association blow,
And year by year the landscape grow
Familiar to the stranger's child;

As year by year the laborer tills
His wonted glebe, or lops the glades;
And year by year our memory fades
From all the circle of the hills.

102

We leave the well-beloved place
Where first we gazed upon the sky;
The roofs, that heard our earliest cry,
Will shelter one of stranger race.

We go, but ere we go from home,
As down the garden-walks I move,
Two spirits of a diverse love
Contend for loving masterdom.

One whispers, "Here thy boyhood sung
Long since its matin song, and heard
The low love-language of the bird
In native hazels tassel-hung."

The other answers, "Yea, but here
Thy feet have strayed in after hours
With thy lost friend among the bowers,
And this hath made them trebly dear."

These two have striven half the day,
And each prefers his separate claim,
Poor rivals in a losing game,
That will not yield each other way.

I turn to go: my feet are set
To leave the pleasant fields and farms;
They mix in one another's arms
To one pure image of regret.

103

On that last night before we went
From out the doors where I was bred,
I dreamed a vision of the dead,
Which left my after-morn content.

Methought I dwelt within a hall,
And maidens with me: distant hills
From hidden summits fed with rills
A river sliding by the wall.

The hall with harp and carol rang.
They sang of what is wise and good
And graceful. In the centre stood
A statue veiled, to which they sang;

And which, tho' veiled, was known to me,
The shape of him I loved, and love
For ever: then flew in a dove
And brought a summons from the sea:

And when they learnt that I must go
They wept and wailed, but led the way
To where a little shallop lay
At anchor in the flood below;

And on by many a level mead,
And shadowing bluff that made the banks,
We glided winding under ranks
Of iris, and the golden reed;

And still as vaster grew the shore,
And rolled the floods in grander space,
The maidens gathered strength and grace
And presence, lordlier than before;

And I myself, who sat apart,
And watched them, waxed in every limb;
I felt the thews of Anakim,
The pulses of a Titan's heart;

As one would sing the death of war,
And one would chant the history
Of that great race, which is to be,
And one the shaping of a star;

Until the forward-creeping tides
Began to foam, and we to draw
From deep to deep, to where we saw
A great ship lift her shining sides.

The man we loved was there on deck,
But thrice as large as man he bent
To greet us. Up the side I went,
And fell in silence on his neck:

Whereat those maidens with one mind
Bewailed their lot; I did them wrong:
"We served thee here," they said, "so long,
And wilt thou leave us now behind?"

So rapt I was, they could not win
An answer from my lips, but he
Replying, "Enter likewise ye
And go with us": they entered in.

And while the wind began to sweep
A music out of sheet and shroud,
We steered her toward a crimson cloud
That landlike slept along the deep.

104

The time draws near the birth of Christ;[7]
The moon is hid, the night is still;
A single[8] church below the hill
Is pealing, folded in the mist.

A single peal of bells below,
That wakens at this hour of rest
A single murmur in the breast,
That these are not the bells I know.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,
In lands where not a memory strays,
Nor landmark breathes of other days,
But all is new unhallowed ground.

105

To-night ungathered let us leave
This laurel, let this holly stand:
We live within the stranger's land,
And strangely falls our Christmas-eve.

Our father's dust is left alone
And silent under other snows:
There in due time the woodbine blows,
The violet comes, but we are gone.

No more shall wayward grief abuse
The genial hour with mask and mime;
For change of place, like growth of time,
Has broke the bond of dying use.

Let cares that petty shadows cast,
By which our lives are chiefly proved,
A little spare the night I loved,
And hold it solemn to the past.

But let no footstep beat the floor,
Nor bowl of wassail mantle warm;
For who would keep an ancient form
Through which the spirit breathes no more?

Be neither song, nor game, nor feast;
Nor harp be touched, nor flute be blown;
No dance, no motion, save alone
What lightens in the lucid East

Of rising worlds by yonder wood.
Long sleeps the summer in the seed;
Run out your measured arcs, and lead
The closing cycle rich in good.

106

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

[7] See sections 30 and 78 for earlier Christmases.
[8] Waltham Abbey Church, near Tennyson's new home.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

107

It is the day when he was born,
A bitter day that early sank
Behind a purple-frosty bank
Of vapor, leaving night forlorn.

The time admits not flowers or leaves
To deck the banquet. Fiercely flies
The blast of North and East, and ice
Makes daggers at the sharpened eaves,

And bristles all the brakes and thorns
To yon hard crescent, as she hangs
Above the wood which grides and clangs
Its leafless ribs and iron horns

Together, in the drifts that pass
To darken on the rolling brine
That breaks the coast. But fetch the wine,
Arrange the board and brim the glass;

Bring in great logs and let them lie,
To make a solid core of heat;
Be cheerful-minded, talk and treat
Of all things ev'n as he were by;

We keep the day. With festal cheer,
With books and music, surely we
Will drink to him, whate'er he be,
And sing the songs he loved to hear.

108

I will not shut me from my kind,
And, lest I stiffen into stone,
I will not eat my heart alone,
Nor feed with sighs a passing wind:

What profit lies in barren faith,
And vacant yearning, tho' with might
To scale the heaven's highest height,
Or dive below the wells of Death?

What find I in the highest place,
But mine own phantom chanting hymns?
And on the depths of death there swims
The reflex of a human face.

I'll rather take what fruit may be
Of sorrow under human skies:
'Tis held that sorrow makes us wise,
Whatever wisdom sleep with thee.

. . . . . .

116

Is it, then, regret for buried time
That keenlier in sweet April wakes,
And meets the year, and gives and takes
The colors of the crescent prime?

Not all: the songs, the stirring air,
The life re-orient out of dust,
Cry thro' the sense to hearten trust
In that which made the world so fair.

Not all regret: the face will shine
Upon me, while I muse alone,
And that dear voice, I once have known
Still speak to me of me and mine.

Yet less of sorrow lives in me
For days of happy commune dead,
Less yearning for the friendship fled
Than some strong bond which is to be.

117

O days and hours, your work is this,
To hold me from my proper place,
A little while from his embrace,
For fuller gain of after bliss;

That out of distance might ensue
Desire of nearness doubly sweet,

And unto meeting, when we meet,
Delight a hundredfold accrue,

For every grain of sand that runs,
And every span of shade that steals,
And every kiss of toothed wheels,
And all the courses of the suns.

118

Contemplate all this work of Time,
The giant laboring in his youth;
Nor dream of human love and truth,
As dying Nature's earth and lime;

But trust that those we call the dead
Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends. They say,
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms,
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man;

Who throve and branched from clime to clime,
The herald of a higher race,
And of himself in higher place,
If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more;
Or, crowned with attributes of woe
Like glories, move his course, and show
That life is not as idle ore,

But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die.

. . . . .

126

Love is and was my lord and king,
And in his presence I attend
To hear the tidings of my friend,
Which every hour his couriers bring.

Love is and was my king and lord,
And will be, tho' as yet I keep
Within his court on earth, and sleep
Encompassed by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
That moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.

127

And all is well, tho' faith and form
Be sundered in the night of fear;
Well roars the storm to those that hear
A deeper voice across the storm,

Proclaiming social truth shall spread,
And justice, even tho' thrice again
The red fool-fury of the Seine[9]
Should pile her barricades with dead.

But ill for him that wears a crown,
And him, the lazar, in his rags!
They tremble, the sustaining crags;
The spires of ice are toppled down,

And molten up, and roar in flood;
The fortress crashes from on high,
The brute earth lightens to the sky,
And the great Æon sinks in blood,

And compassed by the fires of hell;
While thou, dear spirit, happy star,
O'erlook'st the tumult from afar,
And smilest, knowing all is well.

. . . . . .

130

Thy voice is on the rolling air;
I hear thee where the waters run;
Thou standest in the rising sun,
And in the setting thou art fair.

What are thou then? I cannot guess;
But tho' I seem in star and flower
To feel thee some diffusive power,
I do not therefore love thee less:

[9] The French Revolution of 1848 was the third, others having occurred in 1789 and 1830.

My love involves the love before;
My love is vaster passion now;
Tho' mixed with God and Nature thou,
I seem to love thee more and more.

Far off thou art, but ever nigh;
I have thee still, and I rejoice;
I prosper, circled with thy voice;
I shall not lose thee tho' I die.

131

O living will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow thro' our deeds and make them pure,

That we may lift from out of dust
A voice as unto him that hears
A cry above the conquered years
To one that with us works, and trust,

With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved
Until we close that all we loved
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

(1833-1850)

Lyric from *Maud*

Come into the garden, Maud,
For the black bat, night, has flown,
Come into the garden, Maud,
I am here at the gate alone;
And the woodbine spices are wafted abroad,
And the musk of the rose is blown.

For a breeze of morning moves,
And the planet of Love[1] is on high,
Beginning to faint in the light that she loves
On a bed of daffodil sky,
To faint in the light of the sun she loves,
To faint in his light, and to die.

All night have the roses heard
The flute, violin, bassoon;
All night has the casement jessamine stirred
To the dancers dancing in tune;
Till a silence fell with the waking bird,
And a hush with the setting moon.

[1] Venus.

I said to the lily, "There is but one,
With whom she has heart to be gay.
When will the dancers leave her alone?
She is weary of dance and play."
Now half to the setting moon are gone,
And half to the rising day;
Low on the sand and loud on the stone
The last wheel echoes away.

I said to the rose, "The brief night goes
In babble and revel and wine.
O young lord-lover, what sighs are those,
For one that will never be thine?
But mine, but mine," so I sware to the rose,
"For ever and ever, mine."

And the soul of the rose went into my blood,
As the music clashed in the hall;
And long by the garden lake I stood,
For I heard your rivulet fall
From the lake to the meadow and on to the wood,
Our wood, that is dearer than all;

From the meadow your walks have left so sweet
That whenever a March-wind sighs
He sets the jewel-print of your feet
In violets blue as your eyes,
To the woody hollows in which we meet
And the valleys of Paradise.

The slender acacia would not shake
One long milk-bloom on the tree;
The white lake-blossom fell into the lake
As the pimpernel dozed on the lea;
But the rose was awake all night for your sake,
Knowing your promise to me;
The lilies and roses were all awake,
They sighed for the dawn and thee.

Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls,
Come hither, the dances are done,
In gloss of satin and glimmer of pearls,
Queen lily and rose in one;
Shine out, little head, sunning over with curls,
To the flowers, and be their sun.

There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
She is coming, my life, my fate.
The red rose cries, "She is near, she is near";
And the white rose weeps, "She is late";

The larkspur listens, "I hear, I hear";
And the lily whispers, "I wait."

She is coming, my own, my sweet;
Were it ever so airy a tread,
My heart would hear her and beat,
Were it earth in an earthly bed;
My dust would hear her and beat,
Had I lain for a century dead,
Would start and tremble under her feet,
And blossom in purple and red.

(pub. 1855)

Milton

(Alcaics)[1]

O mighty-mouthed inventor of harmonies,
O skilled to sing of Time or Eternity,
God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages;
Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
Starred from Jehovah's gorgeous armories,
Tower, as the deep-domed empyrean
Rings to the roar of an angel onset!
Me rather all that bowery loneliness,
The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,
And bloom profuse and cedar arches
Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
Where some refulgent sunset of India
Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods
Whisper in odorous heights of even.

(pub. 1863)

The Higher Pantheism

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains,—
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?

Is not the Vision He, though He be not that which He seems?
Dreams are true while they last, and do we not live in dreams?

Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from Him?

Dark is the world to thee; thyself art the reason why,
For is He not all but thou, that hast power to feel "I am I"?

Glory about thee, without thee; and thou fulfillest thy doom,
Making Him broken gleams and stifled splendor and gloom.

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—
Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

God is law, say the wise; O Soul, and let us rejoice,
For if He thunder by law the thunder is yet His voice.

Law is God, say some; no God at all, says the fool,
For all we have power to see is a straight staff bent in a pool;

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see;
But if we could see and hear, this Vision—were it not He?

(pub. 1869)

The Revenge

A Ballad of the Fleet

Sir Richard Grenville, who had been commissioned, with Lord Howard, to capture the gold from Spanish vessels returning from the Americas, battled against an overwhelming number of Spanish ships off the Azores in 1591, and there received his death-wound. The account of this brave exploit of the *Revenge* and its men, Tennyson found in Sir Walter Ralegh.

I

At Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay,
And a pinnace, like a fluttered bird, came flying from far away:

[1] Alcaic verse invented by Alcaeus, a Greek lyric poet about 600 B.C. This is as close an imitation of the movement as seems possible in English.

"Spanish ships of war at sea! we have sighted fifty-three!"
Then swore Lord Thomas Howard: "'Fore God I am no coward;
But I cannot meet them here, for my ships are out of gear,
And the half my men are sick. I must fly, but follow quick.
We are six ships of the line; can we fight with fifty-three?"

2

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville: "I know you are no coward;
You fly them for a moment to fight with them again.
But I've ninety men and more that are lying sick ashore.
I should count myself the coward if I left them, my Lord Howard,
To these Inquisition dogs and the devildoms of Spain."

3

So Lord Howard passed away with five ships of war that day,
Till he melted like a cloud in the silent summer heaven;
But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick men from the land
Very carefully and slow,
Men of Bideford in Devon,
And we laid them on the ballast down below;
For we brought them all aboard,
And they blessed him in their pain, that they were not left to Spain,
To the thumb-screw and the stake, for the glory of the Lord.

4

He had only a hundred seamen to work the ship and to fight,
And he sailed away from Flores till the Spaniard came in sight,
With his huge sea-castles heaving upon the weather bow.
"Shall we fight or shall we fly?
Good Sir Richard, tell us now,
For to fight is but to die!
There'll be little of us left by the time this sun be set."
And Sir Richard said again: "We be all good English men.
Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the children of the devil,
For I never turned my back upon Don or devil yet."

5

Sir Richard spoke and he laughed, and we roared a hurrah, and so
The little *Revenge* ran on sheer into the heart of the foe,
With her hundred fighters on deck, and her ninety sick below;
For half of their fleet to the right and half to the left were seen,
And the little *Revenge* ran on through the long sea-lane between.

6

Thousands of their soldiers looked down from their decks and laughed,
Thousands of their seamen made mock at the mad little craft
Running on and on, till delayed
By their mountain-like *San Philip* that, of fifteen hundred tons,
And up-shadowing high above us with her yawning tiers of guns,
Took the breath from our sails, and we stayed.

7

And while now the great *San Philip* hung above us like a cloud
Whence the thunderbolt will fall
Long and loud,
Four galleons drew away
From the Spanish fleet that day,
And two upon the larboard and two upon the starboard lay,
And the battle-thunder broke from them all.

8

But anon the great *San Philip*, she bethought herself and went,
Having that within her womb that had left her ill content;
And the rest they came aboard us, and they fought us hand to hand,

For a dozen times they came with their pikes and musketeers,
And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a dog that shakes his ears
When he leaps from the water to the land.

9

And the sun went down, and the stars came out far over the summer sea,
But never a moment ceased the fight of the one and the fifty-three.
Ship after ship, the whole night long, their high-built galleons came,
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her battle-thunder and flame;
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back with her dead and her shame.
For some were sunk and many were shattered, and so could fight us no more—
God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world before?

10

For he said, "Fight on! fight on!"
Though his vessel was all but a wreck;
And it chanced that, when half of the short summer night was gone,
With a grisly wound to be dressed he had left the deck,
But a bullet struck him that was dressing it suddenly dead,
And himself he was wounded again in the side and the head,
And he said, "Fight on! fight on!"

11

And the night went down, and the sun smiled out far over the summer sea,
And the Spanish fleet with broken sides lay round us all in a ring;
But they dared not touch us again, for they feared that we still could sting,
So they watched what the end would be.
And we had not fought them in vain,
But in perilous plight were we,
Seeing forty of our poor hundred were slain,
And half of the rest of us maimed for life
In the crash of the cannonades and the desperate strife;
And the sick men down in the hold were most of them stark and cold,
And the pikes were all broken or bent, and the powder was all of it spent;
And the masts and the rigging were lying over the side;
But Sir Richard cried in his English pride:
"We have fought such a fight for a day and a night
As may never be fought again!
We have won great glory, my men!
And a day less or more
At sea or ashore,
We die—does it matter when?
Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink her, split her in twain!
Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of Spain!"

12

And the gunner said, "Ay, ay," but the seamen made reply:
"We have children, we have wives,
And the Lord hath spared our lives.
We will make the Spaniard promise, if we yield, to let us go;
We shall live to fight again and to strike another blow."
And the lion there lay dying, and they yielded to the foe.

13

And the stately Spanish men to their flagship bore him then,
Where they laid him by the mast, old Sir Richard caught at last,
And they praised him to his face with their courtly foreign grace;
But he rose upon their decks, and he cried:
"I have fought for Queen and Faith like a valiant man and true;
I have only done my duty as a man is bound to do.
With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Grenville die!"
And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

14

And they stared at the dead that had been so valiant and true,
And had holden the power and glory of Spain so cheap

That he dared her with one little ship and his English few;
Was he devil or man? He was devil for aught they knew,
But they sank his body with honor down into the deep,
And they manned the *Revenge* with a swarthier alien crew,
And away she sailed with her loss and longed for her own;
When a wind from the lands they had ruined awoke from sleep,
And the water began to heave and the weather to moan,
And or ever that evening ended a great gale blew,
And a wave like the wave that is raised by an earthquake grew,
Till it smote on their hulls and their sails and their masts and their flags,
And the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot-shattered navy of Spain,
And the little *Revenge* herself went down by the island crags
To be lost evermore in the main.

(pub. 1878)

Rizpah

17—

Stirred by the analogy of a story he had read in a popular magazine with the Biblical tale of Rizpah (2 Samuel 21:1-14), Tennyson wrote this dramatic monologue.

1

Wailing, wailing, wailing, the wind over land and sea—
And Willy's voice in the wind, "O mother, come out to me!"
Why should he call me to-night, when he knows that I cannot go?
For the downs are as bright as day, and the moon stares at the snow.

2

We should be seen, my dear; they would spy us out of the town.
The loud black nights for us, and the storm rushing over the down,
When I cannot see my own hand, but am led by the creak of the chain,
And grovel and grope for my son till I find myself drenched with the rain.

3

Anything fallen again? nay—what was there left to fall?
I have taken them home, I have numbered the bones, I have hidden them all.
What am I saying? and what are *you?* do you come as a spy?
Falls? what falls? who knows? As the tree falls so must it lie.

4

Who let her in? how long has she been? you—what have you heard?
Why did you sit so quiet? you never have spoken a word.
O—to pray with me—yes—a lady—none of their spies—
But the night has crept into my heart, and begun to darken my eyes.

5

Ah—you, that have lived so soft, what should *you* know of the night,
The blast and the burning shame and the bitter frost and the fright?
I have done it, while you were asleep—you were only made for the day.
I have gathered my baby together—and now you may go your way.

6

Nay—for it's kind of you, madam, to sit by an old dying wife.
Nothing hard of my boy, I have only an hour of life.
I kissed my boy in the prison, before he went out to die.
"They dared me to do it," he said, and he never has told me a lie.
I whipped him for robbing an orchard once when he was but a child—

"The farmer dared me to do it," he said; he was always so wild—
And idle—and couldn't be idle—my Willy—he never could rest.
The King should have made him a soldier, he would have been one of his best.

7

But he lived with a lot of wild mates, and they never would let him be good;
They swore that he dare not rob the mail, and he swore that he would;
And he took no life, but he took one purse, and when all was done
He flung it among his fellows—"I'll none of it," said my son.

8

I came into court to the judge and the lawyers. I told them my tale,
God's own truth—but they killed him, they killed him for robbing the mail.
They hanged him in chains for a show—we had always borne a good name—
To be hanged for a thief—and then put away—isn't that enough shame?
Dust to dust—low down—let us hide! but they set him so high
That all the ships of the world could stare at him, passing by.
God 'ill pardon the hell-black raven and horrible fowls of the air,
But not the black heart of the lawyer who killed him and hanged him there.

9

And the jailer forced me away. I had bid him my last good-bye;
They had fastened the door of his cell. "O mother!" I heard him cry.
I couldn't get back though I tried, he had something further to say,
And now I never shall know it. The jailer forced me away.

10

Then since I couldn't but hear that cry of my boy that was dead,
They seized me and shut me up: they fastened me down on my bed.
"Mother, O mother!"—he called in the dark to me year after year—
They beat me for that, they beat me—you know that I couldn't but hear;
And then at the last they found I had grown so stupid and still
They let me abroad again—but the creatures had worked their will.

11

Flesh of my flesh was gone, but bone of my bone was left—
I stole them all from the lawyers—and you, will you call it a theft?—
My baby, the bones that had sucked me, the bones that had laughed and had cried—
Theirs? O, no! they are mine—not theirs—they had moved in my side.

12

Do you think I was scared by the bones? I kissed 'em, I buried 'em all—
I can't dig deep, I am old—in the night by the churchyard wall.
My Willy 'ill rise up whole when the trumpet of judgment 'ill sound,
But I charge you never to say that I laid him in holy ground.

13

They would scratch him up—they would hang him again on the cursed tree.
Sin? O, yes, we are sinners, I know—let all that be,
And read me a Bible verse of the Lord's goodwill toward men—
"Full of compassion and mercy, the Lord"—let me hear it again;
"Full of compassion and mercy—long-suffering." Yes, O, yes!
For the lawyer is born but to murder—the Savior lives but to bless.
He'll never put on the black cap[1] except for the worst of the worst,
And the first may be last—I have heard it in church—and the last may be first.

[1] to be worn by the judge when condemning the prisoner to death.

Suffering—O, long-suffering—yes, as the Lord must know,
Year after year in the mist and the wind and the shower and the snow.

14

Heard, have you? what? they have told you he never repented his sin.
How do they know it? are *they* his mother? are *you* of his kin?
Heard! have you ever heard, when the storm on the downs began,
The wind that 'ill wail like a child and the sea that 'ill moan like a man?

15

Election, Election, and Reprobation[2]—it's all very well.
But I go to-night to my boy, and I shall not find him in hell.
For I cared so much for my boy that the Lord has looked into my care,
And He means me I'm sure to be happy with Willy, I know not where.

16

And if *he* be lost—but to save *my* soul, that is all your desire—
Do you think I care for *my* soul if my boy be gone to the fire?
I have been with God in the dark—go, go, you may leave me alone—
You have never borne a child—you are just as hard as a stone.

17

Madam, I beg your pardon! I think that you mean to be kind,
But I cannot hear what you say for my Willy's voice in the wind—
The snow and the sky so bright—he used but to call in the dark,
And he calls to me now from the church and not from the gibbet—for hark!
Nay—you can hear it yourself—it is coming—shaking the walls—
Willy—the moon's in a cloud—Good-night. I am going. He calls.

(pub. 1880)

[2] Theological terms: acceptance or rejection by God's decree.

By an Evolutionist

The Lord let the house of a brute to the soul of a man,
And the man said "Am I your debtor?"
And the Lord—"Not yet: but make it as clean as you can,
And then I will let you a better."

I

If my body come from brutes, my soul uncertain, or a fable,
Why not bask amid the senses while the sun of morning shines,
I, the finer brute rejoicing in my hounds, and in my stable,
Youth and Health, and birth and wealth, and choice of women and of wines?

II

What hast thou done for me, grim Old Age, save breaking my bones on the rack?
Would I had past in the morning that looks so bright from afar!

OLD AGE

Done for thee? starved the wild beast that was linkt with thee eighty years back.
Less weight now for the ladder-of-heaven that hangs on a star.

I

If my body come from brutes, tho' somewhat finer than their own,
I am heir, and this my kingdom. Shall the royal voice be mute?
No, but if the rebel subject seek to drag me from the throne,
Hold the sceptre, Human Soul, and rule thy Province of the brute.

II

I have climbed to the snows of Age, and I gaze at
a field in the Past,
Where I sank with the body at times in the
sloughs of a low desire,
But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the man is
quiet at last
As he stands on the heights of his life with a
glimpse of a height that is higher.

(pub. 1889)

Crossing the Bar

Tennyson requested that this poem be placed as the final one in editions of his works. A comparison of this with Browning's *Prospice* (cf. *below*) affords an interesting study of the temperamental differences between the two poets.

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless
deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For though from out our bourne of Time and
Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

(pub. 1889)

Robert Browning

(1812-1889)

One of the healthiest and most virile of English poets, Robert Browning was born May 7, 1812, in Camberwell, then a suburb of London, where he lived for his first twenty-eight years. His father was a clerk in the Bank of England and himself somewhat gifted in the fine arts and letters. Though the fact that his parents were Nonconformists prevented their son's attendance at either of the great universities, the young Browning did not lack for cultural opportunities. The family library with its rich collection of curious and erudite books afforded him an education supplementary to what he could obtain at near-by schools. The elder Browning, who remained a sympathetic friend throughout his son's career (he lived until the poet's sixty-fifth year), was a devotee of medieval legend, and the boy came to know "Paracelsus, Faustus, and even Talmudic personages, personally." His mother was a skilled musician who developed Robert's taste so well that music was ever dear to him. Not far from the Camberwell home, too, stood the Dulwich Art Gallery, with which the lad became thoroughly familiar. Although he attended London University for a few months (1829-30), it was his home environment which equipped him with a varied and scholarly knowledge of the classics, music, history, art, and philosophy. His athletic physique and his wholesomely sociable nature prevented all this learning from becoming pedantry, but rather converted it into something alive and zestful.

His love for the poetry of Keats and Shelley (cf. *Memorabilia*, *below*) made Browning resolve to become a poet too. In 1833 he published *Pauline* without selling a copy. Besides the interest attaching to its being his first opus, the poem is important for announcing Browning's conception of the poet as a historian of the human soul. To give expression to the human character, he felt that poetry must break the restraints

of form and aim at naturalness of idiom. After a trip to Russia (1833), he for a while fluctuated in his choice of music, letters, or diplomacy as a career. *Paracelsus* (1835), though the reviewers ignored it, made him known as a poet to the literati of London. A social being, if ever there was one born, Browning soon got to know everyone. Carlyle, Landor, Leigh Hunt became his friends, and, later, Dickens and Wordsworth.

Paracelsus revealed the cornerstone of Browning's faith: that the striving for good, rather than the achieving it, is the test of spiritual strength. (To this idea he was later to give magnificent expression in *Rabbi Ben Ezra*—cf. *below*.) Among his new friends was the actor Macready, the leading interpreter of Shakespeare. Believing Browning to possess dramatic gifts of a high order, he urged him to write plays for stage production. The poet's *Strafford* was performed at Covent Garden in May, 1837. Thereafter he wrote several other dramas: *King Victor and King Charles* (1842); *The Return of the Druses* (1843); *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon* (1843)—the best of them; *Colombe's Birthday* (1844); *Luria* (1846); and *A Soul's Tragedy* (1846). A misunderstanding with Macready over the performance of *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon* resulted in Browning's gradual loss of interest in the theatre. His genius for dramatic expression was indeed great, but was not at home in the full-length play. It was in his dramatic monologues that he found the consummate medium for this side of his gifts.

In the meantime, from 1841 to 1846, he published a series of *Bells and Pomegranates* —eight in all; the name was intended to convey his "endeavor towards something like an alternation, or mixture, of music with discoursing, sound with sense, poetry with thought." Number One contained *Pippa Passes* (1841), a poem in dramatic form, the product of a visit to Italy in 1838. This, his first completely successful work, is built upon a delightful idea. Pippa, a simple factory girl of Asolo, decides to spend her holiday by imagining herself in the situation of the four happiest people in town; she passes by the window of each, singing an innocent song, unaware that behind each window is occurring an intense soul-struggle. It is her song that decides the crisis of these beings whose fates she little dreams of having affected so profoundly. At the end of the day, not knowing that she has been the means of saving the souls of those she supposed more fortunate than herself, she goes home feeling that her holiday has slipped through her fingers.

Pippa Passes indicated the bent of Browning's genius in the four distinct dramatic episodes in which the soul-states of the characters come vividly alive. In 1842 appeared *Bells and Pomegranates, No. III*, the *Dramatic Lyrics*. These were shorter poems which included *Cavalier Tunes* (cf. *below*), *My Last Duchess* (cf. *below*), and *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister* (cf. *below*). It was in the two last-named masterpieces that he discovered the form perfect for his dramatic and psychological interests: the dramatic monologue. In these compressed fragments of drama, we meet at a crucial moment of his life some individual, historical or imaginary, who reveals to us the secrets of his soul. Browning was concerned with achieving complete veracity, and his keen sympathies and lively imagination enabled him to picture villains with as full a sense of fact as men of beautiful character. His skill in portraiture is that of the master novelist; but this concentrated kind of composition often compresses a life history into a hundred lines.

In 1845 appeared the seventh series of *Bells and Pomegranates*, the *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*, containing *The Lost Leader* (cf. *below*), *The Bishop Orders His Tomb*, and the first part of *Saul* (cf. *below*). Early in the same year he began his correspondence (cf. Introduction to E. B. Browning, *below*) with the invalid poet, Elizabeth Barrett, with whom he was already in love by the time he met her five months later. For many years she had not left her room where she was virtually imprisoned by her father's fear for her life. She, on her part, was in love with him, too, but she dreaded to burden his vigorous manhood with a tubercular wife. After a whirlwind courtship, during which she took a new interest in life and seemed to collect new resources of strength within

herself, he proposed marriage to her. Her father was adamant in his refusal to give his consent to what he was certain would hasten his daughter's impending death. Browning, confident that his love could rescue her from her couch of illness, insisted on an elopement. Secretly they were married in September 1846 and ran off to Italy. In Florence they took apartments at the Casa Guidi, and made their home there for the rest of Mrs. Browning's life.

They were extremely happy in their devotion to each other, and Mrs. Browning enjoyed fifteen years of better health than she had known since her childhood. Her love for him is immortalized in her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, as his for her is recorded in *One Word More, Prospice* (cf. *below*), and the end of the first book of *The Ring and the Book*. They traveled over Italy and even revisited London. Their life together was filled with joy and accomplishment. They genuinely revered each other's gifts; he, indeed, though much her superior, felt her talent greater than his own. He produced now his two splendid volumes of *Men and Women* (1855), which contained *Fra Lippo Lippi* (cf. *below*) and *Andrea del Sarto* (cf. *below*)—both inspired by his reading of the Renaissance biographer Vasari (cf. *below*), *The Statue and the Bust* (cf. *below*), *The Last Ride Together* (cf. *below*), *Memorabilia* (cf. *below*), and *Saul*.

In June 1861 Mrs. Browning died, and Browning's perfect life was broken. What her death meant to him can be sensed in *Prospice*, which appeared in his volume of *Dramatis Personae* (1864). He left Florence forever and returned to London. But though Browning lived constantly with the memories of his wife, he was too healthy to disintegrate after even so great a loss. For a year he nursed his grief and saw few people. Such behavior, he at last decided, would have never been approved by the woman he mourned, and so he began once more to mix with the world, and before long had found his circle of friends. But whatever peace he knew came not from the world but from his work, to which he now applied himself with greater energy than ever.

Recognition had been accorded him very slowly. Alienated by the novelty of Browning's poetic manner, the public preferred the less muscular art of Tennyson. Among the élite Browning's reputation had indeed steadily grown. His first book to have anything like a real sale, however, was the *Dramatis Personae* of 1864. From then on his readers appreciably increased in number. But even as late as 1871 he considered the twenty-five hundred copies which *Balaustion's Adventure* had sold in five months as very good "for the likes of me." The year before Tennyson had sold forty thousand copies of the *Idylls of the King!*

It was his most ambitious work, *The Ring and the Book* (1868-69), which really won him general acclaim. One day in June 1860, the year before his wife's death, he had come across an "old yellow book," bound in vellum, on a street bookstall in Florence. It was a dry, factual account of an old murder trial. For some reason the outline of the story appealed deeply to his imagination. At first he did nothing with it. But after his wife's death, he sought relief in plunging into work on his "murder poem," an epical poem in twelve books. Toward the end of 1864 he began the actual writing, and by 1869 it was finished. This masterwork is the triumph of Browning's method as employed earlier in the dramatic monologues. The plot itself is not complicated. Guido, a cruel patrician of Arezzo, tortures his innocent wife Pompilia until she escapes, under the protection of Caponsacchi, a young monk, to the home of her parents in Rome. Her husband follows her, and murders her and her parents. In the end Guido is condemned to death. It is the technique of storytelling which makes *The Ring and the Book* remarkable. From every point of view the narrative is told, each character shedding new light upon the others and the facts of the case, until we realize how elusive human truth really is.

Accolades of praise were now heaped upon Browning for this profound achievement. He was a public figure to whom long-delayed awards were freely given. Some of them, such as the founding of many Browning Societies in England and America,

were not entirely to his taste. Oxford, after granting him an M.A. in 1887, offered him an honorary fellowship at Balliol, and an honorary D.C.L. In 1871 he returned to Italy, where he remained for most of his last years. The most important of his later volumes are *Dramatic Idyls* (1879, 1880), *Jocoseria* (1883), *Ferishtah's Fancies* (1884), *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance* (1887), and *Asolando* (1889). He enjoyed robust health until the end. On December 12, 1889, he died at the home of his son Pen, in Venice. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

When the "Browning cult" began to subside it was for a while fashionable to consider him not truly a poet. Compared with his great contemporary, Tennyson, he may indeed seem boisterous. Nor is it untrue that his verse sometimes has not the ring of true poetry. But that is not because of any admixture of prose in his conceptions. His head was perhaps too full of exciting impressions. Everything that pulsed with life stirred him deeply, and he poured forth in superabundance his zest for living. He himself admitted that he was less interested in the contemplation of nature than of human beings. And everything that concerned human beings was vital to him; hence his wide knowledge of history, music, painting, sculpture, and architecture. He found subjects for his poetry in all times and climes, but the Italian Renaissance, with its brilliant record of strong personalities, suggested some of his luckiest themes. His own buoyant health of mind and body kept him sane and sound; as a poet he could with the same objectivity adventure into the criminal, the sordid, the vulgar, the holy, the saintly, and the innocent. Browning will be remembered, said Oscar Wilde, "as the most supreme writer of fiction, it may be, that we have ever had. His sense of dramatic situation was unrivaled."

But Browning could be, when he so desired, a master of the lyric too. Indeed, his technical dexterity has only too often been overlooked. Anxious to record the rhythms of excited speech in his dramatic monologues, he found no impediments in the limitations of metre. Because his art is not obvious, it has sometimes passed unnoticed. As for his philosophy, it is, like Plato's and Shelley's, based upon love as man's chief test of soul. Unlike Tennyson and Arnold, Browning was confident that the very incompleteness of human desires was a testimony to the existence of a life hereafter. Energy, courage, and love were the great virtues for him and "sloth of living" the chief vice.

The twelve-volume edition by C. Porter and H. A. Clark of Browning's works (1898) is fully annotated. There are several good one-volume collections. Mrs. S. Orr's *Handbook to the Works of Robert Browning* (1899) gives a full explanation of each poem. The best short critical study is A. Symons's *Introduction to the Study of Browning* (new edition 1906). Also valuable are: S. A. Brooke's *The Poetry of Browning* (1902), G. K. Chesterton's *Browning* (1903), E. Dowden's *Robert Browning* (1904), C. H. Herford's *Browning* (1905), and Mrs. S. Orr's *Life and Letters of Robert Browning* (new edition 1908).

Pippa's Song

The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!

(pub. 1841)

Cavalier Tunes

Marching Along

Kentish Sir Byng stood for his King,
Bidding the crop-headed Parliament[1] swing:
And, pressing[2] a troop unable to stoop
And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

God for King Charles! Pym[3] and such carles[4]
To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous parles![5]
Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
Till you're—
Chorus.—Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell.
Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry[6] as well!
England, good cheer! Rupert[7] is near!
Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here,
Cho.—Marching along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls
To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!
Hold by the right, you double your might;
So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,
Cho.—March we along, fifty-score strong,
Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

[1] The members of the Parliament of 1640 who opposed the king wore their hair short as a protest against the long curled hair of the Cavaliers.
[2] pressing into service.
[3] John Pym (1584-1643), leader of Parliament.
[4] churls.
[5] debates.
[6] Sir Arthur Hazelrigg, Nathaniel Fiennes, and Sir Henry Vane, the younger, all of the Parliamentary party. Vane was once governor of Massachusetts.
[7] Prince Rupert of Bavaria, nephew of Charles I and commander of his cavalry.

Give a Rouse

King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!
Who gave me the goods that went since?
Who raised me the house that sank once?
Who helped me to gold I spent since?
Who found[1] me in wine you drank once?
Cho.—King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
King Charles!

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
By the old fool's side that begot him?
For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
While Noll's[2] damned troopers shot him?
Cho.—King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now
King Charles!

Boot and Saddle

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!
Rescue my castle before the hot day
Brightens to blue from its silvery gray.
Cho.—Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say;
Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
"God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay—
Cho.—Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

[1] furnished.
[2] Oliver Cromwell's.

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array:
Who laughs, "Good fellows ere this, by my fay,
Cho.—Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"
Who? My wife Gertrude; that, honest and gay,
Laughs when you talk of surrendering, "Nay!
I've better counsellers; what counsel they?
Cho.—Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!"

(pub. 1842)

My Last Duchess

This famous dramatic monologue, whose setting is Ferrara, shows Browning's gift for compressing drama into a comparatively few lines. The characterization is admirable. As the Duke speaks of his former wife's portrait, we see into the cold materialism of his heart and sense the sweetness and graciousness of the woman who could not please him. Browning seems to reflect that it is possible for a man to have, like the Duke, refined artistic tastes and still be inhuman.

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now. Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned—since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I—
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek. Perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat"; such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the west,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—which I have not—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed, the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands[1];
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretense
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

(pub. 1842)

Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister

As in *My Last Duchess*, we understand the baseness of the speaker, despite his good opinion of himself. His hated fellow monk is equally vivid to us as a man of beautiful character. Perhaps no poet before him would have dreamed of opening and closing a poem with such phrases as Browning here employs.

[1] Browning said that "the commands were that she should be put to death, or he might have had her shut up in a convent."

Gr-r-r—there go, my heart's abhorrence!
  Water your damned flower-pots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
  God's blood, would not mine kill you!
What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
  Oh, that rose has prior claims—
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
  Hell dry you up with its flames!

At the meal we sit together:
  Salve tibi![1] I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
  Sort of season, time of year:
Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely
  Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:
What's the Latin name for "parsley"?
  What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
  Laid with care on our own shelf!
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
  And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
  Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps—
Marked with L for our initial!
  (He-he! There his lily snaps!)

Saint, forsooth! While brown Dolores
  Squats outside the Convent bank
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
  Steeping tresses in the tank,
Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
  —Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 'twere a Barbary corsair's?
  (That is, if he'd let it show!)

When he finishes refection,
  Knife and fork he never lays
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
  As do I, in Jesu's praise.
I the Trinity illustrate,
  Drinking watered orange-pulp—
In three sips the Arian[2] frustrate;
  While he drains his at one gulp.

Oh, those melons! If he's able
  We're to have a feast! so nice!
One goes to the Abbot's table,
  All of us get each a slice.

How go on your flowers? None double?
  Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble
  Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

There's a great text in Galatians,
  Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
  One sure, if another fails:
If I trip him just a-dying,
  Sure of heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
  Off to hell, a Manichee?[3]

Or, my scrofulous French novel
  On gray paper with blunt type!
Simply glance at it, you grovel
  Hand and foot in Belial's gripe:
If I double down its pages
  At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
  Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

Or, there's Satan!—one might venture
  Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
  As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blasted lay that rose-acacia
  We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine* . . .
'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratiâ,*
  Ave, Virgo![4] Gr-r-r—you swine!

(pub. 1843)

[1] Greetings to you. The monks conversed in Latin.

[2] The Arians believed that Christ was inferior to God, who had created Him. The monk wants to show his belief in the Trinity.

[3] a sect whose religion was a combination of Christianity and the Persian Zoroastrianism.

[4] Hail Virgin, full of grace.

The Lost Leader

[Browning's note on this poem is interesting:]

19 Warwick-Crescent, W., Feb. 24, '75

DEAR MR. GROSART,—I have been asked the question you now address me with, and as duly answered it, I can't remember how many times; there is no sort of objection to one more assurance or rather confession, on my part, that I *did* in my hasty youth presume to use the great and venerated personality of Wordsworth as a sort of painter's model; one from which this or the other particular feature may be selected and turned to account; had I intended more, above all, such a boldness as portraying the entire man, I should not have talked about "handfuls of silver and bits of ribbon." These never influenced the change of politics in the great poet, whose

defection, nevertheless, accompanied as it was by a regular face-about of his special party, was to my juvenile apprehension, and even mature consideration, an event to deplore. But just as in the tapestry on my wall I can recognize figures which have *struck out* a fancy, on occasion, that though truly enough thus derived, yet would be preposterous as a copy, so, though I dare not deny the original of my little poem, I altogether refuse to have it considered as the "very effigies" of such a moral and intellectual superiority.

Faithfully yours,
ROBERT BROWNING

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his service!
Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud!
We that had loved him so, followed him, honored him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their graves!
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,—
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

We shall march prospering,—not through his presence;
Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

(pub. 1845)

Meeting at Night

The gray sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, through its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

(pub. 1845)

Parting at Morning

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim:
And straight was a path of gold for him,[1]
And the need of a world of men for me.

(pub. 1845)

The Bishop Orders His Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church

ROME, 15—

"I know no other piece of modern English, prose or poetry, in which there is so much told, as in these lines, of the Renaissance spirit,—its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin. It is nearly all that I said of the central Renaissance in thirty pages of the *Stones of Venice*, put into as many lines, Browning's being also the antecedent work. The worst of it is that this kind of concentrated

[1] the sun.

writing needs so much solution before the reader can fairly get the good of it, that people's patience fails them, and they give the thing up as insoluble; though, truly, it ought to be to the current of common thought like Saladin's talisman, dipped in clear water, not soluble altogether, but making the element medicinal."—*Ruskin.*

Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity!
Draw round my bed: is Anselm keeping back?
Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not! Well—
She, men would have to be your mother once,
Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was!
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
And as she died so must we die ourselves,
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
Life, how and what is it? As here I lie
In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
Hours and long hours in the dead night, I ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" Peace, peace seems all.
Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace;
And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought
With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know:
—Old Gandolf cozened[1] me, despite my care;
Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
He graced his carrion with, God curse the same!
Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence
One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,[2]
And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
And up into the aery dome where live
The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk:
And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
With those nine columns round me, two and two,
The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands:
Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
—Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,[3]
Put me where I may look at him! True peach,
Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
Draw close: that conflagration of my church
—What then? So much was saved if aught were missed!
My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood,
Drop water gently till the surface sink,
And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I! . . .

[1] cheated.
[2] the right-hand side as one faces the altar.
[3] a cheap marble that splits into layers like an onion.

Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft,
And corded up in a tight olive-frail,[4]
Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all,
That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst!
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How else
Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath?
The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
The Savior at his sermon on the mount,
Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
And Moses with the tables[5] . . . but I know
Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,
Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
To revel down my villas while I gasp
Bricked o'er with beggar's moldy travertine[6]
Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
My bath must needs be left behind, alas!
One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts.
And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs?
—That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's[7] every word,
No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
Tully, my masters? Ulpian[8] serves his need!
And then how I shall lie through centuries,
And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
And see God made and eaten all day long,[9]

[4] a rush-basket.
[5] Note the incongruous mixture of pagan and Christian images.
[6] a cheap limestone much used in building at Rome.
[7] Cicero's. His Latin was the standard for purity.
[8] A Roman jurist (170-228) whose Latin style was inferior to Cicero's.
[9] in the sacrament of the Mass.

And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke!
For as I lie here, hours of the dead night,
Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work:
And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
About the life before I lived this life,
And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests,
Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount,
Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
—Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend?
No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best!
Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
All *lapis*, all, sons! Else I give the Pope
My villas! Will ye ever eat my heart?
Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
They glitter like your mother's for my soul,
Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
With grapes, and add a visor and a Term,
And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down,
To comfort me on my entablature
Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
"Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there!
For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it! Stone—
Gritstone, a-crumble! Clammy squares which sweat
As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
And no more *lapis* to delight the world!
Well, go! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
But in a row: and, going, turn your backs
—Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
Old Gandolf—at me, from his onion-stone,
As still he envied me, so fair she was!

(pub. 1845)

Memorabilia

Ah, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you,
And did you speak to him again?
How strange it seems and new!

But you were living before that,
And also you are living after;
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter!

I crossed a moor, with a name of its own
And a certain use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about:

For there I picked up on the heather,
And there I put inside my breast,
A molted feather, an eagle feather!
Well, I forget the rest.

(pub. 1855)

The Last Ride Together

I said—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
Since this was written and needs must be—
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame,
Your leave for one more last ride with me.

My mistress bent that brow of hers;
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two
With life or death in the balance: right!
The blood replenished me again;
My last thought was at least not vain:
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end tonight?

Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once—
And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew

Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear!
  Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
  What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this?
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
  And here we are riding, she and I.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive, and who succeeds?
We rode; it seemed, my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
  As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought,—All labor, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
  I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
  We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There's many a crown for us who can reach.
Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
  My riding is better, by their leave.

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
  And place them in rhyme, so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
  Sing, riding's a joy. For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
  You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you grown gray
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
"Greatly his opera's strains intend,
But in music we know how fashions end!"
  I gave my youth; but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being—had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
  Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
  Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

And yet—she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first discerned,
  We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two,
With life forever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,—
And heaven just prove that I and she
  Ride, ride together, forever ride?

(pub. 1855)

The Statue and the Bust

A correspondent of an American paper once asked the following questions respecting this poem:—

"1. When, how, and where did it happen? Browning's divine vagueness lets one gather only that the lady's husband was a Riccardi. 2. Who was the lady? who the duke? 3. The magnificent house wherein Florence lodges her préfet is known to all Florentine ball-goers as the Palazzo Riccardi. It was bought by the Riccardi from the Medici in 1659. From none of its windows did the lady gaze at her more than royal lover. From what window, then, if from any? Are the statue and the bust still in their original positions?"

The letter fell into the hands of Mr. Thomas J. Wise,

who sent it to Mr. Browning, and received the following answer.

Jan. 8, 1887.

"DEAR MR. WISE,—I have seldom met with such a strange inability to understand what seems the plainest matter possible: 'ball-goers' are probably not history-readers, but any guide-book would confirm what is sufficiently stated in the poem. I will append a note or two, however. 1. 'This story the townsmen tell;' 'when, how, and where,' constitutes the subject of the poem. 2. The lady was the wife of Riccardi; and the duke, Ferdinand, just as the poem says. 3. As it was built by, and inhabited by, the Medici till sold, long after, to the Riccardi, it was not from the duke's palace, but a window in that of the Riccardi, that the lady gazed at her lover riding by. The statue is still in its place, looking at the window under which 'now is the empty shrine.' Can anything be clearer? My 'vagueness' leaves what to be 'gathered' when all these things are put down in black and white? Oh, 'ball-goers'!"

[Browning here employs the *terza rima* of the *Divine Comedy* (cf. Vol. I, p. 102).]

There's a palace in Florence, the world knows well,
And a statue watches it from the square,
And this story of both do our townsmen tell.

Ages ago, a lady there,
At the farthest window facing the East
Asked, "Who rides by with the royal air?"

The bridesmaids' prattle around her ceased;
She leaned forth, one on either hand;
They saw how the blush of the bride increased—

They felt by its beats her heart expand—
As one at each ear and both in a breath
Whispered, "The Great-Duke Ferdinand."

That selfsame instant, underneath,
The Duke rode past in his idle way,
Empty and fine like a swordless sheath.

Gay he rode, with a friend as gay,
Till he threw his head back—"Who is she?"
—"A bride the Riccardi brings home today."

Hair in heaps lay heavily
Over a pale brow spirit-pure—
Carved like the heart of the coal-black tree,

Crisped like a war-steed's encolure—
And vainly sought to dissemble her eyes
Of the blackest black our eyes endure,

And lo, a blade for a knight's emprise
Filled the fine empty sheath of a man,—
The Duke grew straightway brave and wise.

He looked at her, as a lover can;
She looked at him, as one who awakes:
The past was a sleep, and her life began.

Now, love so ordered for both their sakes,
A feast was held that selfsame night
In the pile which the mighty shadow makes.

(For Via Larga is three-parts light,
But the palace overshadows one,
Because of a crime, which may God requite!

To Florence and God the wrong was done,
Through the first republic's murder there
By Cosimo[1] and his cursed son.)

The Duke (with the statue's face in the square)
Turned in the midst of his multitude
At the bright approach of the bridal pair.

Face to face the lovers stood
A single minute and no more,
While the bridegroom bent as a man subdued—

Bowed till his bonnet brushed the floor—
For the Duke on the lady a kiss conferred,
As the courtly custom was of yore.

In a minute can lovers exchange a word?
If a word did pass, which I do not think,
Only one out of a thousand heard.

That was the bridegroom. At day's brink
He and his bride were alone at last
In a bed chamber by a taper's blink.

Calmly he said that her lot was cast,
That the door she had passed was shut on her
Till the final catafalk repassed.

The world meanwhile, its noise and stir,
Through a certain window facing the East
She could watch like a convent's chronicler.

Since passing the door might lead to a feast,
And a feast might lead to so much beside,
He, of many evils, chose the least.

[1] Cosimo de' Medici (1389-1464).

"Freely I choose too," said the bride—
"Your window and its world suffice,"
Replied the tongue, while the heart replied—

"If I spend the night with that devil twice,
May his window serve as my loop of hell
Whence a damned soul looks on paradise!

"I fly to the Duke who loves me well,
Sit by his side and laugh at sorrow
Ere I count another ave-bell.

" 'Tis only the coat of a page to borrow,
And tie my hair in a horse-boy's trim.
And I save my soul—but not to-morrow"—

(She checked herself and her eye grew dim)
"My father tarries to bless my state:
I must keep it one day more for him.

"Is one day more so long to wait?
Moreover the Duke rides past, I know;
We shall see each other, sure as fate."

She turned on her side and slept. Just so!
So we resolve on a thing and sleep:
So did the lady, ages ago.

That night the Duke said, "Dear or cheap
As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
To body or soul, I will drain it deep."

And on the morrow, bold with love,
He beckoned the bridegroom (close on call,
As his duty bade, by the Duke's alcove)

And smiled " 'Twas a very funeral,
Your lady will think, this feast of ours,—
A shame to efface, whate'er befall!

"What if we break from the Arno bowers,
And try if Petraja, cool and green,
Cure last night's fault with this morning's flowers?"

The bridegroom, not a thought to be seen
On his steady brow and quiet mouth,
Said, "Too much favor for me so mean!

"But, alas! my lady leaves the South;
Each wind that comes from the Apennine
Is a menace to her tender youth:

"Nor a way exists, the wise opine,
If she quits her palace twice this year,
To avert the flower of life's decline."

Quoth the Duke, "A sage and a kindly fear.
Moreover Petraja is cold this spring:
Be our feast to-night as usual here!"

And then to himself—"Which night shall bring
Thy bride to her lover's embraces, fool—
Or I am the fool, and thou art the king!

"Yet my passion must wait a night, nor cool—
For to-night the Envoy arrives from France
Whose heart I unlock with thyself, my tool.

"I need thee still and might miss perchance.
To-day is not wholly lost, beside,
With its hope of my lady's countenance:

"For I ride—what should I do but ride?
And passing her palace, if I list,
May glance at its window—well betide!"

So said, so done: nor the lady missed
One ray that broke from the ardent brow,
Nor a curl of the lips where the spirit kissed.

Be sure that each renewed the vow,
No morrow's sun should arise and set
And leave them then as it left them now.

But next day passed, and next day yet,
With still fresh cause to wait one day more
Ere each leaped over the parapet.

And still, as love's brief morning wore,
With a gentle start, half smile, half sigh,
They found love not as it seemed before.

They thought it would work infallibly,
But not despite of heaven and earth:
The rose would blow when the storm passed by.

Meantime they could profit in winter's dearth
By store of fruits that supplant the rose:
The world and its ways have a certain worth:

And to press to point while these oppose
Were simple policy; better wait:
We lose no friends and we gain no foes.

Meantime, worse fates than a lover's fate,
Who daily may ride and pass and look
Where his lady watches behind the grate!

And she—she watched the square like a book
Holding one picture and only one,
Which daily to find she undertook:

When the picture was reached the book was done,
And she turned from the picture at night to scheme
Of tearing it out for herself next sun.

So weeks grew months, years; gleam by gleam
The glory dropped from their youth and love,
And both perceived they had dreamed a dream;

Which hovered as dreams do, still above:
But who can take a dream for a truth?
Oh, hide our eyes from the next remove!

One day as the lady saw her youth
Depart, and the silver thread that streaked
Her hair, and, worn by the serpent's tooth,

The brow so puckered, the chin so peaked,—
And wondered who the woman was,
Hollow-eyed and haggard-cheeked,

Fronting her silent in the glass—
"Summon here," she suddenly said,
"Before the rest of my old self pass,

"Him, the Carver, a hand to aid,
Who fashions the clay no love will change,
And fixes a beauty never to fade.

"Let Robbia's[2] craft so apt and strange
Arrest the remains of young and fair,
And rivet them while the seasons range.

"Make me a face on the window there,
Waiting as ever, mute the while,
My love to pass below in the square!

"And let me think that it may beguile
Dreary days which the dead must spend
Down in their darkness under the aisle,

"To say, 'What matters it at the end?
I did no more while my heart was warm
Than does that image, my pale-faced friend.'

"Where is the use of lip's red charm,
The heaven of hair, the pride of the brow,
And the blood that blues the inside arm—

"Unless we turn, as the soul knows how,
The earthly gift to an end divine?
A lady of clay is as good, I trow."

But long ere Robbia's cornice, fine,
With flowers and fruits which leaves enlace,
Was set where now is the empty shrine—

(And, leaning out of a bright blue space,
As a ghost might lean from a chink of sky,
The passionate pale lady's face—

Eying ever, with earnest eye
And quick-turned neck at its breathless stretch,
Some one who ever is passing by—)

The Duke had sighed like the simplest wretch
In Florence, "Youth—my dream escapes!
Will its record stay?" And he bade them fetch

Some subtle molder of brazen shapes—
"Can the soul, the will, die out of a man
Ere his body find the grave that gapes?

"John of Douay[3] shall effect my plan,
Set me on horseback here aloft,
Alive, as the crafty sculptor can,

"In the very square I have crossed so oft:
That men may admire, when future suns
Shall touch the eyes to a purpose soft,

"While the mouth and the brow stay brave in bronze—
Admire and say, 'When he was alive
How he would take his pleasure once!'

"And it shall go hard but I contrive
To listen the while, and laugh in my tomb
At idleness which aspires to strive."

So! While these wait the trump of doom,
How do their spirits pass, I wonder,
Nights and days in the narrow room?

Still, I suppose, they sit and ponder
What a gift life was, ages ago,
Six steps out of the chapel yonder.

[2] one of the Robbias, famous Florentine artists, made the bust.

[3] a sculptor of Bologna.

Only they see not God, I know,
Nor all that chivalry of his,
The soldier-saints who, row on row,

Burn upward each to his point of bliss—
Since, the end of life being manifest,
He had burned his way through the world to this.

I hear you reproach, "But delay was best,
For their end was a crime."—Oh, a crime will do
As well, I reply, to serve for a test,

As a virtue golden through and through,
Sufficient to vindicate itself
And prove its worth at a moment's view!

Must a game be played for the sake of pelf?
Where a button goes, 'twere an epigram
To offer the stamp of the very Guelph.

The true has no value beyond the sham:
As well the counter as coin, I submit,
When your table's a hat, and your prize, a dram.

Stake your counter as boldly every whit,
Venture as warily, use the same skill,
Do your best, whether winning or losing it,

If you choose to play!—is my principle.
Let a man contend to the uttermost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will!

The counter our lovers staked was lost
As surely as if it were lawful coin:
And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost

Is—the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.
You of the virtue (we issue join)
How strive you? *De te, fabula!*[4]

(pub. 1855)

GIORGIO VASARI (1511-1571)

Although he was an able architect and painter, Vasari's chief claim to immortality is his series of *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*. Living in an age of wretched taste, after the decline of the great Renaissance in the Italian fine arts, he was a man of superior judgment able to appreciate the masterpieces of the older artists (like Cimabue and Giotto). His *Lives*, first published in 1550, and rewritten and expanded in 1568, are the chief sources for our knowledge of the history of the arts in Italy during the Renaissance. Some such service Ruskin attempted to perform in his studies of *Modern Painters* (cf. *below*).

Vasari's style is engaging, and his biographies are rendered more sprightly by the interspersion of anecdote. Though recent research has revised portions of Vasari's history, his work remains authoritative, sound in its critical judgments, and a classic in its field. It was a favorite with Browning, to whom it suggested the materials for his *Fra Lippo Lippi* (cf. *below*) and *Andrea del Sarto* (cf. *below*).

Mrs. Foster's translation was published in 1850.

LIVES OF THE MOST EMINENT PAINTERS, SCULPTORS, AND ARCHITECTS

The Florentine Painter, Fra Filippo Lippi

(Born 1412—Died 1469)

Translated by Mrs. Jonathan Foster

The Carmelite monk, Fra Filippo di Tommaso Lippi, was born at Florence in a bye street called Ardiglione, under the Canto alla Cuculia, and behind the convent of the Carmelites. By the death of his father he was left a friendless orphan at the age of two years, his mother having also died shortly after his birth. The child was for some time under the care of a certain Mona Lapaccia, his aunt, the sister of his father, who brought him up with very great difficulty till he had attained his eighth year, when, being no longer able to support the burden of his maintenance, she placed him in the above-named convent of the Carmelites. Here, in proportion as he showed himself dexterous and ingenious in all works performed by hand, did he manifest the utmost dulness and incapacity in letters, to which he would never apply himself, nor would he take any pleasure in learning of any kind. The boy continued to be called by his worldly name of Filippo, and being placed with others, who like himself were in the house of the novices, under the care of the master, to the end that the latter might see what could be done with him; in place of studying, he never did any thing but daub his own books, and those of the other boys, with caricatures, whereupon the prior determined to give him all means and every opportunity for learning to draw. The chapel of the Carmine had then been newly painted by Masaccio, and this being exceedingly beautiful, pleased Fra Filippo greatly, wherefore he frequented it daily for his recrea-

[4] The story is about you.

tion, and, continually practising there, in company with many other youths, who were constantly drawing in that place, he surpassed all the others by very much in dexterity and knowledge; insomuch that he was considered certain to accomplish some marvellous thing in the course of time. For not only in his youth, but when almost in his childhood, he performed so many praiseworthy labors, that it was only wonderful. While still very young he painted a picture in *terra verde*,[1] in the cloister, near Masaccio's painting of the Consecration; the subject of which was a Pope confirming the Rule of the Carmelites, with others in fresco on several of the walls in different parts of the church: among these was a figure of St. John the Baptist, with stories from the life of that saint. Proceeding thus, and improving from day to day, he had so closely followed the manner of Masaccio, and his works displayed so much similarity to those of the latter, that many affirmed the spirit of Masaccio to have entered the body of Fra Filippo. On one of the pillars of the church, near the organ, he depicted the figure of San Marziale, a work by which he acquired great fame, seeing that it was judged to bear a comparison with those executed by Masaccio. Whereupon, hearing himself so highly commended by all, he formed his resolution at the age of seventeen, and boldly threw off the clerical habit.

Some time after this event, and being in the march of Ancona,[2] Filippo was one day amusing himself with certain of his friends in a boat on the sea, when they were all taken by a Moorish galley which was cruising in that neighborhood, and led captives into Barbary, where he remained, suffering many tribulations, for eighteen months. But, having frequent opportunities of seeing his master, it came into his head one day to draw his portrait; and finding an opportunity, he took a piece of charcoal from the fire, and with that delineated his figure at full length on a white wall, robed in his Moorish vestments. This being related to the master by the other slaves, to all of whom it appeared a miracle, the arts of drawing and painting not being practised in that country, the circumstance caused his liberation from the chains in which he had so long been held. And truly that was greatly to the glory of that noble art; for here was a man to whom belonged the right of condemning and punishing, but who, in place of inflicting pains and death, does the direct contrary, and is even led to show friendship, and restore the captive to liberty. Having afterwards executed certain works in painting for his master, he was then conducted safely to Naples, where he painted a picture on panel for king Alfonso, then Duke of Calabria, which was placed in the chapel of the castle, where the guard-room now is. But after no long time he conceived a wish to return to Florence, where he remained some months, during which time he painted an altar-piece for the nuns of Sant' Ambrogio, a most beautiful picture, by means of which he became known to Cosimo de' Medici,[3] who was thereby rendered his most assured friend. . . .

In Prato, near Florence, where Fra Filippo had some relations, he took up his abode for some months, and there executed various works for the whole surrounding district, in company with the Carmelite, Fra Diamante, who had been his companion in noviciate. Having then received a commission from the nuns of Santa Margherita, to paint a picture for the high altar of their church, he one day chanced to see the daughter of Francesco Buti, a citizen of Florence, who had been sent to the Convent either as a novice or boarder. Fra Filippo, having given a glance at Lucrezia, for such was the name of the girl, who was exceedingly beautiful and graceful, so persuaded the nuns, that he prevailed on them to permit him to make a likeness of her, for the figure of the Virgin in the work he was executing for them. The result of this was, that the painter fell violently in love with Lucrezia, and at length found means to influence her in such a manner, that he led her away from the nuns, and on a certain day, when she had gone forth to do honor to the Cintola of our Lady, a venerated relic preserved at Prato and exhibited on that occasion, he bore her from their keeping. By this event the nuns were deeply disgraced, and the father of Lucrezia was so grievously afflicted thereat, that he never more recovered his cheerfulness, and made every possible effort to regain his child. But Lucrezia, whether retained by fear or by some other cause, would not return, but remained with Filippo, to whom she bore a son, who was also called Filippo, and who eventually became a most excellent and very famous painter like his father.

In the church of San Domenico, in this same Prato, are two pictures by this master, and in the transept of the church of San Francesco is another, a figure of the Virgin namely. Desiring to remove this work from its original place, the superintendents, to save it from injury, had the wall on which it was depicted cut away, and having secured and bound it with woodwork, thus transported it to another wall of the church, where it is still to be seen. Over a well, in the court-yard of the Ceppo of Francesco di Marco,

[1] a kind of green pigment prepared from the mineral glauconite.

[2] a district in eastern Italy on the Adriatic Sea.

[3] Florentine banker and statesman (1389-1464).

there is a small picture on panel by this master, representing the portrait of the above-named Francesco di Marco, the author and founder of that pious establishment. In the Capitular Church of Prato, on a small tablet which is over the side door as one ascends the steps, Fra Filippo depicted the death of San Bernardo, by the touch of whose bier many lame persons are restored to health. In this work are monks bewailing the loss of their master; and the exquisite grace of their heads, the truth and beauty with which their grief, and the plaintive expression of their weeping, are conveyed to the spectator, is a thing marvelous to behold. Some of the hoods and draperies of these monks have most beautiful folds, and the whole work merits the utmost praise for the excellence of its design, composition, and coloring, as well as for the grace and harmony of proportion displayed in it, completed as it is by the most delicate hand of Filippo. He was also appointed by the wardens of the same church, who desired to retain a memorial of him, to paint the chapel of the High Altar, and here we have likewise good evidence of his power, for besides the excellence of the picture as a whole, there are certain heads and draperies in it which are most admirable. In this work Fra Filippo made the figures larger than life, and hereby instructed later artists in the mode of giving true grandeur to large figures. There are likewise certain figures clothed in vestments but little used at that time, whereby the minds of others were awakened, and artists began to depart from that sameness which should rather be called obsolete monotony than antique simplicity. In the same work are stories from the life of Santo Stefano, to whom the church is dedicated; they cover the wall on the right side, and consist of the Disputation, the Stoning and the Death of the Protomartyr. In the first of these, where St. Stephen is disputing with the Jews, the countenance of the saint exhibits so much zeal and fervor, that it is difficult even to imagine; how much more than to give it expression: while, in the faces and attitudes of these Jews, their hatred and rage, with the anger they feel at finding themselves vanquished by the saint, are equally manifest. Still more forcibly has he depicted the brutal rage of those who slew the martyr with stones, which they grasp, some large, others smaller ones, with grinding teeth, horrible to behold, and with gestures of demoniac rage and cruelty. St. Stephen, calm and steadfast in the midst of their terrible violence, is seen with his face towards heaven, imploring the pardon of the Eternal Father for those who thus attack him, with the utmost piety and fervor. This variety of expression is certainly very fine, and is well calculated to teach students of art the value of imitative power, and the importance of being able to express clearly the affections and emotions of the characters represented. Fra Filippo devoted the most earnest attention to this point, as is seen in this work; he has given the disciples who are burying St. Stephen attitudes so full of dejection, and faces so deeply afflicted, so drowned in tears, that it is scarcely possible to look at them without feeling a sense of sorrow. On the other side of the chapel is the History of St. John the Baptist, his Birth, that is to say, his Preaching in the Wilderness, his Baptism, the Feast of Herod, and the Decapitation of the Saint. In the picture of the Preaching, the Divine Spirit inspiring the speaker is most clearly manifest in his face, while the different emotions of hope, anxiety, gladness, and sorrow, of the crowd, women as well as men, who are listening around him, charmed and mastered by the force of his words, are equally well expressed. In the Baptism are beauty and goodness exemplified, and in the Feast of Herod, the splendor of the banquet, the address of Herodias, the astonishment of the guests, and their inexpressible sorrow when the head is presented on the charger, are rendered with admirable truth and effect. Among those present at the banquet are numerous figures in fine attitudes, exhibiting beautiful draperies and exquisite expressions of countenance. A portrait of Fra Filippo himself, taken with his own hand by help of a mirror, is one of them, and among the persons who bewail the death of St. Stephen, is the portrait of his disciple Fra Diamante, in a figure robed in black, and bearing the vestments of a bishop. This work is indeed the best of all that he produced, as well for the many fine qualities displayed in it, as for the circumstance, that having made the figures somewhat larger than life, he encouraged those who came after him to enlarge their manner. Fra Filippo was indeed so highly estimated for his great gifts, that many circumstances in his life which were blamable received pardon, and were partly placed out of view, in consideration of his extraordinary abilities. In the work just described is the portrait of Messer Carlo, natural son of Cosimo de' Medici, who was rector of the church wherein it was executed, which had received large benefactions both from him and his house. . . .

Fra Lippo Lippi

Cf. Vasari's account, *above*.

I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks, what's to blame? you think you see a monk!
What, 'tis past midnight, and you go the rounds,
And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?
The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up,
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him company!
Aha, you know your betters! Then, you'll take
Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am I?
Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how d'ye call?
Master—a . . . Cosimo of the Medici,[1]
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were best!
Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,
How you affected such a gullet's-gripe!
But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner nor discredit you:
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
And count fair prize what comes into their net?
He's Judas to a tittle, that man is!
Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hangdogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbors me
(And many more beside, lads! more beside!)
And all's come square again. I'd like his face—
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair[2]
With one hand ("Look you, now," as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them and they take you? like enough!
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
'Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night—
Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute-strings, laughs, and whifts of song,—
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?
Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they went.
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,—three slim shapes,
And a face that looked up . . . Zooks, sir, flesh and blood,
That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,
Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,
All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by Saint Laurence,[3] hail fellow, well met,—
Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows?
And so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,
You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head—
Mine's shaved—a monk, you say—the sting's in that!
If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum's the word naturally; but a monk!
Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!
I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,

[1] a rich Florentine banker and ruler (1389-1464).

[2] He would like to use the officer as a model for his painting.

[3] The church of San Lorenzo in Florence.

(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
While I stood munching my first bread that month:
"So boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father,
Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-time,—
"To quit this very miserable world?
Will you renounce" . . . "the mouthful of bread?" thought I;
By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me;
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
Palace, farm, villa, shop, and banking-house,
Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
'Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
And day-long blessed idleness beside!
"Let's see what the urchin's fit for"—that came next.
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
Such a to-do! They tried me with their books;
Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!
Flower o' the clove,
All the Latin I construe is "amo," I love!
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
Eight years together, as my fortune was,
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains,—
Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight[4] and have him whipped,—
How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop
His bone from the heap of offal in the street,—
Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
He learns the look of things, and none the less
For admonition from the hunger-pinch.
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use.
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
Scrawled them within the antiphonary's[5] marge,
Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's,
And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked black.
"Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out, d'ye say?
In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.
What if at last we get our man of parts,
We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
And Preaching Friars,[6] to do our church up fine
And put the front on it that ought to be!"
And hereupon he bade me daub away.
Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a blank,
Never was such prompt disemburdening.
First, every sort of monk, the black and white,
I drew them, fat and lean: then, folk at church,
From good old gossips waiting to confess
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,—
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there
With the little children round him in a row
Of admiration, half for his beard and half
For that white anger of his victim's son
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
Signing himself with the other because of Christ
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion of a thousand years)
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,
(Which the intense eyes looked through) came at eve
On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers
(The brute took growling), prayed, and so was gone.
I painted all, then cried "'Tis ask and have;
Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder flat,
And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies,—"That's the very man!
Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes
To care about his asthma: it's the life!"
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funked;
Their betters took their turn to see and say:
The Prior and the learned pulled a face
And stopped all that in no time. "How? what's here?
Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!
Faces, arms, legs, and bodies like the true
As much as pea and pea! it's devil's-game!
Your business is not to catch men with show,
With homage to the perishable clay,
But lift them over it, ignore it all,
Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.

[4] the magistrates who governed Florence.
[5] the margin of the book he used in the choir.
[6] the Dominicans.

Your business is to paint the souls of men—
Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no, it's not . . .
It's vapor done up like a new-born babe—
(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul!
Give us no more of body than shows soul!
Here's Giotto,[7] with his Saint a-praising God,
That sets us praising,—why not stop with him?
Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
With wonder at lines, colors, and what not?
Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
Rub all out, try at it a second time.
Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—
Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!
Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow's simply black,
And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks naught.
Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them three-fold?
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and naught else,
You get about the best thing God invents:
That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,
Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
"Rub all out!" Well, well, there's my life, in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds:
You should not take a fellow eight years old
And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
I'm my own master, paint now as I please—
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front—
Those great rings serve more purposes than just
To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!

[7] Giotto (1267?-1337), famous Florentine artist and architect.

And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still—"It's art's decline, my son!
You're not of the true painters, great and old;
Brother Angelico's[8] the man, you'll find;
Brother Lorenzo[9] stands his single peer:
Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third!"
Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine!
I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!
Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them—sometimes do and sometimes don't;
For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come
A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—
A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—
(*Flower o' the peach,*
Death for us all, and his own life for each!)
And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,
The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
Although the miller does not preach to him
The only good of grass is to make chaff.
What would men have? Do they like grass or no—
May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing
Settled for ever one way. As it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself:
You don't like what you only like too much,
You do like what, if given you at your word.
You find abundantly detestable.
For me, I think I speak as I was taught;
I always see the garden and God there
A-making man's wife: and, my lesson learned,
The value and significance of flesh,
I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.

You understand me: I'm a beast, I know.
But see, now—why, I see as certainly
As that the morning-star's about to shine,
What will hap some day. We've a youngster here
Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop:
His name is Guidi[10]—he'll not mind the monks—

[8] Fra Angelico (1387-1455), painter of religious subjects.
[9] Lorenzo Monaco, monk and painter.
[10] Tommaso Guidi, or Masaccio (1401-1428), really Lippo's master, not his pupil.

They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—
He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace,
I hope so—though I never live so long,
I know what's sure to follow. You be judge!
You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
However, you're my man, you've seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
The shapes of things, their colors, lights and shades,
Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!
—For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to? What's it all about?
To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say.
But why not do as well as say,—paint these
Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works—paint anyone, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
Are here already; nature is complete:
Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)
There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though! How much more,
If I drew higher things with the same truth!
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
"Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer!"
Strikes in the Prior: "when your meaning's plain
It does not say to folk—remember matins,
Or, mind you fast next Friday!" Why, for this
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a Saint Laurence[11] six months since
At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:
"How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"
I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns—
"Already not one phiz of your three slaves
Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
The pious people have so eased their own
With coming to say prayers there in a rage:
We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
Expect another job this time next year,
For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—
Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools!

—That is—you'll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,
Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now!
It's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself:
And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece
. . . There's for you! Give me six months, then go, see
Something in Sant' Ambrogio's![12] Bless the nuns!
They want a cast o' my office. I shall paint
God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
As puff on puff of grated orris-root
When ladies crowd to Church at midsummer.
And then i' the front, of course a saint or two—
Saint John, because he saves the Florentines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
The man of Uz[13] (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience). Well, all these
Secured at their devotion, up shall come
Out of a corner[14] when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!—
Mazed, motionless, and moonstruck—I'm the man!
Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear?
I, caught up with my monk's-things by mistake,
My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
I, in this presence, this pure company!
Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?
Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing

[11] Saint Lawrence being roasted to death.

[12] This refers to a picture painted for Saint Ambrose's Church in Florence, *The Coronation of the Virgin.*

[13] Job.

[14] Lippo's own head appears in a corner of the picture.

Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so fast!"
—Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—
He made you and devised you, after all,
Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there draw—
His camel-hair[15] make up a painting-brush?
We come to brother Lippo for all that,
Iste perfecit opus!"[16] So, all smile—
I shuffle sideways with my blushing face
Under the cover of a hundred wings
Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay
And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,
Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops
The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off
To some safe bench behind, not letting go
The palm of her, the little lily thing
That spoke the good word for me in the nick,
Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.
And so all's saved for me, and for the church
A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!
Your hand, sir, and good-by: no lights, no lights!
The street's hushed, and I know my own way back,
Don't fear me! There's the gray beginning. Zooks!

(pub. 1855)

GIORGIO VASARI

The Most Excellent Florentine Painter, Andrea del Sarto

(Born 1488—Died 1530)

Translated by Mrs. Jonathan Foster

At length then we have come, after having written the lives of many artists who have been distinguished, some for coloring, some for design, and some for invention; we have come, I say, to that of the truly excellent Andrea del Sarto, in whom art and nature combined to show all that may be done in painting, when design, coloring, and invention unite in one and the same person. Had this master possessed a somewhat bolder and more elevated mind, had he been as much distinguished for higher qualifications as he was for genius and depth of judgment in the art he practised, he would beyond all doubt, have been without an equal. But there was a certain timidity of mind, a sort of diffidence and want of force in his nature, which rendered it impossible that those evidences of ardor and animation, which are proper to the more exalted character, should ever appear in him; nor did he at any time display one particle of that elevation which, could it but have been added to the advantages wherewith he was endowed, would have rendered him a truly divine painter: wherefore the works of Andrea are wanting in those ornaments of grandeur, richness, and force, which appear so conspicuously in those of many other masters. His figures are nevertheless well drawn, they are entirely free from errors, and perfect in all their proportions, and are for the most part simple and chaste: the expression of his heads is natural and graceful in women and children, while in youths and old men it is full of life and animation. The draperies of this master are beautiful to a marvel, and the nude figures are admirably executed, the drawing is simple, the coloring is most exquisite, nay, it is truly divine. . . .

These three (paintings) were given to public view accordingly, and in one of them Andrea was found to have depicted the circumstance of San Filippo clothing the naked, after he had taken the monastic habit. Another represented the same Saint when he was reproving certain gamesters; these men, blaspheming God and scorning the admonition of San Filippo, are making a mockery of his words, when suddenly there falls a lightning-flash from Heaven, which striking the tree under which they were seated, kills two of their number. All the rest are instantly seized with indescribable terror, some raising their hands to their heads, cast themselves in desperation to the earth, others seek safety in flight, with looks full of horror. Among these is a woman wild with the terror caused by the sound of the thunder, and rushing along with so natural and life-like a movement, that she seems to be indeed alive. A horse, having torn himself loose in his flight, betrays the terror he feels at the outcries around him, by rearing aloft, and in all his movements gives evidence of the effect produced by the unexpected disturbance. The whole work, in short, proves the forethought with which Andrea considered all that the various circumstances of such an event as he was depicting required, and gives testimony of a care and diligence which is certainly most commendable, as well as needful to him who would exercise the art of painting. In the third of these pictures San Filippo delivers a woman from evil spirits, and this also is delineated with all those considerations which can be imagined as proper to the due representation of such an event; wherefore all these pictures obtained for Andrea very great honor and fame. . . .

These various labors secured so great a name for

[15] John the Baptist was clothed in camel's hair. See *Mark* 1:6.

[16] "This one did the work," inscription on a scroll in the picture.

Andrea in his native city, that among the many artists, old and young, who were then painting, he was accounted one of the best that handled pencil and colors. Our artist then found himself to be not only honored and admired, but also in a condition, notwithstanding the really mean price that he accepted for his labors, which permitted him to render assistance to his family, while he still remained unoppressed for his own part, by those cares and anxieties which beset those who are compelled to live in poverty. But having fallen in love with a young woman whom on her becoming a widow he took for his wife, he found that he had enough to do for the remainder of his days, and was subsequently obliged to work much more laboriously than he had previously done; for in addition to the duties and liabilities which engagements of that kind are wont to bring with them, Andrea del Sarto found that he had brought on himself many others; he was now tormented by jealousy, now by one thing, now by another; but ever by some evil consequence of his new connection.[1]

[1] In the first edition of Vasari, the history of Andrea's marriage is given at greater length. Our author there says: "At that time there was a most beautiful girl in the Via di San Gallo, who was married to a capmaker, and who, though born of a poor and vicious father, carried about her as much pride and haughtiness as beauty and fascination. She delighted in trapping the hearts of men, and among others ensnared the unlucky Andrea, whose immoderate love for her soon caused him to neglect the studies demanded by his art, and in great measure to discontinue the assistance which he had given to his parents.

"Now it chanced that a sudden and grievous illness seized the husband of this woman, who rose no more from his bed, but died thereof. Without taking counsel of his friends therefore; without regard to the dignity of his art or the consideration due to his genius, and to the eminence he had attained with so much labor; without a word, in short, to any of his kindred, Andrea took this Lucrezia di Baccio del Fede, such was the name of the woman, to be his wife; her beauty appearing to him to merit thus much at his hands, and his love for her having more influence over him than the glory and honor towards which he had begun to make such hopeful advances. But when this news became known in Florence, the respect and affection which his friends had previously borne to Andrea changed to contempt and disgust, since it appeared to them that the darkness of this disgrace had obscured for a time all the glory and renown obtained by his talents.

"But he destroyed his own peace as well as estranged his friends by this act, seeing that he soon became jealous, and found that he had besides fallen into the hands of an artful woman, who made him do as she pleased in all things. He abandoned his own poor father and mother, for example, and adopted the father and sisters of his wife in their stead; insomuch that all who knew the facts, mourned over him, and he soon began to be as much avoided as he had previously been sought after. His disciples still remained with him, it is true, in the hope of learning something useful, yet there was not one of them, great or small, who was not maltreated by his wife, both by evil words and despiteful actions: none could escape her blows, but although Andrea lived in the midst of all that torment, he yet accounted it a great pleasure."

While Andrea was thus laboring over these works in Florence poorly remunerated for his toils, living in wretched poverty and wholly incapable of raising himself from his depressed condition, the two pictures which he had sent into France, were obtaining much admiration from King Francis, and among the many others which had been despatched to him from Rome, Venice, and Lombardy, these had been adjudged to be by far the best. That monarch therefore, praising them very highly, was told that he might easily prevail on Andrea to visit France, when he might enter the service of His Majesty; this proposal was exceedingly agreeable to the king, who therefore gave orders that everything needful should be done for that purpose, and that a sum of money for the expenses of the journey, should be paid to Andrea in Florence. The latter gladly set forth on his way to France accordingly, taking with him his scholar Andrea Sguazzella.

Having in due time arrived at the French court, they were received by the monarch very amicably and with many favors; even the first day of his arrival was marked to Andrea by proofs of that magnanimous sovereign's liberality and courtesy, since he at once received not only a present of money, but the added gift of very rich and honorable vestments. He soon afterwards commenced his labors, rendering himself so acceptable to the king as well as to the whole court, and receiving so many proofs of good-will from all, that his departure from his native country soon appeared to our artist to have conducted him from the extreme of wretchedness to the summit of felicity. One of Andrea's first works in France was the portrait of the Dauphin, the son of the king, a child born but a few months previously, and still in his swathing bands; wherefore, having taken this painting to the king, he received in return three hundred ducats of gold.

Continuing his labors, he afterwards painted a figure of Charity for King Francis; this was considered an exceedingly beautiful picture, and was held by that monarch in all the estimation due to so admirable a work. From that time the king commanded that a very considerable income should be annually paid to Andrea, doing his utmost to induce the painter to remain contentedly at his court, and promising that he should never want for anything that he could desire; and this happened because the promptitude of Andrea in his works, and the easy character of the man, who was satisfied with everything around him,

were both agreeable to King Francis; he gave very great satisfaction to the whole court also, painting numerous pictures and executing various works of different kinds for the nobles.

And now, had Andrea del Sarto only reflected on all that he had escaped from, and duly weighed the advantageous character of that position to which fate had conducted him, I make no doubt but that, to say nothing of riches, he might have attained to great honors. But one day being employed on the figure of a St. Jerome doing penance, which he was painting for the mother of the king, there came to him certain letters from Florence; these were written to him by his wife, and from that time (whatever may have been the cause) he began to think of leaving France; he asked permission to that effect from the French king accordingly, saying that he desired to return to Florence, but that when he had arranged his affairs in that city, he would return without fail to his majesty; he added, that when he came back his wife should accompany him, to the end that he might remain in France the more quietly; and that he would bring with him pictures and sculptures of great value. The king, confiding in these promises, gave him money for the purchase of those pictures and sculptures, Andrea taking an oath on the gospels to return within the space of a few months, and that done he departed to his native city.

He arrived safely in Florence, enjoying the society of his beautiful wife and that of his friends, with the sight of his native city during several months; but when the period specified by the king, and that at which he ought to have returned, had come and passed, he found himself at the end, not only of his own money, but what with building, indulging himself in various pleasures and doing no work, of that belonging to the French monarch also, the whole of which he had consumed. He was nevertheless determined to return to France, but the prayers and tears of his wife had more power than his own necessities, or the faith which he had pledged to the king; he remained therefore in Florence, and the French monarch was so greatly angered thereby, that for a long time after he would not look at the paintings of Florentine masters, and declared that if Andrea ever fell into his hands he would have no regard whatever to the distinction of his endowments, but would do him more harm than he had done him good. Andrea del Sarto remained in Florence therefore, as we have said, and from a highly eminent position he sank to the very lowest, procuring a livelihood and passing his time as he best might.

We conclude, then, with the opinion, that if Andrea displayed no great elevation of mind in the actions of his life, and contented himself with little, yet, it is not to be denied, that he manifested considerable elevation of genius in his art, or that he gave proof of infinite promptitude and ability in every kind of labor connected therewith; nor will any refuse to admit, that his works form a rich ornament to every place wherein they are found; nay, more, it is most certain that he conferred great benefits on his contemporaries in art, by the examples he left them in manner, design, and coloring; his works exhibiting fewer errors than those of any other Florentine; seeing that Andrea, as I have said before, understood the management of light and shade most perfectly, causing the objects depicted to take their due degree of prominence, or to retire within the shadows, with infinite ability, and painting his pictures with the utmost grace and animation. He likewise taught the method of working in fresco with perfect harmony, and without much retouching *a secco*,[2] which causes all his pictures in that manner to appear as if they were executed in a day; wherefore this master may serve as an example to the Tuscan artists on all occasions. He is entitled to the highest praise among the most eminent of their number, and well merits to receive the palm of honor.

Andrea del Sarto

Called "The Faultless Painter"

Cf. Vasari's account, *above*.

John Kenyon, a friend of Browning's asked the poet to purchase for him a copy of the picture of Andrea del Sarto and his wife which hangs in the Pitti Palace in Florence. Unable to find one, Browning sent Kenyon this poem in lieu of the picture.

But do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love!
I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems

[2] in the dry.

As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,[1]
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this!
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require:
It saves a model. So! keep looking so—
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,
And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less.
You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,
There's what we painters call our harmony!
A common grayness silvers everything,—
All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone you know),—but I, at every point;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now looks the life he makes us lead;
So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!
I feel he laid the fetter: let it lie!
This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that's behind us! You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak:
And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love! so such thing should be—
Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
I do not boast, perhaps: yourself are judge,
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it!
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past:
I do what many dream of all their lives,
—Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
(I know his name, no matter)—so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's[2] outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that?
Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
I know both what I want and what might gain,
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
"Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.
Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate[3] who died five years ago.
('Tis copied, George Vasari[4] sent it me.)
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,

[1] a suburb on a hill above Florence.

[2] a mountain peak north of Florence.

[3] Raphael (1483-1520).

[4] Cf. p. 571.

Above and through his art—for it gives way;
That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it:
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
"God and the glory! never care for gain.
The present by the future, what is that?
Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo![5]
Rafael is waiting: up to God, all three!"
I might have done it for you. So it seems:
Perhaps not. All is as God overrules.
Besides, incentives come from the soul's self;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you?
What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not;
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:
Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside;
But they speak sometimes; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak! That Francis,[6] that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!
I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
I painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the background, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward!
A good time, was it not, my kingly days?
And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—
'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;
Too live the life grew, golden and not gray,
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.
How could it end in any other way?
You called me, and I came home to your heart.
The triumph was—to reach and stay there; since
I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,
You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!
"Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
The Roman's is the better when you pray,
But still the other's Virgin was his wife"—
Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge
Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
My better fortune, I resolve to think.
For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .
(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
Too lifted up in heart because of it)
"Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,
Who, were he set to plan and execute
As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.
I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
Do you forget already words like those?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost,—
Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!
This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
If you would sit thus by me every night

[5] Michelangelo (1475-1564), painter, sculptor, architect, and poet.

[6] Francis I of France had employed Andrea to paint for him at his palace of Fontainebleau. The king gave him money to buy pictures and statues in Italy, but Andrea bought a house for Lucrezia instead. See Vasari, *above*.

I should work better, do you comprehend?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.
Come from the window, love,—come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The gray remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint, were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,
Not yours this time! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What's better and what's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!
Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
And I have labored somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard,[7] Rafael, Agnolo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So—still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

(pub. 1855)

Saul[1]

I

Said Abner,[2] "At last thou art come! Ere I tell, ere thou speak,
Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and did kiss his cheek.
And he: "Since the King, O my friend, for thy countenance sent,
Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from his tent
Thou return with the joyful assurance the King liveth yet,
Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the water be wet.
For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of three days,
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer nor of praise,
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their strife,
And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back upon life.

[1] Founded on *I Samuel*, 16:14-23.

[2] commander of Saul's army.

[7] Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519).

II

"Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child with his dew
On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living and blue
Just broken to twine round thy harpstrings, as if no wild heat
Were now raging to torture the desert!"

III

Then I, as was meet,
Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The Tent was unlooped;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I stooped;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not afraid
But spoke, "Here is David, thy servant!" And no voice replied.
At the first I saw naught but the blackness; but soon I descried
A something more black than the blackness—the vast, the upright
Main prop which sustains the pavilion; and slow into sight
Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of all.
Then a sunbeam, that burst through the tent roof, showed Saul.

IV

He stood as erect as that tent-prop, both arms stretched out wide
On the great cross-support in the center, that goes to each side;
He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there as, caught in his pangs
And waiting his change, the king serpent all heavily hangs,
Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance come
With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and stark, blind and dumb.

V

Then I tuned my harp,- took off the lilies we twine round its chords
Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—those sunbeams like swords!
And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as, one after one,
So docile they come to the pen-door till folding be done.
They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they have fed
Where the long grasses stifle the water within the stream's bed;
And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows star
Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so far!

VI

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland will each leave his mate
To fly after the player; then, what makes the crickets elate
Till for boldness they fight one another; and then, what has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand-house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and half mouse!
God made all the creatures and gave them our love and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family here.

VII

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their wine-song, when hand
Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and great hearts expand
And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And then, the last song
When the dead man is praised on his journey—"Bear, bear him along
With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! Are balm-seeds not here

To console us? The land has none left such as he on the bier.
Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!"—And then, the glad chaunt
Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next, she whom we vaunt
As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then, the great march
Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress an arch
Naught can break; who shall harm them, our friends?—Then, the chorus intoned
As the Levites go up to the altar in glory enthroned.
But I stopped here: for here in the darkness Saul groaned.

VIII

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and listened apart;
And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered: and sparkles 'gan dart
From the jewels that woke in his turban, at once with a start,
All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous at heart.
So the head: but the body still moved not, still hung there erect.
And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it unchecked,
As I sang:—

IX

"Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! No spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,
And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draft of wine,
And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!
Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose sword thou didst guard
When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for glorious reward?
Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up as men sung
The low song of the nearly-departed, and hear her faint tongue
Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let one more attest
I have lived, seen God's hand through a lifetime, and all was for best?'
Then they sung through their tears in strong triumph, not much, but the rest.
And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the working whence grew
Such result as, from seething grape-bundles, the spirit strained true:
And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of wonder and hope,
Present promise and wealth of the future beyond the eye's scope,—
Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch; a people is thine:
And all gifts, which the world offers singly, on one head combine!
On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and rage (like the throe
That, a-work in the rock, helps its labor and lets the gold go),
High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame crowning them,—all
Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—King Saul."

X

And lo, with that leap of my spirit,—heart, hand, harp and voice,
Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding rejoice
Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when, dare I say,
The Lord's army, in rapture of service, strains through its array,

And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—"Saul!" cried I, and stopped,
And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul, who hung propped
By the tent's cross-support in the center, was struck by his name.
Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes right to the aim,
And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that held (he alone,
While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black, but alive yet, your mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages untold—
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all hail, there they are!
—Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the green on his crest
For their food in the ardors of summer. One long shudder thrilled
All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and was stilled
At the King's self left standing before me, released and aware.
What was gone, what remained? All to traverse 'twixt hope and despair;
Death was past, life not come: so he waited. Awhile his right hand
Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forthwith to remand
To their place what new objects should enter: 't was Saul as before.
I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was hurt any more
Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from the shore,
At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow decline
Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap and entwine
Base with base to knit strength more intensely: so, arm folded arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

XI

What spell or what charm,
(For awhile there was trouble within me,) what next should I urge
To sustain him where song had restored him?—Song filled to the verge
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty: beyond, on what fields,
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the cup they put by?
He saith, "It is good"; still he drinks not: he lets me praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

XII

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pasture, when round me the sheep
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in sleep;
And I lay in my hollow and mused on the world that might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the hill and the sky:
And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to be passed with my flocks,
Let me people at least, with my fancies, the plains and the rocks,
Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the show
Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly shall know!
Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the courage that gains,
And the prudence that keeps what men strive for." And now these old trains
Of vague thought came again; I grew surer; so, once more the string
Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

XIII

"Yea, my King,"
I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts that spring
From the mere mortal life held in common by man and by brute:

In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul it bears fruit.
Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its stem trembled first
Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler; then safely outburst
The fan-branches all round; and thou mindest when these too, in turn,
Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect: yet more was to learn,
E'en the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our dates shall we slight,
When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow? or care for the plight
Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them? Not so! stem and branch
Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the palm-wine shall staunch
Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee such wine.
Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for! the spirit be thine!
By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still shalt enjoy
More indeed, than at first when inconscious, the life of a boy.
Crush that life, and behold its wine running! Each deed thou hast done
Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en as the sun
Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him, though tempests efface,
Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must everywhere trace
The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of thy will,
Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall thrill
Thy whole people, the countless, with ardor, till they too give forth
A like cheer to their sons; who in turn, fill the South and the North
With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse in the past!
But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at last:
As the lion when age dims his eyeball, the rose at her height,
So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever take flight.
No! Again a long draft of my soul-wine! Look forth o'er the years!
Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin with the seer's!
Is Saul dead? In the depth of the vale make his tomb—bid arise
A gray mountain of marble heaped four-square, till built to the skies,
Let it mark where the great First King slumbers: whose fame would ye know?
Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record shall go
In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul, so he did;
With the sages directing the work, by the populace chid,—
For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there! Which fault to amend,
In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon they shall spend
(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise, and record
With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the statesman's great word
Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The river's a-wave
With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when prophet-winds rave:
So the pen gives unborn generations their due and their part
In thy being! Then, first of the mighty, thank God that thou art!"

XIV

And behold while I sang . . . but O Thou who didst grant me that day,
And before it not seldom hast granted thy help to essay,
Carry on, and complete an adventure,—my shield and my sword
In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my word,—
Still be with me, who then at the summit of human endeavor
And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed hopeless as ever
On the new stretch of heaven above me—till, mighty to save,
Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's throne from man's grave!
Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my heart
Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels last night I took part,

As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with my sheep.
And still fear lest the terrible glory evanish like sleep!
For I wake in the gray dewy covert, while Hebron[3] upheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and Kidron[4] retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

XV

I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and, ever more strong,
Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand replumed
His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his countenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had bent
The brow from the daily communion; and still, though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop, till, stayed by the pile
Of his armor and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there awhile,
And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop, to raise
His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched on the praise
I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient there;
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was 'ware
That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak roots which please
To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke not, but slow
Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
Sott and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: through my hair
The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized mine—
And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where was the sign?
I yearned—"Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,
I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and this;
I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,
At this moment,—had love but the warrant love's heart to dispense!"

XVI

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song more! outbroke—

XVII

"I have gone the whole round of creation: I saw and I spoke:
I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain
And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned him again
His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw,
I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet all's law.
Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked
To perceive him has gained an abyss, where a dewdrop was asked.
Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid bare.
Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite Care!
Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no less,

[3] a city in Palestine.
[4] a brook near Jerusalem.

In the king I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.
And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending up-raises it too)
The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.
Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity known,
I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.
There's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hoodwink,
I am fain to keep still in abeyance (I laugh as I think)
Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst
E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could love if I durst!
But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake
God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain for love's sake.
—What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors great and small,
Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth appal?
In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?
Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the parts shift?
Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the end, what Began?
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?
Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,
To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvelous dower
Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest),
These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the best?
Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
This perfection,—succeed with life's day-spring, death's minute of night?
Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul the mistake,
Saul the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him awake
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new harmony yet
To be run and continued, and ended—who knows? —or endure?
The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make sure:
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles in this.

XVIII

"I believe it! 'T is thou, God, that givest, 't is I who receive:
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my prayer
As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.
From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread Sabaoth:
I will?—the mere atoms despise me! Why am I not loth
To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it I dare
Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops my despair?
This;—'t is not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do!
See the King—I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.
Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing which,
I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me now!

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou—so wilt thou!
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with death!
As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.
'T is the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever: a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

XIX

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right,
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the aware:
I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as struglingly there,
As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—
Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with her crews;
And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot
Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge: but I fainted not,
For the hand still impelled me at once and supported, suppressed
All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,
Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.
Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth—
Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth;
In the gathered intensity brought to the gray of the hills;
In the shuddering forests' held breath; in the sudden wind-thrills;
In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with eye sidling still,
Though averted with wonder and dread; in the birds stiff and chill
That rose heavily as I approached them, made stupid with awe:
E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the new law.
The same stared in the white humid faces upturned by the flowers;
The same worked in the heart of the cedar and moved the vine-bowers:
And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent and low,
With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—"E'en so, it is so!"

(1845-55)

Rabbi Ben Ezra

Ibn Ezra was a medieval Jewish writer, poet, physician, and philosopher, who was born at Toledo toward the close of the eleventh century and lived nearly one hundred years. His philosophy was one highly sympathetic to Browning, for which reason the poet chose to deliver one of the clearest expressions of his own philosophy through the person of the Rabbi.

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made.
Our times are in his hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned;
Youth shows but half. Trust God; see all, nor be afraid!"

Not that, amassing flowers,
Youth sighed, "Which rose make ours,
Which lily leave and then as best recall?"
Not that, admiring stars,
It yearned, "Nor Jove, nor Mars;
Mine be some figured flame which blends, transcends them all!"

Not for such hopes and fears
Annulling youth's brief years,
Do I remonstrate; folly wide the mark!
Rather I prize the doubt
Low kinds exist without,
Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast.
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

Rejoice we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
Be our joys three-parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

For thence—a paradox
Which comforts while it mocks—
Shall life succeed in that it seems to fail.
What I aspired to be,
And was not, comforts me;
A brute I might have been, but would not sink i' the scale.

What is he but a brute
Whose flesh has soul to suit,
Whose spirit works lest arms and legs want play?
To man, propose this test—
Thy body at its best,
How far can that project thy soul on its lone way?

Yet gifts should prove their use.
I own the Past profuse
Of power each side, perfection every turn;
Eyes, ears took in their dole,
Brain treasured up the whole;
Should not the heart beat once "How good to live and learn!"

Not once beat "Praise be thine!
I see the whole design,
I, who saw power, see now love perfect too.
Perfect I call thy plan;
Thanks that I was a man!
Maker, remake, complete—I trust what thou shalt do."?

For pleasant is this flesh;
Our soul, in its rose-mesh
Pulled ever to the earth, still yearns for rest.
Would we some prize might hold
To match those manifold
Possessions of the brute—gain most, as we did best!

Let us not always say,
"Spite of this flesh today
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!"
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, "All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

Therefore I summon age
To grant youth's heritage,
Life's struggle having so far reached its term.
Thence shall I pass, approved
A man, for aye removed
From the developed brute; a god, though in the germ.

And I shall thereupon
Take rest, ere I be gone
Once more on my adventure brave and new;
Fearless and unperplexed,
When I wage battle next,
What weapon to select, what armor to indue.

Youth ended, I shall try
My gain or loss thereby;
Leave the fire ashes, what survives is gold.
And I shall weigh the same,
Give life its praise or blame.
Young, all lay in dispute; I shall know, being old.

For note, when evening shuts,
A certain moment cuts
The deed off, calls the glory from the gray.
A whisper from the west
Shoots—"Add this to the rest,
Take it and try its worth. Here dies another day."

So, still within this life,
Though lifted o'er its strife,
Let me discern, compare, pronounce at last,
"This rage was right i' the main,
That acquiescence vain;
The Future I may face now I have proved the Past."

For more is not reserved
To man, with soul just nerved
To act tomorrow what he learns today.
Here, work enough to watch
The Master work, and catch
Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool's true play.

As it was better, youth
Should strive, through acts uncouth,
Toward making, than repose on aught found made:
So, better, age, exempt
From strife, should know, than tempt
Further. Thou waitedst age; wait death nor be afraid!

Enough now, if the Right
And Good and Infinite
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own,
With knowledge absolute,
Subject to no dispute
From fools that crowded youth, nor let thee feel alone.

Be there, for once and all,
Severed great minds from small,
Announced to each his station in the Past!
Was I, the world arraigned,
Were they, my soul disdained,
Right? Let age speak the truth and give us peace at last!

Now, who shall arbitrate?
Ten men love what I hate,
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten, who in ears and eyes
Match me. We all surmise,
They this thing, and I that; whom shall my soul believe?

Not on the vulgar mass
Called "work," must sentence pass,
Things done, that took the eye and had the price;
O'er which, from level stand,
The low world laid its hand,
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice.

But all, the world's coarse thumb
And finger failed to plumb,
So passed in making up the main account;
All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's amount:

Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act,
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I could never be,
All, men ignored in me,
This I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

Aye, note that Potter's wheel,[1]
That metaphor! and feel
Why time spins fast, why passive lies our clay—
Thou, to whom fools propound,
When the wine makes its round,
"Since life fleets, all is change; the Past gone, seize today!"

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure.
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be.
Time's wheel runs back or stops; Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee 'mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance;
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest;
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves,
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Skull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

[1] Cf. *Isaiah* 64:8. Also Fitzgerald's *Rubaiyat* (p. 669 *below*), lines 325-360.

Look not thou down but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash, and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips aglow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with earth's wheel?

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who moldest men;
And since, not even while the whirl was worst,
Did I—to the wheel of life
With shapes and colors rife,
Bound dizzily—mistake my end, to slake thy thirst.

So, take and use thy work;
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

(pub. 1864)

Prospice[1]

Written shortly after Mrs. Browning's death, this poem shows the rugged virility of Browning's character. It offers an interesting comparison with Tennyson's *Crossing the Bar* (cf. *above*). The closing lines refer to the poet's wife.

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
Yet the strong man must go;
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
And the barriers fall,
Though a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers,
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness, and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!

(1861)

[1] look forward.

Why I Am a Liberal

"Why?" Because all I haply can and do,
All that I am now, all I hope to be,—
Whence comes it save from fortune setting free
Body and soul the purpose to pursue,
God traced for both? If fetters not a few,
Of prejudice, convention, fall from me,
These shall I bid man—each in his degree
Also God-guided—bear, and gayly, too?

But little do or can the best of us:
That little is achieved through Liberty.
Who, then, dares hold, emancipated thus,
His fellow shall continue bound? Not I,
Who live, love, labor freely, nor discuss
A brother's right to freedom. That is "Why."

(pub. 1885)

Epilogue to Asolando

The concluding poem in Browning's last volume, this *Epilogue* appeared on the day the poet died.

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
When you set your fancies free,
Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, imprisoned—
Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,
—Pity me?

Oh, to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!
What had I on earth to do

With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivel!
—Being—who?

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
Greet the unseen with a cheer!
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed—fight on, fare ever
There as here!"

(1889)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

(1806-1861)

Elizabeth Barrett was born March 6, 1806, the eldest of a family of eleven children. Her childhood was spent happily on a fine estate in Herefordshire. When she was thirteen she had composed an "epic" on the *Battle of Marathon*, published privately by her wealthy father. Two years later she injured her spine, and for the rest of her life was never in complete health. After a few years' residence in Devonshire, her father settled in London, eventually in the famous house at 50 Wimpole Street, which to Elizabeth became a veritable prison. The climate of London proved unwholesome to her, and she developed tuberculosis. Her brother Edward, convinced that she required a milder atmosphere, took her to Torquay. But his attempt ended tragically, for he was accidentally drowned, and Elizabeth's mental suffering so completely prostrated her that her life was in serious danger. Her well-meaning but self-willed father now kept her confined for years to her room under the illusion that he was safeguarding her from death. She found some relief in her studies and her writing, and in 1844 an edition of her poems was issued with a dedication to her father. Of them the most famous is *The Cry of the Children* (cf. *below*), a stirring protest against child labor. During the same year she wrote an essay on Carlyle which makes plain her ardent admiration of his teachings.

Lady Geraldine's Courtship, a romantic poem in her collection of 1844, paid tribute to Robert Browning as a great poet. Among her many readers, for she had rapidly established a reputation for herself, was Browning, who, grateful for her notice, wrote to her on his return to England. "I love you with all my heart, dear Miss Barrett," he began abruptly in his letter of January 10, 1845, "—and this is no off-hand complimentary letter that I shall write,—whatever else, no prompt matter-of-course recognition of your genius, and there a graceful and natural end of the thing. Since the day last week when I first read your poems, I quite laugh how I have been turning and turning again in my mind what I should be able to tell you of their effect upon me. . . . I do, as I say, love these books with all my heart—and I love you too." Her answer to him on the next day said: "Sympathy is dear—very dear to me: but the sympathy of a poet, and of such a poet, is the quintessence of sympathy to me!" And in answer to his hint that he would like to visit her she responded: "Winters shut me up as they do dormouse's eyes; in the spring, *we shall see*."

He was soon pressing her to hasten their meeting but she, fearfully, reminded him that it was still winter. On March 20, 1845, she wrote him: "There will be both a May and a June if we live to see such things, and perhaps, after all, we may, and as to

seeing *you* besides, I observe that you distrust me, and that perhaps you penetrate my morbidity and guess how when the moment comes to see a living human face to which I am not accustomed, I shrink. . . . I shall be afraid of you at first. . . . You are Paracelsus, and I am a recluse, with nerves that have been broken on the rack. . . . You seem to have drunken of the cup of life full, with the sun shining on it. I have lived only inwardly. . . . When my illness came and I seemed to stand on the edge of the world with all done, and no prospect . . . of ever passing the threshold of one room again; why then, I turned to thinking with some bitterness . . . that I had stood blind in this temple I was about to leave—that I had seen no Human nature, that my brothers and sisters of the earth were *names* to me, that I had beheld no great mountain or river, nothing in fact." By May he had seen her, and on the twenty-first of that month he wrote: "I trust to you for a true account of how you are—if tired, if not tired, if I did wrong in any thing,—or, if you please, *right* in any thing. . . . For an instance . . . they all say here I speak very loud—(a trick caught from having often to talk with a deaf relative of mine). And did I stay too long?"

Upon her writing to Browning that her father had refused to allow her to go to Italy for her health, he answered on September 25, 1845: "I think I ought to understand what a father may exact, and a child should comply with. . . . You ask whether you ought to obey this no-reason? I will tell you. All passive obedience and implicit submission of will and intellect is by far too easy . . . to be the course prescribed by God to Man. . . . When I first saw you—you know what followed. I supposed you to labor under an incurable complaint—and, of course, to be completely dependent on your father. . . . When you told me lately that 'you could never be poor'—all my solicitude was at an end—I had but myself to care about, and I told you, what I believed and believe, that I can at any time amply provide for that. . . . Now again the circumstances shift—and you are in what I should wonder at as the veriest slavery—and I who *could* free you from it. . . . Now while I *dream,* let me once dream! I would marry you now and thus—I would come when you let me, and go when you bade me—I would be no more than one of your brothers—'*no more*'—that is, instead of getting tomorrow for Saturday, I should get Saturday as well." For a while she dreaded accepting her happiness from him. Her father, she wrote, "would rather see me dead at his foot than yield the point." On September 12, 1846, they were married in secret. The next week found them out of England, from which they had fled to avoid the elder Barrett's fury.

The fruit of his affection, which seized her out of the hands of Death, was a series of wonderful love sonnets, *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (cf. *below*), which she published in 1850. It is to explain the background of this, her masterpiece, that we have quoted the correspondence which reflects the condition of mind under which she wrote. Theirs was one of the most dramatic love stories in literary history and certainly was productive of the most moving series of sonnets any courtship ever produced. Some years later Browning offered his poetic contribution on their love, *One Word More.*

Via Paris they went to Pisa, and from Pisa to Florence. At the Casa Guidi they settled until her death fifteen years later. His love gave her a renewed lease on life, and their marriage was one of the happiest on record. *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851) contained in poetry her impressions of Italy. *Aurora Leigh* (1857), a novel in verse, has a certain autobiographical interest in some of its passages; more important, it makes plain her profound sympathy for the poor and economically downtrodden; as poetry, however, it is too prosaic and full of moralizing to be considered great. A last collection of her poems was issued in 1862.

With the exception of the *Sonnets from the Portuguese,* and some individual shorter poems like *A Musical Instrument* (cf. *below*), Mrs. Browning's poetry suffers from occasional carelessness of rhythm and rhyme, and her poetic output in consequence is not all of equal literary importance. Her sincerity, her sensitivity to social injustice, and her affection for the beauties of nature, however, raise her best creations to a high

place in our poetry. She made, moreover, several excellent translations—among them, from Theocritus (cf. Vol. I, p. 246) and the *Prometheus Bound* (cf. Vol. II, p. 287) of Aeschylus.

The Oxford edition of her poetry (1910) is complete. The *Letters of R. Browning and E. B. Barrett* were issued in two volumes (1897) by F. G. Kenyon. J. K. Ingram's biography (1888) is authoritative.

Sonnets from the Portuguese

After their marriage, Mrs. Browning disclosed to her husband that she had written a sequence of forty-five sonnets inspired by their love for each other. It was he who gave them their present title so that, despite their autobiographical import, they could be published under the guise of their being translations. As a sequence they stand unrivaled among English sonnets for their fervor and impassioned sincerity. The conventions of the Petrarchan school (cf. Vol. I, p. 238) are in them quite forgotten. It is true that the Italian sonnet form has been managed with greater skill and finer music by other poets than Mrs. Browning, but no sonneteer has spoken more directly to the heart than she.

1

I thought once how Theocritus[1] had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished-for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young.
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;
And a voice said in mastery, while I strove—
"Guess now who holds thee?"—"Death,"[2] I said.
But, there,
The silver answer rang—"Not Death, but Love."

3

Unlike are we, unlike, O princely Heart!
Unlike our uses and our destinies.
Our ministering two angels look surprise
On one another, as they strike athwart
Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee, art
A guest for queens to social pageantries,
With gages[1] from a hundred brighter eyes
Than tears even can make mine, to ply thy part
Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer, singing through
The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree?
The chrism is on thine head,—on mine, the dew,—
And Death must dig the level where these agree.

4

Thou hast thy calling to some palace floor,
Most gracious singer of high poems, where
The dancers will break footing, from the care
Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.
And dost thou lift this house's latch too poor
For hand of thine? and canst thou think and bear
To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fulness at my door?
Look up and see the casement broken in,
The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
Hush, call no echo up in further proof
Of desolation! there's a voice within
That weeps as—thou must sing—alone, aloof.

7

The face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink

[1] For Theocritus, cf. Vol. I, p. 243.
[2] She had been an invalid for many years.
[1] pledges.

Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink,
Was caught up into love and taught the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.
The names of country, heaven, are changed away
For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;
And this—this lute and song—loved yesterday,
(The singing angels know) are only dear
Because thy name moves right in what they say.

14

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
"I love her for her smile—her look—her way
Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day;"—
For these things in themselves, beloved, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry:
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby.
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou may'st love on through love's eternity.

22

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into fire
At either curved point,—What bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,
The angels would press on us, and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, beloved,—where the unfit,
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

26

I lived with visions for my company
Instead of men and women, years ago,
And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know
A sweeter music than they played to me.
But soon their trailing purple was not free
Of this world's dust, their lutes did silent grow,
And I myself grew faint and blind below
Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come—to be,
Beloved, what they seemed. Their shining fronts,
Their songs, their splendors—better, yet the same,
As river-water hallowed into fonts—
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
My soul with satisfaction of all wants—
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

28

My letters all dead paper, mute and white!
And yet they seem alive and quivering
Against my tremulous hands which loose the string
And let them drop down on my knee to-night.
This said, he wished to have me in his sight
Once, as a friend; this fixed a day in spring
To come and touch my hand—a simple thing,
Yet I wept for it!—this—the paper's light—
Said, "*Dear,* I love thee"; and I sank and quailed
As if God's future thundered on my past:
This said, "I am thine"—and so its ink has paled
With lying at my heart that beat too fast:
And this—O Love, thy words have ill availed,
If, what this said, I dared repeat at last!

35

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
And be all to me? Shall I never miss
Home-talk and blessing and the common kiss
That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,
When I look up, to drop on a new range
Of walls and floors, another home than this?
Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?
That's hardest! If to conquer love has tried,
To conquer grief, tries more, as all things prove;
For grief indeed is love and grief beside.
Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love.
Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart wide
And fold within the wet wings of thy dove.

43

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight

For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as men turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

(pub. 1850)

The Cry of the Children

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows:
The young birds are chirping in the nest;
The young fawns are playing with the shadows;
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in their sorrow,
Why their tears are falling so?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago;
The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending in the frost,
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
The old hope is hardest to be lost:
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy;
"Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary,
Our young feet," they say, "are very weak!
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek:
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old:

"True," say the children, "it may happen
That we die before our time:
Little Alice died last year, her grave is shapen
Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her:
Was no room for any work in the close clay!
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her
Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries;
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For a smile has time for growing in her eyes:
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk-chime.
It is good when it happens," say the children,
"That we die before our time."

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking
Death in life as best to have:
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do;
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty,
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
But they answer, "Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

"For oh," say the children, "we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap;
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring,
Through the coal-dark, underground;

Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

"For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning;
Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn, our heads, with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places:
Turns the sky in the high window, blank and reeling,
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling:
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.
And all day the iron wheels are droning:
And sometimes we could pray,
'O ye wheels,' (breaking out in a mad moaning)
'Stop! be silent for to-day!'"

Ay, be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth!
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals:
Let them prove their living souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark;
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray;
So the blessed One who blesseth all the others,
Will bless them another day.
They answer, "Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door:
Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
Hears our weeping any more?

"Two words, indeed, of praying we remember;
And at midnight's hour of harm,
'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm.
We know no other words, except 'Our Father,'
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand which is strong.
'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely
(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

"But no!" say the children, weeping faster,
"He is speechless as a stone:
And they tell us, of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on.
Go to!" say the children,—"Up in Heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find:
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving:
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving,
And the children doubt of each.

And well may the children weep before you!
They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun:
They know the grief of man, without its wisdom;
They sink in man's despair, without its calm;
And slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm:
Are worn as if with age, yet unretrievingly
The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
Let them weep! let them weep!

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity.
"How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?

Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple shows your path!
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
That the strong man in his wrath."
(pub. 1841)

A Musical Instrument

What was he doing, the great god Pan,
Down in the reeds by the river?
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat
And breaking the golden lilies afloat
With the dragon-fly on the river?

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,
From the deep cool bed of the river,
The limpid water turbidly ran,
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,
And the dragon-fly had fled away,
Ere he brought it out of the river.

High on the shore sat the great god Pan,
While turbidly flowed the river,
And hacked and hewed as a great god can
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,
Till there was not a sign of the leaf indeed
To prove it fresh from the river.

He cut it short, did the great god Pan,
(How tall it stood in the river!),
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,
Steadily from the outside ring,
And notched the poor dry empty thing
In holes as he sat by the river.

"This is the way," laughed the great god Pan,
(Laughed while he sat by the river)
"The only way since gods began
To make sweet music, they could succeed."
Then dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,
He blew in power by the river.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!
Piercing sweet by the river!
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!
The sun on the hill forgot to die,
And the lilies revived, and the dragon-fly
Came back to dream on the river.

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan
To laugh, as he sits by the river,
Making a poet out of a man:
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain—
For the reed which grows never more again
As a reed with the reeds of the river.
(1860)

John Ruskin

(1819-1900)

One of the most high-minded of men, John Ruskin was not more remarkable for his gifts as a writer than for the beauty of his personal character. Many thinkers have entertained high ideals for the alleviation of a suffering humanity, but few have been willing to make personal sacrifices to set an example of unselfishness. Ruskin inherited something of a fortune from his father; and though people of large income have usually not been noted for any tendency to part with it, he gave all his away in the furtherance of his beliefs. It is common to point out that that kind of socialism is utopian. But it is also worthy of remark that such criticism of Ruskin's generosity often emanates either from those who are satisfied with a predatory order of society or from those who really prefer to love humanity in the abstract while they feel free to be utterly egotistic in their daily acts. Apart from the practical good a man like Ruskin is able to accomplish, his very life serves as an inspiration to others who dare hope greater things for mankind. The tragic fact, however, is that Ruskin's life was crowned not with triumph but with apparent failure, though many of the reforms he fought for have since been realized.

His interest in social problems was a natural development of his concern with the arts. And hence his career falls into the two periods during which first the arts and later political economy were the ruling passions of his life.

He was born on February 8, 1819, in London, the only child of a well-to-do wine merchant. Honesty and sobriety of demeanor were part of the atmosphere in the Ruskin household. His education, of which he has given us a fascinating account in his autobiography, *Praeterita* (cf. *below*), was entrusted to his mother's care. Chief among the studies upon which she insisted was his mastery of the Bible from "the first verse of Genesis . . . to the last verse of the Apocalypse." To his full knowledge of the Bible Ruskin attributed his feeling for style and the values of words. The garden of their house at Herne Hill encouraged the child to become early a close observer of plant and animal life. At the age of eight he was writing verse, and at ten he was being tutored in languages and mathematics. He was never during their life separated from his parents. When he entered Christ Church College, Oxford, his mother took lodgings near him, and his father came to see him on week-ends. The Ruskins traveled about considerably and their son imbibed profound impressions of nature from their visits to the Lake District, Scotland, Wales, and the Continent. When he was fourteen he had his first view of the Alps, an experience that deeply affected him. His parents were careful not only to instill in him a veneration for nature but also to cultivate his tastes for the best in art. Two years which he spent in Italy because of ill health were devoted to a study of medieval painting. At college he read widely, did a great deal of drawing, and won the Newdigate Prize for poetry. His childhood and young manhood were, in short, sheltered from any knowledge but that of the beautiful. When, therefore, he became aware, in later life, of the sordidness of life among the working class, the shock was so violent as to wrench him out of the pattern in which he had been living.

In 1832 he was given as a present a volume of Rogers's poem, *Italy,* which contained designs by the painter J. M. W. Turner. His discovery of this great artist was an event of crucial importance. When *Blackwood's* severely criticized some newly exhibited pictures of Turner's in 1836, Ruskin penned a defense which, though unpublished, was sent to the painter. One day in May 1842, the year in which he took his degree, Ruskin learned the secret of painting from nature. On the road to Norwood, he tells us, "I noticed a bit of ivy round a thorn stem. . . . I proceeded to make a light-and-shade pencil study of it. . . . When it was done I saw that I had virtually lost all my time since I was twelve years old, because no one had ever told me to draw what was really there." Now Ruskin at last began to understand Turner's canvases, and decided to write a book to explain them to the world. In May 1843 the first volume of *Modern Painters* (cf. *below*) appeared. Reproducing in word-pictures the meaning of Turner's pigment, Ruskin taught England to re-evaluate a master to whom great praise and blame had been apportioned without true appreciation of what he had accomplished. *Modern Painters,* whose beauty was of a new order in English prose, became an immediate success, and went through many editions. Turner was rediscovered, and Ruskin's reputation as art critic was made.

Ruskin eventually issued four more volumes of *Modern Painters,* the last of them appearing in 1860. But before they were written, he undertook an ambitious course of preparation. On the Continent he studied landscape, the sea, rocks, the Old Masters, and literature. And after the second volume (1846), convinced that art must express more than form and color if it were to contribute to the dignity of mankind, he began to widen his scope. Greater breadth is already to be seen in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), which deals with seven concepts which humanity has expressed in its great buildings: sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, life, memory, and obedience. The moral import of the fine arts, which had always been a consideration with Ruskin, here assumes a new dominance. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* is also Ruskin's first strong argument in support of Gothic architecture. Accompanied by his own careful

drawings, his essay had an enormous effect in clarifying medieval ideals, and has affected the history of architecture itself.

His master work of this period of his writing is *The Stones of Venice* (cf. *below*), published 1851-53, which contains some of its author's most beautiful prose and soundest ideas. Besides its magnificent description and fascinating history of the architectural wonders of Venice—there is still no better guide to the beauties of that city—the book offers a vindication of that revival of respect for the medieval which had been inspiring English poets since the mid-eighteenth century. Ruskin argues that the great creations of his beloved Middle Ages were due to the moral grandeur of those centuries, and that the degradation which he believed characteristic of the later Renaissance could be explained by the decay of Venetian moral life.

Carlyle hailed the book with enthusiasm. And Ruskin, whose examination of art had turned his attention more closely to the conditions of society which had produced it, was drawn more and more to agree with Carlyle's powerful advocacy of the doctrine of salvation by work. The two men became more intimate, and Ruskin was soon acknowledging himself to be something of a disciple, though he surpassed his master in insight and intellectual balance. Like Carlyle, he came to understand that the current order of industrial society was depriving humanity of decency and dignity. But unlike his teacher, he placed no hopes for better things in dictators. Nor did he, like Kingsley, suppose that improvement was to be expected from awakening benevolence in employers and in teaching better manners to employees.

His transition was rapid. In 1854 he became associated with F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, F. J. Furnivall, and Thomas Hughes in establishing the Workingmen's College in London, and soon was writing for his pupils manuals on *The Elements of Drawing* and *The Elements of Perspective*. At Manchester in 1858 he lectured on *The Political Economy of Art*. His contacts with workingmen convinced him that the whole structure of society required reorganization, and he set to studying economics. In 1860 he began to write, for Thackeray's *Cornhill Magazine*, the series known as *Unto This Last*, in which he attacked industrial economics, with its defense of the *status quo*, and insisted that "there is no Wealth but Life." His message in the concluding section is, "Care in no wise to make more of money, but care to make much of it; remembering always the great, palpable, inevitable fact—the root and rule of all economy—that which one person has, another cannot have; and that every atom of substance, of whatever kind, used or consumed, is so much human life spent; which, if it issue in the saving present life or gaining more, is well spent, but if not is either so much life prevented, or so much slain." He advocates: "training schools for youth at government cost"; founding of "government manufactories and workshops for the sale of every necessary of life, and for the exercise of every useful art"; the employment of the unemployed, after suitable training, in government shops; and provisions for the old and destitute.

The outcry against *Unto This Last* was so great that the series was discontinued by the magazine. The same fate was allotted to his articles, *Munera Pulveris* (1862), which he wrote for *Fraser's Magazine* until the editor, Froude, was forced by public pressure to stop them. Here Ruskin outlined a system of economy based on a theory of value as "the strength or availing of anything towards the sustaining of life." The hostile reception of his socialistic theories only intensified his determination to develop them. He continued his lectures in *Sesame and Lilies* (1865), of which *The Mystery of Life and Its Arts* (cf. *below*) is a peculiarly comprehensive statement of his position, and in *A Crown of Wild Olive* (1866). From 1869 to 1884 he was Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford; and he was able to arouse such enthusiasm among his students that numbers of them joined him in his project of building a road with their own hands, to prove the dignity of labor. He also established St. George's Guild, expending on it large sums of money, for the purpose of forming a model industrial and agricultural society. He experimented successfully with co-operatives in handicrafts as well. Besides

these many examples of personal devotion to bettering the lot of humanity, Ruskin never tired of rendering financial aid and public assistance to artists, particularly the members of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood who had come under his influence. And although he lost his wife to one of these protégés, J. E. Millais, he was in no manner incited to be unjust to him as an artist or to desist from coming to the aid of others.

It is not easy to see why, when Dickens, Carlyle, the Christian Socialists, and Arnold were attacking the social order, Ruskin should have occasioned so much resentment. The answer may lie in the violence of his manner. "I will put up with this state of things, passively, not an hour longer," he says in the first of the letters to his followers, *Fors Clavigera* (1871-74). "I am not an unselfish person, nor an Evangelical one; I have no particular pleasure in doing good; neither do I dislike doing it so much as to expect to be rewarded for it in another world. But I simply cannot paint, nor read, nor look at minerals, nor do anything else that I like, and the very light of the morning sky, when there is any—which is seldom, now-a-days, near London—has become hateful to me, because of the misery that I know of, and see signs of, where I know it not, which no imagination can interpret too bitterly." The fundamental balance with which he viewed the injustices of capitalist society can be read in a justly famous passage: "In a community regulated only by laws of demand and supply, but protected by open violence, the persons who become rich are, generally speaking, industrious, resolute, proud, covetous, prompt, methodical, sensible, unimaginative, insensitive, and ignorant. The persons who remain poor are the entirely foolish, the entirely wise, the idle, the reckless, the humble, the thoughtful, the dull, the imaginative, the sensitive, the well-informed, the improvident, the irregularly and impulsively wicked, the clumsy knave, the open thief, and the entirely merciful, just, and godly person."

Ruskin's economics are doubtless confused. He was too much the artist and too much concerned with moral issues to attain to the cold objectivity demanded of the science. But he understood better than most of his contemporaries the general nature of the problem. And the example of selflessness which he set was an inspiration to his disciples. Finally, as a modern commentator puts it: "His proposals were 'lunatic,' but many of them have achieved the stamp of sanity between the sober covers of the statute-book, and it is possible that even his more thorough-going principles may some day be adopted."

The standard edition of Ruskin's *Works* was made by Sir E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn in thirty-nine volumes (1903-12). The authoritative *Life* is by Sir E. T. Cook (2 vols., 1911). Other good biographies are by F. Harrison (1906), Mrs. Meynell (1900), and Mrs. Williams-Ellis (1929). Valuable studies are: J. A. Hobson's *John Ruskin, Social Reformer* (1898), A. C. Benson's *John Ruskin* (1911), and H. Ladd's *Victorian Morality of Art* (1932). A fine picture of the man and his relations with the Pre-Raphaelites will be found in F. Winwar's *Poor Splendid Wings* (1933).

From *Modern Painters*, Part I

Some Sea Pictures of Turner[1]

In the autumn of 1842, when Ruskin had returned from his fifth visit to the Alps, he began to write the first part of his *Modern Painters*. As Frederic Harrison states the young man's purposes: "Brimful of the Alps, of the mountains, lakes, castles, and churches of the Rhine, Switzerland, and Italy, Cumberland, and Perthshire, the personal friend of Turner, the possessor of some of his best pieces, the pupil of Copley Fielding and Harding, the honorary class-man of Oxford and prize poet, he now fell with zeal to enlarge his . . .

[1] J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851), English landscape painter.

pleading for Turner. . . . The dominant idea of his trumpet call to painters was to fling aside the traditions of the Academies, to go humbly to nature, rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, scorning nothing. . . . It was set forth with a splendor of declamation, and a torrent of illustration, with word-pictures and word-scourges, such as had never yet been dreamed of in the stolid commonplaces of conventional criticism."

The careless observation of some literary historians that Ruskin discovered Turner is entirely inaccurate. Turner had been made a member of the Royal Academy long before Ruskin was born, and he had not suffered any eclipse of fame. But what Ruskin did do was to free Turner from the gross misunderstanding with which his paintings had been criticized, and to prove that nothing was more erroneous than the charge that Turner had been untrue to nature. Ruskin, to make his argument the more powerful, devoted many pages to describing and analyzing the appearances of nature. His method was something new and wonderful.

Though Turner was "rather overwhelmed" by his young friend's enthusiasm, many discriminating people were delighted with *Modern Painters*—Wordsworth, the Brownings, George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, Tennyson, and Jowett, among others. Young artists, particularly Holman Hunt, William Morris, and Burne-Jones of the Pre-Raphaelite group, were inspired to new endeavors by it.

Few people, comparatively, have ever seen the effect on the sea of a powerful gale continued without intermission for three or four days and nights, and to those who have not, I believe it must be unimaginable, not from the mere force or size of surge, but from the complete annihilation of the limit between sea and air. The water from its prolonged agitation is beaten, not into mere creaming foam, but into masses of accumulated yeast, which hang in ropes and wreaths from wave to wave, and where one curls over to break, form a festoon like a drapery, from its edge; these are taken up in wind, not in dissipating dust, but bodily, in writhing, hanging, coiling masses, which make the air white and thick as with snow, only the flakes are a foot or two long each; the surges themselves are full of foam in their very bodies, underneath, making them white all through, as the water is under a great cataract; and their masses, being thus half water and half air, are torn to pieces by the wind whenever they rise, and carried away in roaring smoke, which chokes and strangles like actual water. Add to this that when the air has been exhausted of its moisture by long rain, the spray of the sea is caught by it as described above (Section III, chap. vi., § 13), and covers its surface not merely with the smoke of finely divided water, but with boiling mist; imagine also the low rain-clouds brought down to the very level of the sea, as I have often seen them, whirling and flying in rags and fragments from wave to wave; and finally, conceive the surges themselves in their utmost pitch of power, velocity, vastness, and madness, lifting themselves in precipices and peaks, furrowed with the whirl of ascent, through all this chaos; and you will understand that there is indeed no distinction left between the sea and air; that no object, nor horizon, nor any landmark or natural evidence of position is left; that the heaven is all spray, and the ocean all cloud, and that you can see no farther in any direction than you could see through a cataract. Suppose the effect of the first sunbeam sent from above to show this annihilation to itself, and you have the sea picture of the Academy, 1842—the Snowstorm, one of the very grandest statements of sea-motion, mist, and light, that has ever been put on canvas, even by Turner. Of course it was not understood; his finest works never are; but there was some apology for the public's not comprehending this, for few people have had the opportunity of seeing the sea at such a time, and when they have, cannot face it. To hold by a mast or a rock, and watch it, is a prolonged endurance of drowning which few people have the courage to go through. To those who have, it is one of the noblest lessons of nature.

But I think the noblest sea that Turner has ever painted, and, if so, the noblest certainly ever painted by man, is that of the Slave Ship, the chief Academy picture of the exhibition of 1840. It is a sunset on the Atlantic after prolonged storm; but the storm is partially lulled, and the torn and streaming rain-clouds are partially moving in scarlet lines to lose themselves in the hollow of the night. The whole surface of sea included in the picture is divided into two ridges of enormous

swell, not high, nor local, but a low, broad heaving of the whole ocean, like the lifting of its bosom by deep-drawn breath after the torture of the storm. Between these two ridges, the fire of the sunset falls along the trough of the sea, dyeing it with an awful but glorious light, the intense and lurid splendor which burns like gold and bathes like blood. Along this fiery path and valley, the tossing waves by which the swell of the sea is restlessly divided, lift themselves in dark, indefinite, fantastic forms, each casting a faint and ghastly shadow behind it along the illumined foam. They do not rise everywhere, but three or four together in wild groups, fitfully and furiously, as the under strength of the swell compels or permits them; leaving between them treacherous spaces of level and whirling water, now lighted with green and lamplike fire, now flashing back the gold of the declining sun, now fearfully dyed from above with the indistinguishable images of the burning clouds, which fall upon them in flakes of crimson and scarlet, and give to the reckless waves the added motion of their own fiery flying. Purple and blue, the lurid shadows of the hollow breakers are cast upon the mist of the night, which gathers cold and low, advancing like the shadow of death upon the guilty ship as it labors amidst the lightning of the sea, its thin masts written upon the sky in lines of blood, girded with condemnation in that fearful hue which signs the sky with horror, and mixes its flaming flood with the sunlight,—and cast far along the desolate heave of the sepulchral waves, incarnadines the multitudinous sea.

I believe, if I were reduced to rest Turner's immortality upon any single work, I should choose this. Its daring conception—ideal in the highest sense of the word—is based on the purest truth, and wrought out with the concentrated knowledge of a life; its color is absolutely perfect, not one false or morbid hue in any part or line, and so modulated that every square inch of canvas is a perfect composition; its drawing as accurate as fearless; the ship buoyant, bending, and full of motion; its tones as true as they are wonderful; and the whole picture dedicated to the most sublime of subjects and impressions—(completing the perfect system of all truth, which we have shown to be formed by Turner's works)—the power, majesty, and deathfulness of the open, deep, illimitable sea.

(1843)

From *The Stones of Venice*

Ruskin described his purpose in writing *The Stones of Venice* as being "to show that the Gothic architecture of Venice had risen out of, and indicated in all its features, a state of pure national faith, and of domestic virtue; and that its Renaissance architecture had arisen out of, and in all its features indicated, a state of concealed national infidelity, and of domestic corruption. . . . Good architecture is the work of good and believing men." The first of the two volumes of this work was composed in Venice and London during 1849 and 1850. He had made a careful study of St. Mark's Cathedral, the Ducal Palace, and other public buildings, seeking the history of balconies, colonnades, and capitals. In 1852 he went again to Venice, and the rest of *The Stones of Venice* appeared in 1853. The selection which we reprint from Volume II is one of the most famous descriptive passages in our prose. Here all the wealth and luxuriance of Ruskin's style are to be seen at their best, manipulated with fine artistry, and in perfect harmony with the subject matter.

St. Mark's

And now I wish that the reader, before I bring him into St. Mark's Place,[1] would imagine himself for a little time in a quiet English cathedral town, and walk with me to the west front of its cathedral. Let us go together up the more retired street, at the end of which we can see the pinnacles of one of the towers, and then through the low gray gateway, with its battlemented top and small latticed window in the centre, into the inner private-looking road or close, where nothing goes in but the carts of the tradesmen who supply the bishop and the chapter, and where there are little shaven grass-plots, fenced in by neat rails, before old-fashioned groups of somewhat diminutive and excessively

[1] the principal square in Venice.

trim houses, with little oriel and bay windows jutting out here and there, and deep wooden cornices and eaves painted cream color and white, and small porches to their doors in the shape of cockle-shells, or little, crooked, thick, indescribable wooden gables warped a little on one side; and so forward till we come to larger houses, also old-fashioned, but of red brick, and with gardens behind them, and fruit walls, which show here and there, among the nectarines, the vestiges of an old cloister arch or shaft, and looking in front on the cathedral square itself, laid out in rigid divisions of smooth grass and gravel walk, yet not uncheerful, especially on the sunny side, where the canons' children are walking with their nursery-maids. And so, taking care not to tread on the grass, we will go along the straight walk to the west front, and there stand for a time, looking up at its deep-pointed porches and the dark places between their pillars where there were statues once, and where the fragments, here and there, of a stately figure are still left, which has in it the likeness of a king, perhaps indeed a king on earth, perhaps a saintly king long ago in heaven; and so higher and higher up to the great mouldering wall of rugged sculpture and confused arcades, shattered, and gray, and grisly with heads of dragons and mocking fiends, worn by the rain and swirling winds into yet unseemlier shape, and colored on their stony scales by the deep russet-orange lichen, melancholy gold; and so, higher still, to the bleak towers, so far above that the eye loses itself among the bosses of their traceries, though they are rude and strong, and only sees like a drift of eddying black points, now closing, now scattering, and now settling suddenly into invisible places among the bosses and flowers, the crowd of restless birds that fill the whole square with that strange clangor of theirs, so harsh and yet so soothing, like the cries of birds on a solitary coast between the cliffs and sea.

Think for a little while of that scene, and the meaning of all its small formalisms, mixed with its serene sublimity. Estimate its secluded, continuous, drowsy felicities, and its evidence of the sense and steady performance of such kind of duties as can be regulated by the cathedral clock; and weigh the influence of those dark towers on all who have passed through the lonely square at their feet for centuries, and on all who have seen them rising far away over the wooded plain, or catching on their square masses the last rays of the sunset, when the city at their feet was indicated only by the mist at the bend of the river. And then let us quickly recollect that we are in Venice, and land at the extremity of the Calla Lunga San Moisè, which may be considered as there answering to the secluded street that led us to our English cathedral gateway.

We find ourselves in a paved alley, some seven feet wide where it is widest, full of people, and resonant with cries of itinerant salesmen,—a shriek in their beginning, and dying away into a kind of brazen ringing, all the worse for its confinement between the high houses of the passage along which we have to make our way. Over-head, an inextricable confusion of rugged shutters, and iron balconies and chimney flues, pushed out on brackets to save room, and arched windows with projecting sills of Istrian stone, and gleams of green leaves here and there where a fig-tree branch escapes over a lower wall from some inner cortile,[2] leading the eye up to the narrow stream of blue sky high over all. On each side, a row of shops, as densely set as may be, occupying, in fact, intervals between the square stone shafts, about eight feet high, which carry the first floors: intervals of which one is narrow and serves as a door; the other is, in the more respectable shops, wainscotted to the height of the counter and glazed above, but in those of the poorer tradesmen left open to the ground, and the wares laid on benches and tables in the open air, the light in all cases entering at the front only, and fading away in a few feet from the threshold into a gloom which the eye from without cannot penetrate, but which is generally broken by a ray or two from a feeble lamp at the back of the shop, suspended before a print of the Virgin. The less pious shopkeeper sometimes leaves his lamp unlighted, and is contented with a penny print; the more religious one has his print colored and set in a little shrine with a gilded or figured fringe, with perhaps a faded flower or two on each side, and his lamp burning brilliantly. Here, at the fruiterer's, where the dark-green watermelons are heaped upon the counter like cannon balls, the Madonna has a tabernacle of fresh laurel leaves; but the pewterer next door has let his lamp out, and there is nothing to be seen in his shop but the dull gleam of the studded patterns on the copper pans, hanging from his roof in the darkness. Next comes a "Vendita Frittole e Liquori,"[3] where the Virgin, enthroned in a very humble manner beside a tallow candle on a back shelf, presides over certain ambrosial morsels of a nature too ambiguous to be

[2] an enclosed courtyard in a large house.
[3] fritter and liquor shop.

defined or enumerated. But a few steps farther on, at the regular wine-shop of the calle, where we are offered "Vino Nostrani a Soldi 28.32," the Madonna is in great glory, enthroned above ten or a dozen large red casks of three-year-old vintage, and flanked by goodly ranks of bottles of Maraschino, and two crimson lamps; and for the evening, when the gondoliers will come to drink out, under her auspices, the money they have gained during the day, she will have a whole chandelier.

A yard or two farther, we pass the hostelry of the Black Eagle, and, glancing as we pass through the square door of marble, deeply moulded, in the outer wall, we see the shadows of its pergola of vines resting on an ancient well, with a pointed shield carved on its side; and so presently emerge on the bridge and Campo San Moisè, whence to the entrance into St. Mark's Place, called the Bocca di Piazza (mouth of the square), the Venetian character is nearly destroyed, first by the frightful façade of San Moisè, which we will pause at another time to examine, and then by the modernizing of the shops as they near the piazza, and the mingling with the lower Venetian populace of lounging groups of English and Austrians. We will push fast through them into the shadow of the pillars at the end of the "Bocca di Piazza," and then we forget them all; for between those pillars there opens a great light, and, in the midst of it, as we advance slowly, the vast tower of St. Mark seems to lift itself visibly forth from the level of chequered stones; and, on each side, the countless arches prolong themselves into ranged symmetry, as if the rugged and irregular houses that pressed together above us in the dark alley had been struck back into sudden obedience and lovely order, and all their rude casements and broken walls had been transformed into arches charged with goodly sculpture, and fluted shafts of delicate stone.

And well may they fall back, for beyond those troops of ordered arches there rises a vision out of the earth, and all the great square seems to have opened from it in a kind of awe, that we may see it far away;—a multitude of pillars and white domes, clustered into a long low pyramid of coloured light; a treasure-heap, it seems, partly of gold, and partly of opal and mother-of-pearl, hollowed beneath into five great vaulted porches, ceiled with fair mosaic, and beset with sculpture of alabaster, clear as amber and delicate as ivory,—sculpture fantastic and involved, of palm leaves and lilies, and grapes and pomegranates, and birds clinging and fluttering among the branches, all twined together into an endless network of buds and plumes; and, in the midst of it, the solemn forms of angels, sceptred, and robed to the feet, and leaning to each other across the gates, their figures indistinct among the gleaming of the golden ground through the leaves beside them, interrupted and dim, like the morning light as it faded back among the branches of Eden, when first its gates were angel-guarded long ago. And round the walls of the porches there are set pillars of variegated stones, jasper and porphyry, and deep-green serpentine spotted with flakes of snow, and marbles, that half refuse and half yield to the sunshine, Cleopatra-like, "their bluest veins to kiss"—the shadow, as it steals back from them, revealing line after line of azure undulation, as a receding tide leaves the waved sand; their capitals rich with interwoven tracery, rooted knots of herbage, and drifting leaves of acanthus and vine, and mystical signs all beginning and ending in the Cross; and above them, in the broad archivolts, a continuous chain of language and of life—angels, and the signs of heaven, and the labors of men, each in its appointed season upon the earth; and above these, another range of glittering pinnacles, mixed with white arches edged with scarlet flowers,—a confusion of delight, amidst which the breasts of the Greek horses are seen blazing in their breadth of golden strength, and the St. Mark's Lion, lifted on a blue field covered with stars, until at last, as if in ecstasy, the crests of the arches break into a marble foam, and toss themselves far into the blue sky in flashes and wreaths of sculptured spray, as if the breakers on the Lido shore[4] had been frost-bound before they fell, and the sea-nymphs had inlaid them with coral and amethyst.

Between that grim cathedral of England and this, what an interval! There is a type of it in the very birds that haunt them; for, instead of the restless crowd, hoarse-voiced and sable-winged, drifting on the bleak upper air, the St. Mark's porches are full of doves, that nestle among the marble foliage, and mingle the soft iridescence of their living plumes, changing at every motion, with the tints, hardly less lovely, that have stood unchanged for seven hundred years.

And what effect has this splendor on those who pass beneath it? You may walk from sunrise to sunset, to and fro, before the gateway of St. Mark's, and you will not see an eye lifted to it, nor a countenance brightened by it. Priest and layman,

[4] an island near Venice used for bathing and other amusements.

soldier and civilian, rich and poor, pass by it alike regardlessly. Up to the very recesses of the porches, the meanest tradesmen of the city push their counters; nay, the foundations of its pillars are themselves the seats—not "of them that sell doves" for sacrifice, but of the vendors of toys and caricatures. Round the whole square in front of the church there is almost a continuous line of cafés, where the idle Venetians of the middle classes lounge, and read empty journals; in its center the Austrian bands play during the time of vespers, their martial music jarring with the organ notes,—the march drowning the miserere, and the sullen crowd thickening round them,—a crowd, which, if it had its will, would stiletto every soldier that pipes to it.[5] And in the recesses of the porches, all day long, knots of men of the lowest classes, unemployed and listless, lie basking in the sun like lizards; and unregarded children,—every heavy glance of their young eyes full of desperation and stony depravity, and their throats hoarse with cursing,—gamble, and fight, and snarl, and sleep, hour after hour, clashing their bruised centesimi[6] upon the marble ledges of the church porch. And the images of Christ and His angels look down upon it continually.

(1851-3)

From *The Mystery of Life and Its Arts*

In 1868 Ruskin delivered at Dublin a lecture on *The Mystery of Life and Its Arts.* Frederic Harrison says: "It contains much of Ruskin's most memorable work. It is full of sadness, of religious musing, and of passionate exhortation to work out a social reformation, to feel the mystery and the power that lies dormant in each human soul, and more passionate reprobation of the materialism and selfishness which society breeds in our generation so as to hide the mystery and pervert that power."

In 1871 this lecture was issued together with two others under the title of *Sesame and Lilies.*

. . . We have sat at the feet of the poets who sang of heaven, and they have told us their dreams. We have listened to the poets who sang of earth, and they have chanted to us dirges and words of despair. But there is one class of men more:—men, not capable of vision, nor sensitive to sorrow, but firm of purpose—practiced in business; learned in all that can be, (by handling,) known. Men, whose hearts and hopes are wholly in this present world, from whom, therefore, we may surely learn, at least, how, at present, conveniently to live in it. What will *they* say to us, or show us by example? These kings—these councillors—these statesmen and builders of kingdoms—these capitalists and men of business, who weigh the earth, and the dust of it, in a balance. They know the world, surely; and what is the mystery of life to us, is none to them. They can surely show us how to live, while we live, and to gather out of the present world what is best.

I think I can best tell you their answer by telling you a dream I had once. For though I am no poet, I have dreams sometimes:—I dreamed I was at a child's May-day party, in which every means of entertainment had been provided for them, by a wise and kind host. It was in a stately house, with beautiful gardens attached to it; and the children had been set free in the rooms and gardens, with no care whatever but how to pass their afternoon rejoicingly. They did not, indeed, know much about what was to happen next day; and some of them, I thought, were a little frightened, because there was a chance of their being sent to a new school where there were examinations; but they kept the thoughts of that out of their heads as well as they could, and resolved to enjoy themselves. The house, I said, was in a beautiful garden, and in the garden were all kinds of flowers; sweet, grassy banks for rest; and smooth lawns for play; and pleasant streams and woods; and rocky places for climbing. And the children were happy for a little while, but presently they separated themselves into parties; and then each party declared it would have a piece of the garden for its own, and that none of the others should have anything to do with that piece. Next, they quarreled violently which pieces they would have; and at last

[5] Venice at that time was under the control of the hated Austrian army.

[6] small Italian coins worth about one-fifth of a cent.

the boys took up the thing, as boys should do, "practically," and fought in the flower beds till there was hardly a flower left standing; then they trampled down each other's bits of the garden out of spite; and the girls cried till they could cry no more; and so they all lay down at last breathless in the ruin, and waited for the time when they were to be taken home in the evening.[1]

Meanwhile, the children in the house had been making themselves happy also in their manner. For them, there had been provided every kind of indoor pleasure: there was music for them to dance to; and the library was open, with all manner of amusing books; and there was a museum full of the most curious shells, and animals, and birds; and there was a workshop, with lathes and carpenter's tools, for the ingenious boys; and there were pretty fantastic dresses, for the girls to dress in; and there were microscopes, and kaleidoscopes; and whatever toys a child could fancy; and a table, in the dining-room, loaded with everything nice to eat.

But, in the midst of all this, it struck two or three of the more "practical" children, that they would like some of the brassheaded nails that studded the chairs; and so they set to work to pull them out. Presently, the others, who were reading, or looking at shells, took a fancy to do the like; and, in a little while, all the children, nearly, were spraining their fingers, in pulling out brassheaded nails. With all that they could pull out, they were not satisfied; and then, everybody wanted some of somebody else's. And at last, the really practical and sensible ones declared, that nothing was of any real consequence, that afternoon, except to get plenty of brassheaded nails; and that the books, and the cakes, and the microscopes were of no use at all in themselves, but only, if they could be exchanged for nail heads. And at last they began to fight for nail heads, as the others fought for the bits of garden. Only here and there, a despised one shrank away into a corner, and tried to get a little quiet with a book, in the midst of the noise; but all the practical ones thought of nothing else but counting nail heads all the afternoon—even though they knew they would not be allowed to carry so much as one brass knob away with them. But no—it was—"who has most nails? I have a hundred, and you have fifty; or, I have a thousand, and you have two. I must have as many as you before I leave the house, or I cannot possibly go home in peace." At last, they made so much noise that I awoke, and thought to myself, "What a false dream that is, of *children*!" The child is the father of the man; and wiser. Children never do such foolish things. Only men do.

But there is yet one last class of persons to be interrogated. The wise religious men we have asked in vain; the wise contemplative men, in vain; the wise worldly men, in yain. But there is another group yet. In the midst of this vanity of empty religion—of tragic contemplation—of wrathful and wretched ambition, and dispute for dust, there is yet one great group of persons, by whom all these disputers live—the persons who have determined, or have had it by a beneficent Providence determined for them, that they will do something useful; that whatever may be prepared for them hereafter, or happen to them here, they will, at least, deserve the food that God gives them by winning it honorably: and that, however fallen from the purity, or far from the peace, of Eden, they will carry out the duty of human dominion, though they have lost its felicity; and dress and keep the wilderness, though they no more can dress or keep the garden.

These,—hewers of wood, and drawers of water, —these, bent under burdens, or torn of scourges—these, that dig and weave—that plant and build; workers in wood, and in marble, and in iron—by whom all food, clothing, habitation, furniture, and means of delight are produced, for themselves, and for all men besides; men, whose deeds are good, though their words may be few; men, whose lives are serviceable, be they never so short, and worthy of honor, be they never so humble;—from these, surely, at least, we may receive some clear message of teaching; and pierce, for an instant, into the mystery of life, and of its arts.

Yes; from these, at last, we do receive a lesson. But I grieve to say, or rather—for that is the deeper truth of the matter—I rejoice to say—this message of theirs can only be received by joining them—not by thinking about them.

You sent for me to talk to you of art; and I have obeyed you in coming. But the main thing I have to tell you is,—that art must not be talked about. The fact that there is talk about it at all, signifies that it is ill done, or cannot be done. No true painter ever speaks, or ever has spoken, much of his art. The greatest speak nothing. Even

[1] I have sometimes been asked what this means. I intended it to set forth the wisdom of men in war contending for kingdoms, and what follows to set forth their wisdom in peace, contending for wealth. [Ruskin.]

Reynolds[2] is no exception, for he wrote of all that he could not himself do, and was utterly silent respecting all that he himself did.

The moment a man can really do his work he becomes speechless about it. All words become idle to him—all theories.

Does a bird need to theorize about building its nest, or boast of it when built? All good work is essentially done that way—without hesitation, without difficulty, without boasting; and in the doers of the best, there is an inner and involuntary power which approximates literally to the instinct of an animal—nay, I am certain that in the most perfect human artists, reason does *not* supersede instinct, but is added to an instinct as much more divine than that of the lower animals as the human body is more beautiful than theirs; that a great singer sings not with less instinct than the nightingale, but with more—only more various, applicable, and governable; that a great architect does not build with less instinct than the beaver or the bee, but with more—with an innate cunning of proportion that embraces all beauty, and a divine ingenuity of skill that improvises all construction. But be that as it may—be the instinct less or more than that of inferior animals—like or unlike theirs, still the human art is dependent on that first, and then upon an amount of practice, of science,—and of imagination disciplined by thought, which the true possessor of it knows to be incommunicable, and the true critic of it, inexplicable, except through long process of laborious years. That journey of life's conquest, in which hills over hills, and Alps on Alps arose, and sank,—do you think you can make another trace it painlessly by talking? Why, you cannot even carry us up an Alp, by talking. You can guide us up it, step by step, no otherwise—even so, best silently. You girls, who have been among the hills, know how the bad guide chatters and gesticulates, and it is "Put your foot here"; and "Mind how you balance yourself there"; but the good guide walks on quietly, without a word, only with his eyes on you when need is, and his arm like an iron bar, if need be.

In that slow way, also, art can be taught—if you have faith in your guide, and will let his arm be to you as an iron bar when need is. But in what teacher of art have you such faith? Certainly not in me; for, as I told you at first, I know well enough it is only because you think I can talk, not because you think I know my business, that you let me speak to you at all. If I were to tell you anything that seemed to you strange you would not believe it, and yet it would only be in telling you strange things that I could be of use to you. I could be of great use to you—infinite use—with brief saying, if you would believe it; but you would not, just because the thing that would be of real use would displease you. You are all wild, for instance, with admiration of Gustave Doré.[3] Well, suppose I were to tell you, in the strongest terms I could use, that Gustave Doré's art was bad—bad, not in weakness,—not in failure,—but bad with dreadful power—the power of the Furies and the Harpies mingled, enraging, and polluting; that so long as you looked at it, no perception of pure or beautiful art was possible for you. Suppose I were to tell you that! What would be the use? Would you look at Gustave Doré less? Rather, more, I fancy. On the other hand, I could soon put you into good humor with me, if I chose. I know well enough what you like, and how to praise it to your better liking. I could talk to you about moonlight, and twilight, and spring flowers, and autumn leaves, and the Madonnas of Raphael—how motherly! and the Sibyls of Michelangelo—how majestic! and the Saints of Angelico—how pious! and the Cherubs of Correggio[4]—how delicious! Old as I am, I could play you a tune on the harp yet, that you would dance to. But neither you nor I should be a bit the better or wiser; or, if we were, our increased wisdom could be of no practical effect. For, indeed, the arts, as regards teachableness, differ from the sciences also in this, that their power is founded not merely on facts which can be communicated, but on dispositions which require to be created. Art is neither to be achieved by effort of thinking, nor explained by accuracy of speaking. It is the instinctive and necessary result of power, which can only be developed through the mind of successive generations, and which finally burst into life under social conditions as slow of growth as the faculties they regulate. Whole eras of mighty history are summed, and the passions of dead myriads are concentrated, in the existence of a noble art; and if that noble art were among us, we should feel it and rejoice; not caring in the least to hear lectures on it; and since it is not among us, be assured we have to go back to the root of it, or, at least, to the place

[2] Sir Joshua Reynolds, the celebrated English portrait painter of the eighteenth century.

[3] Gustave Doré (1832-1883), French painter well known for his illustrations of Dante.

[4] Michelangelo (1475-1564); Fra Angelico (1387-1455); Correggio (1494-1534), famous Italian painters.

where the stock of it is yet alive, and the branches began to die. . . .

And now, returning to the broader question, what these arts and labors of life have to teach us of its mystery, this is the first of their lessons—that the more beautiful the art, the more it is essentially the work of people who *feel themselves wrong*;—who are striving for the fulfillment of a law, and the grasp of a loveliness, which they have not yet attained, which they feel even farther and farther from attaining the more they strive for it. And yet, in still deeper sense, it is the work of people who know also that they are right. The very sense of inevitable error from their purpose marks the perfectness of that purpose, and the continued sense of failure arises from the continued opening of the eyes more clearly to all the sacredest laws of truth.

This is one lesson. The second is a very plain, and greatly precious one: namely—that whenever the arts and labors of life are fulfilled in this spirit of striving against misrule, and doing whatever we have to do, honorably and perfectly, they invariably bring happiness, as much as seems possible to the nature of man. In all other paths by which that happiness is pursued there is disappointment, or destruction: for ambition and for passion there is no rest—no fruition; the fairest pleasures of youth perish in a darkness greater than their past light: and the loftiest and purest love too often does but inflame the cloud of life with endless fire of pain. But, ascending from lowest to highest, through every scale of human industry, that industry worthily followed, gives peace. Ask the laborer in the field, at the forge, or in the mine; ask the patient, delicate-fingered artisan, or the strong-armed, fiery-hearted worker in bronze, and in marble, and with the colors of light; and none of these, who are true workmen, will ever tell you, that they have found the law of heaven an unkind one—that in the sweat of their face they should eat bread, till they return to the ground[5]; nor that they ever found it an unrewarded obedience, if, indeed, it was rendered faithfully to the command—"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do—do it with thy might."[6]

These are the two great and constant lessons which our laborers teach us of the mystery of life. But there is another, and a sadder one, which they cannot teach us, which we must read on their tombstones.

"Do it with thy might." There have been myriads upon myriads of human creatures who have obeyed this law—who have put every breath and nerve of their being into its toil—who have devoted every hour, and exhausted every faculty—who have bequeathed their unaccomplished thoughts at death—who, being dead, have yet spoken, by majesty of memory, and strength of example. And, at last, what has all this "Might" of humanity accomplished, in six thousand years of labor and sorrow? What has it *done*? Take the three chief occupations and arts of men, one by one, and count their achievements. Begin with the first—the lord of them all—Agriculture. Six thousand years have passed since we were set to till the ground, from which we were taken. How much of it is tilled? How much of that which is, wisely or well? In the very center and chief garden of Europe[7]—where the two forms of parent Christianity have had their fortresses—where the noble Catholics of the Forest Cantons, and the noble Protestants of the Vaudois valleys, have maintained, for dateless ages, their faiths and liberties—there the unchecked Alpine rivers yet run wild in devastation; and the marshes, which a few hundred men could redeem with a year's labor, still blast their helpless inhabitants into fevered idiotism. That is so, in the center of Europe! While, on the near coast of Africa, once the Garden of the Hesperides, an Arab woman, but a few sunsets since, ate her child, for famine. And, with all the treasures of the East at our feet, we, in our own dominion, could not find a few grains of rice, for a people that asked of us no more; but stood by, and saw five hundred thousand of them perish of hunger.[8]

Then, after agriculture, the art of kings, take the next head of human arts—Weaving; the art of queens, honored of all noble Heathen women, in the person of their virgin goddess—honored of all Hebrew women, by the word of their wisest king—"She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff; she stretcheth out her hand to the poor. She is not afraid of the snow for her household, for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself covering of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it, and delivereth girdles to the merchant."[9] What have we done in all these thousands of years with this bright art of Greek maid

[5] Cf. *Genesis*, 3:19.
[6] Cf. *Ecclesiastes*, 9:10.
[7] Switzerland.
[8] This refers to the famine in Orissa, India.
[9] Cf. *Proverbs*, 31:19-22, 24.

and Christian matron? Six thousand years of weaving, and have we learned to weave? Might not every naked wall have been purple with tapestry, and every feeble breast fenced with sweet colors from the cold? What have we done? Our fingers are too few, it seems, to twist together some poor covering for our bodies. We set our streams to work for us, and choke the air with fire, to turn our spinning-wheels—and,—*are we yet clothed?* Are not the streets of the capitals of Europe foul with sale of cast clouts and rotten rags? Is not the beauty of your sweet children left in wretchedness of disgrace, while, with better honor, nature clothes the brood of the bird in its nest, and the suckling of the wolf in her den? And does not every winter's snow robe what you have not robed, and shroud what you have not shrouded; and every winter's wind bear up to heaven its wasted souls, to witness against you hereafter, by the voice of their Christ,—"I was naked, and ye clothed me not"?[10]

Lastly—take the Art of Building—the strongest —proudest—most orderly—most enduring of the arts of man; that of which the produce is in the surest manner accumulative, and need not perish, or be replaced; but if once well done, will stand more strongly than the unbalanced rocks—more prevalently than the crumbling hills. The art which is associated with all civic pride and sacred principle; with which men record their power—satisfy their enthusiasm—make sure their defense—define and make dear their habitation. And in six thousand years of building, what have we done? Of the greater part of all that skill and strength, *no* vestige is left, but fallen stones, that encumber the fields and impede the streams. But, from this waste of disorder, and of time, and of rage, what *is* left to us? Constructive and progressive creatures that we are, with ruling brains, and forming hands, capable of fellowship, and thirsting for fame, can we not contend, in comfort, with the insects of the forest, or, in achievement, with the worm of the sea? The white surf rages in vain against the ramparts built by poor atoms of scarcely nascent life; but only ridges of formless ruin mark the places where once dwelt our noblest multitudes. The ant and the moth have cells for each of their young, but our little ones lie in festering heaps, in homes that consume them like graves; and night by night, from the corners of our streets, rises up the cry of the homeless—"I was a stranger, and ye took me not in."[11]

[10] Cf. *Matthew*, 25:43.

[11] Cf. *Matthew*, 25:43.

Must it be always thus? Is our life forever to be without profit—without possession? Shall the strength of its generations be as barren as death; or cast away their labor, as the wild fig tree casts her untimely figs? Is it all a dream then—the desire of the eyes and the pride of life—or, if it be, might we not live in nobler dream than this? The poets and prophets, the wise men, and the scribes, though they have told us nothing about a life to come, have told us much about the life that is now. They have had—they also,—their dreams, and we have laughed at them. They have dreamed of mercy, and of justice; they have dreamed of peace and good will; they have dreamed of labor undisappointed, and of rest undisturbed; they have dreamed of fullness in harvest, and overflowing in store; they have dreamed of wisdom in council, and of providence in law; of gladness of parents, and strength of children, and glory of gray hairs. And at these visions of theirs we have mocked, and held them for idle and vain, unreal and unaccomplishable. What have we accomplished with our realities? Is this what has come of our worldly wisdom, tried against their folly? this, our mightiest possible, against their impotent ideal? or, have we only wandered among the spectra of a baser felicity, and chased phantoms of the tombs, instead of visions of the Almighty; and walked after the imaginations of our evil hearts, instead of after the counsels of Eternity, until our lives—not in the likeness of the cloud of heaven, but of the smoke of hell—have become "as a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away"?[12]

Does it vanish then? Are you sure of that?—sure, that the nothingness of the grave will be a rest from this troubled nothingness; and that the coiling shadow, which disquiets itself in vain, cannot change into the smoke of the torment that ascends forever? Will any answer that they *are* sure of it, and that there is no fear, nor hope, nor desire, nor labor, whither they go? Be it so: will you not, then, make as sure of the Life that now is, as you are of the Death that is to come? Your hearts are wholly in this world—will you not give them to it wisely, as well as perfectly? And see, first of all, that you *have* hearts, and sound hearts, too, to give. Because you have no heaven to look for, is that any reason that you should remain ignorant of this wonderful and infinite earth, which is firmly and instantly given you in possession? Although your days are numbered, and the following darkness sure, is it necessary that you should share the deg-

[12] Cf. *James*, 4:14.

radation of the brute, because you are condemned to its mortality; or live the life of the moth, and of the worm, because you are to companion them in the dust? Not so; we may have but a few thousands of days to spend, perhaps hundreds only—perhaps tens; nay, the longest of our time and best, looked back on, will be but as a moment, as the twinkling of an eye; still we are men, not insects; we are living spirits, not passing clouds. "He maketh the winds His messengers; the momentary fire, His minister";[13] and shall we do less than *these*? Let us do the work of men while we bear the form of them; and, as we snatch our narrow portion of time out of Eternity, snatch also our narrow inheritance of passion out of Immortality —even though our lives *be* as a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.

But there are some of you who believe not this—who think this cloud of life has no such close—that it is to float, revealed and illumined, upon the floor of heaven, in the day when He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him. Some day, you believe, within these five, or ten, or twenty years, for every one of us the judgment will be set, and the books opened. If that be true, far more than that must be true. Is there but one day of judgment? Why, for us every day is a day of judgment—every day is a *Dies Iræ*,[14] and writes its irrevocable verdict in the flame of its West. Think you that judgment waits till the doors of the grave are opened? It waits at the doors of your houses—it waits at the corners of your streets; we are in the midst of judgment—the insects that we crush are our judges—the moments we fret away are our judges—the elements that feed us, judge, as they minister—and the pleasures that deceive us, judge, as they indulge. Let us, for our lives, do the work of Men while we bear the form of them, if indeed those lives are *Not* as a vapor, and do *Not* vanish away.

"The work of men"—and what is that? Well, we may any of us know very quickly, on the condition of being wholly ready to do it. But many of us are for the most part thinking, not of what we are to do, but of what we are to get; and the best of us are sunk into the sin of Ananias, and it is a mortal one—we want to keep back part of the price; and we continually talk of taking up our cross, as if the only harm in a cross was the *weight* of it—as if it was only a thing to be carried, instead of to be—crucified upon. "They that are His have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts."[15] Does that mean, think you, that in time of national distress, of religious trial, of crisis for every interest and hope of humanity—none of us will cease jesting, none cease idling, none put themselves to any wholesome work, none take so much as a tag of lace off their footmen's coats, to save the world? Or does it rather mean, that they are ready to leave houses, lands, and kindreds—yes, and life, if need be? Life!—some of us are ready enough to throw that away, joyless as we have made it. But "*station* in Life"—how many of us are ready to quit *that*? Is it not always the great objection, where there is question of finding something useful to do—"We cannot leave our stations in Life"?

Those of us who really cannot—that is to say, who can only maintain themselves by continuing in some business or salaried office, have already something to do; and all that they have to see to is, that they do it honestly and with all their might. But with most people who use that apology, "remaining in the station of life to which Providence has called them" means keeping all the carriages, and all the footmen and large houses they can possibly pay for; and, once for all, I say that if ever Providence *did* put them into stations of that sort—which is not at all a matter of certainty—Providence is just now very distinctly calling them out again. Levi's station in life was the receipt of custom; and Peter's, the shore of Galilee; and Paul's, the antechambers of the High Priest,[16]—which "station in life" each had to leave, with brief notice.

And, whatever our station in life may be, at this crisis, those of us who mean to fulfill our duty ought first to live on as little as we can; and, secondly, to do all the wholesome work for it we can, and to spend all we can spare in doing all the sure good we can.

And sure good is, first in feeding people, then in dressing people, then in lodging people, and lastly in rightly pleasing people, with arts, or sciences, or any other subject of thought.

I say first in feeding; and, once for all, do not let yourselves be deceived by any of the common talk of "indiscriminate charity." The order to us is not to feed the deserving hungry, nor the industrious hungry, nor the amiable and well-intentioned hungry, but simply to feed the hungry. It is quite

[13] Cf. *Psalms*, 104:4.

[14] "Day of wrath," the opening words of one of the most famous of medieval hymns.

[15] Cf. *Galatians*, 5:24.

[16] This refers to the various apostles who left their daily work to take up the preaching of Christ's gospel.

true, infallibly true, that if any man will not work, neither should he eat[17]—think of that, and every time you sit down to your dinner, ladies and gentlemen, say solemnly, before you ask a blessing, "How much work have I done today for my dinner?" But the proper way to enforce that order on those below you, as well as on yourselves, is not to leave vagabonds and honest people to starve together, but very distinctly to discern and seize your vagabond; and shut your vagabond up out of honest people's way, and very sternly then see that, until he has worked, he does *not* eat. But the first thing is to be sure you have the food to give; and, therefore, to enforce the organization of vast activities in agriculture and in commerce, for the production of the wholesomest food, and proper storing and distribution of it, so that no famine shall any more be possible among civilized beings. There is plenty of work in this business alone, and at once, for any number of people who like to engage in it.

Secondly, dressing people—that is to say, urging everyone within reach of your influence to be always neat and clean, and giving them means of being so. In so far as they absolutely refuse, you must give up the effort with respect to them, only taking care that no children within your sphere of influence shall any more be brought up with such habits; and that every person who is willing to dress with propriety shall have encouragement to do so. And the first absolutely necessary step toward this is the gradual adoption of a consistent dress for different ranks of persons, so that their rank shall be known by their dress; and the restriction of the changes of fashion within certain limits. All which appears for the present quite impossible; but it is only so far even difficult as it is difficult to conquer our vanity, frivolity, and desire to appear what we are not. And it is not, nor ever shall be, creed of mine, that these mean and shallow vices are unconquerable by Christian women.

And then, thirdly, lodging people, which you may think should have been put first, but I put it third, because we must feed and clothe people where we find them, and lodge them afterward. And providing lodgment for them means a great deal of vigorous legislation, and cutting down of vested interests that stand in the way, and after that, or before that, so far as we can get it, thorough sanitary and remedial action in the houses that we have; and then the building of more, strongly, beautifully, and in groups of limited extent, kept in proportion to their streams, and walled round, so that there may be no festering and wretched suburb anywhere, but clean and busy street within, and the open country without, with a belt of beautiful garden and orchard round the walls, so that from any part of the city perfectly fresh air and grass, and sight of far horizon, might be reachable in a few minutes' walk. This is the final aim; but in immediate action every minor and possible good to be instantly done, when, and as, we can; roofs mended that have holes in them—fences patched that have gaps in them—walls buttressed that totter—and floors propped that shake; cleanliness and order enforced with our own hands and eyes, till we are breathless, every day. And all the fine arts will healthily follow. I myself have washed a flight of stone stairs all down, with bucket and broom, in a Savoy inn, where they hadn't washed their stairs since they first went up them; and I never made a better sketch than that afternoon.

These, then, are the three first needs of civilized life; and the law for every Christian man and woman is, that they shall be in direct service toward one of these three needs, as far as is consistent with their own special occupation, and if they have no special business, then wholly in one of these services. And out of such exertion in plain duty all other good will come; for in this direct contention with material evil, you will find out the real nature of all evil; you will discern by the various kinds of resistance, what is really the fault and main antagonism to good; also you will find the most unexpected helps and profound lessons given, and truths will come thus down to us which the speculation of all our lives would never have raised us up to. You will find nearly every educational problem solved, as soon as you truly want to do something; everybody will become of use in their own fittest way, and will learn what is best for them to know in that use. Competitive examination will then, and not till then, be wholesome, because it will be daily, and calm, and in practice; and on these familiar arts, and minute, but certain and serviceable knowledges, will be surely edified and sustained the greater arts and splendid theoretical sciences.

But much more than this. On such holy and simple practice will be founded, indeed, at last, an infallible religion. The greatest of all the mysteries of life, and the most terrible, is the corruption of even the sincerest religion, which is not daily founded on rational, effective, humble, and helpful action. Helpful action, observe! for there is just

[17] Cf. *II Thessalonians*, 3:10.

one law, which obeyed, keeps all religions pure—forgotten, makes them all false. Whenever in any religious faith, dark or bright, we allow our minds to dwell upon the points in which we differ from other people, we are wrong, and in the devil's power. That is the essence of the Pharisee's thanksgiving—"Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are." At every moment of our lives we should be trying to find out, not in what we differ with other people, but in what we agree with them; and the moment we find we can agree as to anything that should be done, kind or good, (and who but fools couldn't?) then do it; push at it together: you can't quarrel in a side-by-side push; but the moment that even the best men stop pushing, and begin talking, they mistake their pugnacity for piety, and it's all over. I will not speak of the crimes which in past times have been committed in the name of Christ, nor of the follies which are at this hour held to be consistent with obedience to Him; but I *will* speak of the morbid corruption and waste of vital power in religious sentiment, by which the pure strength of that which should be the guiding soul of every nation, the splendor of its youthful manhood, and spotless light of its maidenhood, is averted or cast away. You may see continually girls who have never been taught to do a single useful thing thoroughly; who cannot sew, who cannot cook, who cannot cast an account, nor prepare a medicine, whose whole life has been passed either in play or in pride; you will find girls like these, when they are earnest-hearted, cast all their innate passion of religious spirit, which was meant by God to support them through the irksomeness of daily toil, into grievous and vain meditation over the meaning of the great Book, of which no syllable was ever yet to be understood but through a deed; all the instinctive wisdom and mercy of their womanhood made vain, and the glory of their pure consciences warped into fruitless agony concerning questions which the laws of common serviceable life would have either solved for them in an instant, or kept out of their way. Give such a girl any true work that will make her active in the dawn, and weary at night, with the consciousness that her fellow-creatures have indeed been the better for her day, and the powerless sorrow of her enthusiasm will transform itself into a majesty of radiant and beneficent peace.

So with our youths. We once taught them to make Latin verses, and called them educated; now we teach them to leap and to row, to hit a ball with a bat, and call them educated. Can they plough, can they sow, can they plant at the right time, or build with a steady hand? Is it the effort of their lives to be chaste, knightly, faithful, holy in thought, lovely in word and deed? Indeed it is, with some, nay, with many, and the strength of England is in them, and the hope; but we have to turn their courage from the toil of war to the toil of mercy; and their intellect from dispute of words to discernment of things; and their knighthood from the errantry of adventure to the state and fidelity of a kingly power. And then, indeed, shall abide, for them and for us, an incorruptible felicity, and an infallible religion; shall abide for us Faith, no more to be assailed by temptation, no more to be defended by wrath and by fear—shall abide with us Hope, no more to be quenched by the years that overwhelm, or made ashamed by the shadows that betray:—shall abide for us, and with us, the greatest of these; the abiding will, the abiding name of our Father. For the greatest of these is Charity.[18]

(1868)

From *Praeterita*

When I was about four years old my father found himself able to buy the lease of a house on Herne Hill, a rustic eminence four miles south of the "Standard in Cornhill";[1] of which the leafy seclusion remains, in all essential points of character, unchanged to this day: certain Gothic splendors, lately indulged in by our wealthier neighbors, being the only serious innovations; and these are so graciously concealed by the fine trees of their grounds, that the passing viator[2] remains unappalled by them; and I can still walk up and down the piece of road between the Fox tavern and the Herne Hill station, imagining myself four years old.

Our house was the northernmost of a group which stand accurately on the top or dome of the hill, where the ground is for a small space level,

[1] a water standard built in 1582 which stood near the junction of Cornhill with Leadenhall Street.

[18] Cf. *I Corinthians*, 13:13.

[2] traveler.

as the snows are (I understand), on the dome of Mont Blanc;[3] presently falling, however, in what may be, in the London clay formation, considered a precipitous slope, to our valley of Chamouni[4] (or of Dulwich) on the east; and with a softer descent into Cold Harbor-lane on the west: on the south. no less beautifully declining to the dale of the Effra (doubtless shortened from Effrena, signifying the "Unbridled" river; recently, I regret to say, bricked over for the convenience of Mr. Biffin, chemist, and others); while on the north, prolonged indeed with slight depression some half mile or so, and receiving, in the parish of Lambeth, the chivalric title of "Champion Hill," it plunges down at last to efface itself in the plains of Peckham, and the rural barbarism of Goose Green.

The group, of which our house was the quarter, consisted of two precisely similar partner-couples of houses, gardens and all to match; still the two highest blocks of buildings seen from Norwood on the crest of the ridge; so that the house itself, three-storied, with garrets above, commanded, in those comparatively smokeless days, a very notable view from its garret windows, of the Norwood hills on one side, and the winter sunrise over them; and of the valley of the Thames on the other, with Windsor[5] telescopically clear in the distance, and Harrow,[6] conspicuous always in fine weather to open vision against the summer sunset. It had front and back garden in sufficient proportion to its size; the front, richly set with old evergreens, and well-grown lilac and laburnum; the back, seventy yards long by twenty wide, renowned over all the hill for its pears and apples, which had been chosen with extreme care by our predecessor (shame on me to forget the name of a man to whom I owe so much!)—and possessing also a strong old mulberry tree, a tall white-heart cherry tree, a black Kentish one, and an almost unbroken hedge, all round, of alternate gooseberry and currant bush; decked, in due season (for the ground was wholly beneficent), with magical splendor of abundant fruit: fresh green, soft amber, and rough-bristled crimson bending the spinous branches; clustered pearl and pendent ruby joyfully discoverable under the large leaves that looked like vine.

The differences of primal importance which I observed between the nature of this garden, and that of Eden, as I had imagined it, were, that, in this one, *all* the fruit was forbidden; and there were no companionable beasts: in other respects the little domain answered every purpose of Paradise to me; and the climate, in that cycle of our years, allowed me to pass most of my life in it. My mother never gave me more to learn than she knew I could easily get learned, if I set myself honestly to work, by twelve o'clock. She never allowed anything to disturb me when my task was set; if it was not said rightly by twelve o'clock, I was kept in till I knew it, and in general, even when Latin Grammar came to supplement the Psalms, I was my own master for at least an hour before half-past one dinner, and for the rest of the afternoon.

My mother, herself finding her chief personal pleasure in her flowers, was often planting or pruning beside me, at least if I chose to stay beside *her*. I never thought of doing anything behind her back which I would not have done before her face; and her presence was therefore no restraint to me; but, also, no particular pleasure, for, from having always been left so much alone, I had generally my own little affairs to see after; and, on the whole, by the time I was seven years old, was already getting too independent, mentally, even of my father and mother; and, having nobody else to be dependent upon, began to lead a very small, perky, contented, conceited, Cock-Robinson-Crusoe sort of life, in the central point which it appeared to me (as it must naturally appear to geometrical animals) that I occupied in the universe.

This was partly the fault of my father's modesty; and partly of his pride. He had so much more confidence in my mother's judgment as to such matters than in his own, that he never ventured even to help, much less to cross her, in the conduct of my education; on the other hand, in the fixed purpose of making an ecclesiastical gentleman of me, with the superfinest of manners, and access to the highest circles of fleshly and spiritual society, the visits to Croydon, where I entirely loved my aunt, and young baker-cousins, became rare and more rare: the society of our neighbors on the hill could not be had without breaking up our regular and sweetly selfish manner of living; and on the whole, I had nothing animate to care for, in a childish way, but myself, some nests of ants, which the gardener would never leave undisturbed for me, and a sociable bird or two; though I never had the sense or perseverance to make one really tame. But that was partly because, if ever I man-

[3] the highest mountain of the Alps.
[4] a valley near Mont Blanc.
[5] a town, twenty-three miles west of London, in which the most famous of the royal palaces is located.
[6] a town eleven miles northwest of London.

aged to bring one to be the least trustful of me, the cats got it.

Under these circumstances, what powers of imagination I possessed, either fastened themselves on inanimate things,—the sky, the leaves, and pebbles, observable within the walls of Eden,—or caught at any opportunity of flight into regions of romance, compatible with the objective realities of existence in the nineteenth century, within a mile and a quarter of Camberwell Green.

Herein my father, happily, though with no definite intention other than of pleasing me, when he found he could do so without infringing any of my mother's rules, became my guide. I was particularly fond of watching him shave; and was always allowed to come into his room in the morning (under the one in which I am now writing), to be the motionless witness of that operation. Over his dressing-table hung one of his own water-color drawings, made under the teaching of the elder Nasmyth; I believe, at the High School of Edinburgh. It was done in the early manner of tinting, which, just about the time when my father was at the High School, Dr. Munro[7] was teaching Turner; namely, in gray under-tints of Prussian blue and British ink, washed with warm color afterward on the lights. It represented Conway Castle, with its Frith, and, in the foreground, a cottage, a fisherman, and a boat at the water's edge.

When my father had finished shaving, he always told me a story about this picture. The custom began without any initial purpose of his, in consequence of my troublesome curiosity whether the fisherman lived in the cottage, and where he was going to in the boat. It being settled, for peace' sake, that he *did* live in the cottage, and was going in the boat to fish near the castle, the plot of the drama afterward gradually thickened and became, I believe, involved with that of the tragedy of *Douglas*, and of the *Castle Specter*,[8] in both of which pieces my father had performed in private theatricals, before my mother, and a select Edinburgh audience, when he was a boy of sixteen, and she, at grave twenty, a model housekeeper, and very scornful and religiously suspicious of theatricals. But she was never weary of telling me, in later years, how beautiful my father looked in his Highland dress, with the high black feathers.

In the afternoons, when my father returned (always punctually) from his business, he dined, at half-past four, in the front parlor, my mother sitting beside him to hear the events of the day, and give counsel and encouragement with respect to the same;—chiefly the last, for my father was apt to be vexed if orders for sherry fell the least short of their due standard, even for a day or two. I was never present at this time, however, and only avouch what I relate by hearsay and probable conjecture; for between four and six it would have been a grave misdemeanor in me if I so much as approached the parlor door. After that, in summer time, we were all in the garden as long as the day lasted; tea under the white-heart cherry tree; or in winter and rough weather, at six o'clock in the drawing-room,—I having my cup of milk, and slice of bread-and-butter, in a little recess, with a table in front of it, wholly sacred to me; and in which I remained in the evenings as an Idol in a niche, while my mother knitted, and my father read to her,—and to me, so far as I chose to listen.

The series of the Waverley novels,[9] then drawing towards its close, was still the chief source of delight in all households caring for literature; and I can no more recollect the time when I did not know them than when I did not know the Bible; but I have still a vivid remembrance of my father's intense expression of sorrow mixed with scorn, as he threw down *Count Robert of Paris*, after reading three or four pages; and knew that the life of Scott was ended: the scorn being a very complex and bitter feeling in him,—partly, indeed, of the book itself, but chiefly of the wretches who were tormenting and selling the wrecked intellect, and not a little, deep down, of the subtle dishonesty which had essentially caused the ruin. My father never could forgive Scott his concealment of the Ballantyne partnership.[10]

Such being the salutary pleasures of Herne Hill, I have next with deeper gratitude to chronicle what I owe to my mother for the resolutely consistent lessons which so exercised me in the Scriptures as to make every word of them familiar to my ear in habitual music,—yet in that familiarity reverenced, as transcending all thought, and ordaining all conduct.

[7] Thomas Munro (1759-1833), a physician and early patron of Turner.

[8] the former by John Home and the latter by M. G. ("Monk") Lewis, played at the Drury Lane theater in 1798.

[9] by Sir Walter Scott.

[10] a disastrous partnership with the Ballantyne publishing firm which resulted in Scott's bankruptcy.

This she effected, not by her own sayings or personal authority; but simply by compelling me to read the book thoroughly, for myself. As soon as I was able to read with fluency, she began a course of Bible work with me, which never ceased till I went to Oxford. She read alternate verses with me, watching, at first, every intonation of my voice, and correcting the false ones, till she made me understand the verse, if within my reach, rightly, and energetically. It might be beyond me altogether; that she did not care about; but she made sure that as soon as I got hold of it at all, I should get hold of it by the right end.

In this way she began with the first verse of Genesis, and went straight through, to the last verse of the Apocalypse; hard names, numbers, Levitical law, and all; and began again at Genesis the next day. If a name was hard, the better the exercise in pronunciation,—if the chapter was tiresome, the better lesson in patience,—if loathsome, the better lesson in faith that there was some use in its being so outspoken. After our chapters (from two to three a day, according to their length, the first thing after breakfast, and no interruption from servants allowed,—none from visitors, who either joined in the reading or had to stay upstairs,—and none from any visitings or excursions, except real traveling), I had to learn a few verses by heart, or repeat, to make sure I had not lost, something of what was already known; and, with the chapters thus gradually possessed from the first word to the last, I had to learn the whole body of the fine old Scottish paraphrases, which are good, melodious, and forceful verse; and to which, together with the Bible itself, I owe the first cultivation of my ear in sound.

It is strange that of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother thus taught me, that which cost me most to learn, and which was, to my child's mind, chiefly repulsive—the 11th Psalm—has now become of all the most precious to me, in its overflowing and glorious passion of love for the Law of God, in opposition to the abuse of it by modern preachers of what they imagine to be His gospel.

But it is only by deliberate effort that I recall the long morning hours of toil, as regular as sunrise,—toil on both sides equal—by which, year after year, my mother forced me to learn these paraphrases, and chapters (the eighth of 1st Kings being one—try it, good reader, in a leisure hour!), allowing not so much as a syllable to be missed or misplaced; while every sentence was required to be said over and over again till she was satisfied with the accent of it. I recollect a struggle between us of about three weeks, concerning the accent of the "of" in the lines

> Shall any following spring revive
> The ashes of the urn?—

I insisting, partly in childish obstinacy, and partly in true instinct for rhythm (being wholly careless on the subject both of urns and their contents), on reciting it with an accented *of*. It was not, I say, till after three weeks' labor, that my mother got the accent lightened on the "of" and laid on the ashes, to her mind. But had it taken three years she would have done it, having once undertaken to do it. And, assuredly, had she not done it,—well, there's no knowing what would have happened; but I'm very thankful she *did*.

(1873-5)

Matthew Arnold

(1822-1888)

Few of his contemporaries exerted an influence comparable to Matthew Arnold's upon the intellectual perspectives of the later nineteenth century. In common with Carlyle, Ruskin, and Newman, he revolted against the materialism of his age, but, unlike them, he did not seek inspiration from the spiritual values of the Middle Ages. If he allowed himself the luxury of indulging a regret for the religious certainties of the past, he nonetheless kept his eyes firmly on mankind's future. Morals and ethics had lost their theological basis for many thinkers because of science, and Arnold understood that something must be advanced to take religion's place. The foundation he proposed was the potential dignity of the human character, and the goal he set was the pursuit of human perfection. He was unwilling to recline in satisfaction, as did so many Liberals, on the

boast of English progress in material prosperity. Mr. Roebuck, whom Arnold devastatingly attacked, could say to the Sheffield cutlers: "Is not property safe? Is not every man able to say what he likes? Can you not walk from one end of England to the other in perfect safety?" But Arnold had only to quote against him from his daily newspaper: "A shocking child-murder has just been committed at Nottingham. A girl named Wragg left the workhouse there on Saturday morning with her young illegitimate child. The child was soon afterwards found dead on Mapperly Hills, having been strangled. Wragg is in custody." The smug pretenses of industrial ethics were intolerable to Arnold, and he performed some noble services in exposing its shams. Cosmopolitan in temperament and unashamedly a fosterer of culture, Arnold was something like a prophet to those men and women who could not find religious faith merely by desiring to possess it, and who were repelled, as he was, by the spiritual stagnation of middle-class self-complacency.

He was born at Laleham on Christmas Eve, 1822, the son of the famous headmaster of Rugby, Thomas Arnold, a man of capacious views and moral energy. Although as a young man Matthew Arnold affected a debonair dandyism little to his father's taste, there was a deep affection existing between the two, as is revealed in Matthew's letters and his *Rugby Chapel* (cf. *below*). The boy attended his father's school and studied under the elder Arnold. The family had a country place not distant from Grasmere, and in its beauteous surroundings Matthew spent his vacations. The Wordsworths were friends of the Arnolds, and the youth's poetical development was quickened by his veneration for Wordsworth. In 1841 he was granted a classical scholarship at Balliol College, Oxford. At the university Arnold avoided any concentrated study, preferring rather to read widely than to prepare himself for any special endeavor. During these years he formed the close attachment to that "beautiful city! so venerable, so lovely, so unravaged by the fierce intellectual life of our century," Oxford, whose praises he later sang in his famous *Preface* to *Essays in Criticism* (cf. *below*), and whose memories form the background of *The Scholar Gypsy* (cf. *below*) and *Thyrsis* (cf. *below*). He also became saturated with the spirit of the Greek and Roman literatures, which were profoundly to determine his philosophy. At Oxford, too, he became a close friend of Arthur Hugh Clough (cf. *below*).

He took his degree in 1845, taught for a while at Rugby, and was elected to a Fellowship at Oriel College a few months after leaving Balliol. In 1847 he became private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, an active politician, a post he held for three years. He paid a visit to France to visit George Sand and Chopin. Enough leisure was at his disposal for him to read constantly his beloved authors—Homer, Pindar, Sophocles, Thomas a'Kempis, and Goethe, and also to write poetry. His first volume, *The Strayed Reveller and Other Poems,* appeared in 1849. Though almost every one of these poems has since been accepted as part of our great literary heritage, the book made but a slight impression on the public.

Through Lord Lansdowne's influence he was given the post of Inspector of Schools in 1851, and in the same year he married Frances Wightman, daughter of a judge on the Queen's Bench. Arnold's married life was very happy, though subject to the vexations of the endless traveling about that was required of an Inspector of Schools. Until 1866 Arnold retained this position, chafing at his obligations and the long absences from his family. There were compensations, however, in his opportunities for traveling on the Continent to examine other systems of education, and in France he came to know such distinguished writers as Saint-Beuve and Renan. For some years, despite the enervating routine of his office, Arnold continued to write poetry. *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems* appeared in 1852, and the volume called *Poems* in 1853.

To the latter collection Arnold wrote a Preface, marking his first appearance as a prose writer, of which Prof. Saintsbury has said that it was "the most important critical document issued in England for something like a generation." In this essay Arnold advocated the calm of the ancient writers as an important discipline for modern writers. As the student of the Greeks "penetrates into the spirit of the great classical works," Arnold observes, "as he becomes gradually aware of their intense significance, their noble

simplicity, and their calm pathos, he will be convinced that it is this effect, unity and profoundness of moral impression, at which the ancient poets aimed. . . . He will desire to direct his own efforts towards producing the same effect. Above all, he will . . . escape the danger of producing poetical works conceived in the spirit of the passing time, and which partake of its transitoriness. The present age makes great claims upon us: we owe it service, it will not be satisfied without our admiration. I know not how it is, but their commerce with the ancients appears to me to produce, in those who constantly practise it, a steadying and composing effect upon their judgment. . . . They wish neither to applaud nor to revile their age: they wish to know what it is, what it can give them, and whether this is what they want. What they want, they know very well; they want to educe and cultivate what is best and noblest in themselves. . . . They do not talk of their mission, nor of interpreting their age, . . . their business is . . . to afford to the men who live in it the highest pleasure which they are capable of feeling. If asked to afford this by means of subjects drawn from the age itself, they ask what special fitness the present age has for supplying them. They are told that it is an era of progress, an age commissioned to carry out the great ideas of industrial development and social amelioration. They reply that with all this they can do nothing; that the elements they need for the exercise of their art are great actions, calculated powerfully and delightfully to affect what is permanent in the human soul; that so far as the present age can supply such actions, they will gladly make use of them; but that an age wanting in moral grandeur can with difficulty supply such. . . . He who possesses the discipline I speak of . . will not, however, maintain a hostile attitude towards the false pretensions of his age; he will content himself with not being overwhelmed by them. He will esteem himself fortunate if he can succeed in banishing from his mind all feelings of contradiction, and irritation, and impatience; in order to delight himself with the contemplation of some noble action of a heroic time, and to enable others, through his representation of it, to delight in it also."

This poetic credo, strongly impregnated by the practice of the classics and the theories of Aristotle (cf. Vol. I, p. 525), demonstrates both Arnold's dissatisfaction with the prosaic qualities of his age and his intention of bringing men to moral and intellectual virtue. He disliked the Romantic Movement for its excesses of style and looseness of structure and for its vain disgust with life. Wordsworth alone he profoundly admired (cf. Vol. II, p. 106), but he found even him "wanting in completeness and variety." Nor could he share Wordsworth's worship of the divine in Nature, for he felt that "Man hath all that Nature hath—but more," and, he added, "in that more lie all his hopes of good." Arnold's own poetry (cf. *below*) is meditative, as is Wordsworth's, but the recurrent motive in his verse is his profound concern for civilization. Unable to find a solution to the problems of his time, his poetry, the product of his earlier years, is overcast with a feeling of melancholy and frustration. He stated in poetic terms the dilemma of many men like him who took no pleasure in the achievements of the age and found no help in the religion and dogmas being sponsored on all sides.

Arnold possessed neither Browning's volcanic imagination nor Tennyson's golden artistry. But he brought to poetry a classic sense of form uncommon in his period. He was especially gifted in imparting a sense of structure to unrhymed poetry, and was one of the earliest to write with success in free verse. The key to his poetical ideals, to be read in the already quoted Preface to the volume of 1853, is his love of that elegance which is born of symmetry. This remained the foundation of his beliefs, literary and social; and in his later address on *Literature and Science* we hear it clearly enunciated: "The results of the want [of symmetry] show themselves most glaringly, perhaps, in our architecture, but they show themselves, also, in our art. . . . . Striking details we have, and well executed details we have; but that high symmetry which, with satisfying and delightful effect, combines them, we seldom or never have. The glorious beauty of the Acropolis at Athens did not come from single fine things stuck about on that hill, a statue here, a gateway there;—no, it arose from all things being perfectly combined for a supreme perfect

effect." This stricture explains his dislike of the romantic poets' concentration on rich detail to the disregard of the total impression, and affords an excellent commentary on what Arnold attempted, on the artistic side, to accomplish in his poetry. His collections of poems made no great stir when they first appeared, but Arnold himself was his own best critic. "I have less poetical sentiment than Tennyson," he says in a letter, "and less intellectual vigor and abundance than Browning; yet, because I have perhaps more of a fusion of the two than either of them, and have more regularly applied that fusion to the main line of modern development, I am likely enough to have my turn, as they have had theirs." Though the appeal of Arnold's poetry is quiet and unsensational, "he has," as Prof. Saintsbury has remarked, "the real throb and cry, the indispensable 'moments,' the faculty of transforming and transcending." The poems that follow in these pages exhibit Arnold at his best, and to them only a few others, such as the long *Sohrab and Rustum*, need be added to understand his poetical achievement.

Though he had not gained popularity, Arnold's gifts were sufficiently noted to win for him the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford in 1857. His duties involved the delivery of a few public lectures on the study of poetry. His first talk was on the modernity of the great Greek classics. In 1858 he issued a classical tragedy, *Merope,* to justify his stand. In 1868 he wrote his beautiful elegy on Clough, *Thyrsis* (cf. *below*), and in 1867 appeared his last volume of verse, *New Poems*. The major part of his poetic career, in fact, may be said to have terminated with his thirty-fourth year; and twenty years of literary productivity followed his final volume of poems. His detractors have said that the fount of poetic inspiration had dried up within him; but to confute them it is only necessary to quote his fine elegy, *Westminster Abbey,* written as late as 1881. The true explanation would seem to be that he expended his best energies upon the drilling tasks of an inspector of education. However little to his taste his official labors must have been, Arnold possessed too strong a sense of moral responsibility to shirk them, as is attested by his carefully drawn reports and his *Popular Education in France* (1861), *A French Eton* (1864), and *Schools and Universities on the Continent* (1868). The writing of prose he found more compatible with the nomadic life enforced upon him, and he turned more and more to prose composition for the expression of his ideas. Nor need we regret that he thus made the best of necessity, for he is one of the most distinguished of English prose stylists.

His career in prose opened with the publication of three lectures delivered during his professorship at Oxford, *On Translating Homer* (1861). The next year witnessed his *Translating Homer: Last Words*, in which the influence of Sainte-Beuve is strong. His first great prose work, *Essays in Criticism* (cf. *below*), later to be called *Essays in Criticism, First Series,* appeared in 1865. It has been described as the book which taught Englishmen how to write criticism. As Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch says, the *Essays in Criticism* was the first English book to "treat Criticism as a deliberate disinterested art, with laws and methods of its own, a proper temper, and certain standards or touchstones of right taste by which the quality of any writing, as literature, could be tested." It was here that Arnold began his onslaught upon the Philistinism (a phrase he borrowed from Heine) of the English middle class. The word "Philistine" was used frequently by him thereafter to signify the provincialism, narrow-mindedness, and vulgarity of the culture fostered by industrialism. It is difficult for us to realize, for Arnold's battle has been successful, that the average Englishman then looked upon any form of art at best as a waste of time and at worst as something not quite moral. A glance at the periodical literature of the day, with its highly moral tales and "edifying" verses, will give an idea of the abysmal level of public taste. Small wonder that the history of Victorian literature is a record of revolt against the age (cf. Carlyle, Newman, Ruskin, Dickens, Thackeray, the Pre-Raphaelites, Swinburne, etc.). Arnold's insistence on the importance of literature, and of art in general, was not the commonplace his efforts have since made it.

His most belligerent attack on English Philistinism is to be found in *Culture and*

Anarchy (1869), which first appeared as a series of articles for the *Cornhill Magazine* The opening chapter, *Sweetness and Light* (cf. *below*), preaches a new gospel of culture in a style informed with intelligence and wit. To identify the dull Sunday-school side of English life he employed the term "Hebraism" (to include both prophetic Judaism and Pauline Christianity); over against it he held up the "Hellenism" of beauty and reason. A humanity worthy of its calling must learn to co-ordinate its moral with its esthetic and intellectual nature. *Culture and Anarchy* is a spirited plea for the free play of critical intelligence. That pursuit of perfection, which he advocated, is, he here says, "the pursuit of sweetness and light. . . . It knows that the sweetness and light of the few must be imperfect until the raw and unkindled masses of humanity are touched with sweetness and light."

In 1870 Arnold published *St. Paul and Protestantism*, an attempt to apply scientific criticism to the Scriptures. *Friendship's Garland* (1871) is a continuation of the principles announced in *Culture and Anarchy*, but written in a spirit of delightful raillery. His book of 1873, *Literature and Dogma*, evoked a storm of horror from the orthodox. In it he attacked theologians for interpreting the Bible literally, and for their stressing the letter rather than the spirit of the Scriptures. A thoroughgoing humanist, he reversed the old process of adapting the human character to the injunctions of the Bible; to him the Bible was valuable for what it could offer men and women in their search for a sane and balanced life.

Arnold traveled considerably on the Continent and to America, where he made two lecture tours. His last works include *Last Essays on Church and Religion* (1877), *Mixed Essays* (1879), *Irish Essays and Others* (1882), and *Discourses in America* (1885). On April 15, 1888, he was in Liverpool to meet his daughter returning on a visit from America. Running to catch a car, he was suddenly stricken with heart failure, and he died.

Lewis E. Gates makes this interesting estimate of Arnold: "To realize the subtle and high quality of Arnold's genius, one has but to compare him with men of science or with rationalists pure and simple,—with men like Professor Huxley, Darwin, or Bentham. . . . Arnold has a far wider range of sensibilities than any one of them. . . . Arnold brings to bear upon the present a finer spiritual appreciation than the mere man of the world or the mere man of science—a larger accumulation of imaginative experience. . . . Arnold makes of life an art rather than a science, and commits the conduct of it to an exquisite tact, rather than to reason or demonstration. The imaginative assimilation of all the best experience of the past—this he regards as the right training to develop true tact for the discernment of good and evil in all practical matters. . . . He accepts—with some sadness, it is true, and yet genuinely and generously—the modern age, with its scientific bias and its worldly preoccupations; humanist as he is, half-romantic lover of an elder time, he yet masters his regret over what is disappearing and welcomes the present loyally. Believing, however, in the continuity of human experience, and above all in the transcendent worth to mankind of its spiritual acquisitions, . . . he devotes himself to preserving the quintessence of this ideal life of former generations, and insinuating it into the hearts of men of a modern age. He converts himself into a patient, courageous mediator between the old and the new. . . . [He] takes life as it offers itself and does his best with it. He sees and feels its crudeness and disorderliness; but he has faith in the instincts that civilized men have developed in common."

Arnold's works are published in fifteen volumes (1903-04). His *Letters, 1848-1888* were collected in two volumes by G. W. E. Russell (1898, 1901), and the letters to Clough were edited by H. F. Lowry (1933). Good biographies of him have been written by H. Kingsmill (1928), H. W. Paul (1902), G. W. E. Russell (1904), G. Saintsbury (1899), and L. Trilling (1939). Among commendable critical works are W. H. Dawson's *Matthew Arnold and His Relation to the Thought of Our Time* (1904), L. E. Gates's introduction to his *Selections from the Prose Writings of Matthew Arnold* (1898), and C. H. Harvey's *Matthew Arnold* (1931).

The Forsaken Merman

Come, dear children, let us away,
Down and away below.
Now my brothers call from the bay;
Now the great winds shoreward blow;
Now the salt tides seaward flow;
Now the wild white horses play,
Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.
Children dear, let us away,
This way, this way!

Call her once before you go,
Call once yet,
In a voice that she will know:
"Margaret! Margaret!"
Children's voices should be dear
(Call once more) to a mother's ear,
Children's voices, wild with pain.
Surely she will come again!
Call her once and come away;
This way, this way!
"Mother dear, we cannot stay.
The wild white horses foam and fret."
Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down;
Call no more.
One last look at the white-walled town,
And the little gray church on the windy shore;
Then come down.
She will not come though you call all day.
Come away, come away.

Children dear, was it yesterday
We heard the sweet bells over the bay?
In the caverns where we lay,
Through the surf and through the swell,
The far-off sound of a silver bell?
Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep,
Where the winds are all asleep;
Where the spent lights quiver and gleam;
Where the salt weed sways in the stream;
Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round,
Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground;
Where the sea-snakes coil and twine,
Dry their mail, and bask in the brine;
Where great whales come sailing by,
Sail and sail, with unshut eye,
Round the world forever and aye?
When did music come this way?
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday
(Call yet once) that she went away?
Once she sate with you and me,
On a red-gold throne in the heart of the sea,
And the youngest sate on her knee.
She combed its bright hair, and she tended it well,
When down swung the sound of a far-off bell.
She sighed, she looked up through the clear green sea,
She said, "I must go, for my kinsfolk pray
In the little gray church on the shore today.
'Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah, me!
And I lose my poor soul, Merman, here with thee."
I said, "Go up, dear heart, through the waves;
Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves."
She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.
Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?
"The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.
Long prayers," I said, "in the world they say;
Come," I said, and we rose through the surf in the bay.
We went up the beach, by the sandy down
Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-walled town.
Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still,
To the little gray church on the windy hill.
From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers,
But we stood without in the cold-blowing airs.
We climbed on the graves, on the stones worn with rains,
And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded panes.
She sate by the pillar; we saw her clear:
"Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here.
Dear heart," I said, "we are long alone.
The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan."
But, ah! she gave me never a look,
For her eyes were sealed to the holy book.
Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.
Come away, children, call no more.
Come away, come down, call no more.

Down, down, down;
Down to the depths of the sea.
She sits at her wheel in the humming town,
Singing most joyfully.

Hark what she sings: "O joy, O joy,
For the humming street, and the child with its toy.
For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well.
For the wheel where I spun,
And the blessed light of the sun."
And so she sings her fill,
Singing most joyfully,
Till the spindle drops from her hand,
And the whizzing wheel stands still.
She steals to the window, and looks at the sand,
And over the sand at the sea;
And her eyes are set in a stare;
And anon there breaks a sigh,
And anon there drops a tear,
From a sorrow-clouded eye,
And a heart sorrow-laden,
A long, long sigh
For the cold strange eyes of a little mermaiden,
And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away, children,
Come, children, come down.
The hoarse wind blows colder;
Lights shine in the town.
She will start from her slumber
When gusts shake the door;
She will hear the winds howling,
Will hear the waves roar.
We shall see, while above us
The waves roar and whirl,
A ceiling of amber,
A pavement of pearl.
Singing, "Here came a mortal,
But faithless was she;
And alone dwell forever
The kings of the sea."

But, children, at midnight,
When soft the winds blow,
When clear falls the moonlight,
When spring-tides are low,
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starred with broom,
And high rocks throw mildly
On the blanched sands a gloom—
Up the still, glistening beaches,
Up the creeks we will hie,
Over banks of bright seaweed
The ebb-tide leaves dry.
We will gaze, from the sand-hills,
At the white, sleeping town;
At the church on the hillside—
And then come back down,
Singing, "There dwells a loved one,
But cruel is she.
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea."

(pub. 1849)

To a Friend

Who prop, thou ask'st, in these bad days. my mind?
He much, the old man,[1] who, clearest-soul'd of men,
Saw The Wide Prospect, and the Asian Fen,
And Tmolus' hill, and Smyrna's bay, though blind.
Much he,[2] whose friendship I not long since won,
That halting slave, who in Nicopolis
Taught Arrian, when Vespasian's brutal son
Clear'd Rome of what most sham'd him. But be his[3]
My special thanks, whose even-balanc'd soul,
From first youth tested up to extreme old age,
Business could not make dull, nor Passion wild:
Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole:
The mellow glory of the Attic stage;
Singer of sweet Colonus, and its child.

(pub. 1849)

Shakespeare

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask—thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
To the foiled searching of mortality;
And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-schooled, self-scanned, self-honored, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguessed at.—Better so!
All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

(pub. 1849)

[1] Homer.
[2] Epictetus, Stoic philosopher, who flourished about 90 A.D. at Rome.
[3] Sophocles (495-406 B.C.), the author of *Oedipus at Colonus* and of *Antigone*, great Greek tragedies.

Lines Written in Kensington Gardens

In this lone, open glade I lie,
Screen'd by deep boughs on either hand;
And at its end, to stay the eye,
Those black-crown'd, red-boled pine trees stand!

Birds here make song, each bird has his,
Across the girdling city's hum.
How green under the boughs it is!
How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come!

Sometimes a child will cross the glade
To take his nurse his broken toy;
Sometimes a thrush flit overhead
Deep in her unknown day's employ.

Here at my feet what wonders pass,
What endless, active life is here!
What blowing daisies, fragrant grass!
An air-stirr'd forest, fresh and clear.

Scarce fresher is the mountain-sod
Where the tired angler lies, stretch'd out,
And, eased of basket and of rod,
Counts his day's spoil, the spotted trout.

In the huge world, which roars hard by,
Be others happy if they can!
But in my helpless cradle I
Was breathed on by the rural Pan.

I, on men's impious uproar hurl'd,
Think often, as I hear them rave,
That peace has left the upper world
And now keeps only in the grave.

Yet here is peace for ever new!
When I who watch them am away,
Still all things in this glade go through
The changes of their quiet day.

Then to their happy rest they pass!
The flowers upclose, the birds are fed,
The night comes down upon the grass,
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

Calm soul of all things! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar.

The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others give!
Calm, calm me more! nor let me die
Before I have begun to live.

(pub 1852)

To Marguerite

In Returning a Volume of the Letters Of Ortis

Yes: in the sea of life enisl'd,
With echoing straits between us thrown,
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,
We mortal millions live *alone*.
The islands feel the enclasping flow,
And then their endless bounds they know.

But when the moon their hollows lights
And they are swept by balms of spring,
And in their glens, on starry nights
The nightingales divinely sing,
And lovely notes, from shore to shore,
Across the sounds and channels pour;

Oh then a longing like despair
Is to their farthest caverns sent;
—For surely once, they feel, we were
Parts of a single continent.
Now round us spreads the watery plain—
Oh might our marges meet again!

Who order'd, that their longing's fire
Should be, as soon as kindled, cool'd?
Who renders vain their deep desire?
A God, a God their severance rul'd;
And bade betwixt their shores to be
The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

(pub. 1852)

A Summer Night

In the deserted, moon-blanch'd street,
How lonely rings the echo of my feet!
Those windows, which I gaze at, frown,
Silent and white, unopening down,
Repellent as the world;—but see,
A break between the housetops shows
The moon! and, lost behind her, fading dim
Into the dewy dark obscurity

Down at the far horizon's rim,
Doth a whole tract of heaven disclose!

And to my mind the thought
Is on a sudden brought
Of a past night, and a far different scene.
Headlands stood out into the moonlit deep
As clearly as at noon;
The spring-tide's brimming flow
Heaved dazzlingly between;
Houses, with long white sweep,
Girdled the glistening bay;
Behind, through the soft air,
The blue haze-cradled mountains spread away,
That night was far more fair—
But the same restless pacings to and fro,
And the same vainly throbbing heart was there,
And the same bright, calm moon.

And the calm moonlight seems to say:
Hast thou then still the old unquiet breast,
Which neither deadens into rest,
Nor ever feels the fiery glow
That whirls the spirit from itself away,
But fluctuates to and fro,
Never by passion quite possess'd
And never quite benumb'd by the world's sway?—
And I, I know not if to pray
Still to be what I am, or yield and be
Like all the other men I see.

For most men in a brazen prison live,
Where, in the sun's hot eye,
With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly
Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork give,
Dreaming of nought beyond their prison-wall.
And as, year after year,
Fresh products of their barren labor fall
From their tired hands, and rest
Never yet comes more near,
Gloom settles slowly down over their breast;
And while they try to stem
The waves of mournful thought by which they are prest
Death in their prison reaches them,
Unfreed, having seen nothing, still unblest.

And the rest, a few,
Escape their prison and depart
On the wide ocean of life anew.
There the freed prisoner, where'er his heart
Listeth, will sail;
Nor doth he know how there prevail,
Despotic on that sea,
Trade-winds which cross it from eternity.

Awhile he holds some false way, undebarr'd
By thwarting signs, and braves
The freshening wind and blackening waves.
And then the tempest strikes him; and between
The lightning-bursts is seen
Only a driving wreck,
And the pale master on his spar-strewn deck
With anguish'd face and flying hair
Grasping the rudder hard,
Still bent to make some port he knows not where,
Still standing for some false, impossible shore.
And sterner comes the roar
Of sea and wind, and through the deepening gloom
Fainter and fainter wreck and helmsman loom,
And he too disappears, and comes no more.

Is there no life, but these alone?
Madman or slave, must man be one?

Plainness and clearness without shadow of stain!
Clearness divine!
Ye heavens, whose pure dark regions have no sign
Of languor, though so calm, and, though so great,
Are yet untroubled and unpassionate;
Who, though so noble, share in the world's toil,
And, though so task'd, keep free from dust and soil!
I will not say that your mild deeps retain
A tinge, it may be, of their silent pain
Who have long'd deeply once, and long'd in vain—
But I will rather say that you remain
A world above man's head, to let him see
How boundless might his soul's horizons be,
How vast, yet of what clear transparency!
How it were good to abide there, and breathe free;
How fair a lot to fill
Is left to each man still!

(pub. 1852)

Self-Dependence

Weary of myself, and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be,
At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire
O'er the sea and to the stars I send:
'Ye who from my childhood up have calmed me,
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end!

'Ah, once more,' I cried, 'ye stars, ye waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew;
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you!'

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night-air came the answer:
'Wouldst thou *be* as these are? *Live* as they.

'Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things without them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

'And with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silvered roll;
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

'Bounded by themselves, and unregardful
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see.'

O air-born voice! long since, severely clear,
A cry like thine in mine own heart I hear:
'Resolve to be thyself; and know that he,
Who finds himself, loses his misery!'

(pub. 1852)

The Buried Life

Light flows our war of mocking words, and yet,
Behold, with tears my eyes are wet!
I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.
Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,
We know, we know that we can smile!
But there's a something in this breast,
To which thy light words bring no rest,
And thy gay smiles no anodyne.
Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,
And turn those limpid eyes on mine,
And let me read there, love, thy inmost soul.

Alas, is even love too weak
To unlock the heart, and let it speak?
Are even lovers powerless to reveal
To one another what indeed they feel?
I knew the mass of men concealed
Their thoughts, for fear that if revealed
They would by other men be met
With blank indifference, or with blame reproved;
I knew they lived and moved
Tricked in disguises, alien to the rest
Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet
The same heart beats in every human breast!

But we, my love!—does a like spell benumb
Our hearts, our voices?—must we too be dumb?
Ah, well for us, if even we,
Even for a moment, can get free
Our heart, and have our lips unchained;
For that which seals them hath been deep-ordained.

Fate, which foresaw
How frivolous a baby man would be—
By what distractions he would be possessed,
How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity—
That it might keep from his capricious play
His genuine self, and force him to obey
Even in his own despite his being's law,
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast
The unregarded river of our life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;
And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be
Eddying about in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life;
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart that beats
So wild, so deep in us—to know
Whence our lives come, and where they go.
And many a man in his own breast then delves,
But deep enough, alas, none ever mines.
And we have been on many thousand lines,
And we have shown, on each, spirit and power;
But hardly have we, for one little hour,
Been on our own line, have we been ourselves—
Hardly had skill to utter one of all
The nameless feelings that course through our breast,
But they course on for ever unexpressed.
And long we try in vain to speak and act
Our hidden self, and what we say and do
Is eloquent, is well—but 'tis not true!

And then we will no more be racked
With inward striving, and demand
Of all the thousand nothings of the hour
Their stupefying power;
Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call!
Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,
From the soul's subterranean depth upborne
As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey
A melancholy into all our day.

Only—but this is rare—
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours,
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
When our world-deafened ear
Is by the tones of a loved voice caressed—
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again.
The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,
And hears its winding murmur; and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze.

And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
That flying and elusive shadow, rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast.
And then he thinks he knows
The hills where his life rose,
And the sea where it goes.

(pub. 1852)

Philomela

Hark! ah, the Nightingale!
The tawny-throated!
Hark! from that moonlit cedar what a burst!
What triumph! hark—what pain!
O Wanderer from a Grecian shore,
Still, after many years, in distant lands,
Still nourishing in thy bewilder'd brain
That wild, unquench'd, deep-sunken, old-world pain—

Say, will it never heal?
And can this fragrant lawn
With its cool trees, and night,
And the sweet, tranquil Thames,
And moonshine, and the dew,
To thy rack'd heart and brain
Afford no balm?

Dost thou to-night behold
Here, through the moonlight on this English grass,
The unfriendly palace in the Thracian wild?[1]
Dost thou again peruse
With hot cheeks and sear'd eyes
The too clear web, and thy dumb Sister's shame?
Dost thou once more assay
Thy flight, and feel come over thee,
Poor Fugitive, the feathery change
Once more, and once more seem to make resound
With love and hate, triumph and agony,
Lone Daulis, and the high Cephissian vale?
Listen, Eugenia—
How thick the bursts come crowding through the leaves!
Again—thou hearest!
Eternal Passion!
Eternal Pain!

(pub. 1853)

Requiescat

Strew on her roses, roses,
And never a spray of yew!
In quiet she reposes;
Ah, would that I did too!

Her mirth the world required;
She bathed it in smiles of glee.
But her heart was tired, tired,
And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
In mazes of heat and sound.
But for peace her soul was yearning,
And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample spirit,
It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.
Tonight it doth inherit
The vasty hall of death.

(pub. 1853)

[1] For the story of Philomela and Procne see Swinburne's *Itylus*, Vol. II, p. 704, note. Arnold has here reversed the position of the sisters.

The *Scholar-Gipsy*

There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there, and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gipsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtilty of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem as that they discovered to him their mystery. After he had been a pretty while exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among the gipsies; and he gave them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such impostors as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others: that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned.—Glanvil's *Vanity of Dogmatizing,* 1661.—*Arnold.*

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes![1]
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
Nor the cropped herbage shoot another head.
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanched green,
Come, shepherd; and again begin the quest!

Here, where the reaper was at work of late,
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,
And in the sun, all morning, binds the sheaves,
Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use—
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded flocks is borne,
With distant cries of reapers in the corn[2]—
All the live murmur of a summer's day.

Screened is this nook, o'er the high half-reaped field,
And here till sun-down, shepherd! will I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks, I see
Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep;
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade;
And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvil's book.
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!
The story of the Oxford scholar poor,
Of shining parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the gipsy-lore,
And roamed the world with that wild brotherhood,
And came, as most men deemed, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country-lanes,
Two scholars, whom at college erst he knew,
Met him, and of his way of life enquired;
Whereat he answered that the gipsy-crew,
His mates, had arts to rule as they desired
The workings of men's brains,
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.
"And I," he said, "the secret of their art,
When fully learned, will to the world impart;
But it needs Heaven-sent moments for this skill."

This said, he left them, and returned no more.
But rumors hung about the countryside,
That the lost scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,
The same the gipsies wore.
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst[3] in spring;
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
On the warm ingle-bench,[4] the smock-frocked boors
Had found him seated at their entering;

[1] sheepfolds made of interwoven twigs.
[2] grain (of any kind).
[3] Cumner Hurst, a hill southwest of Oxford. All places mentioned later in the poem are in the vicinity of Oxford.
[4] a fireside seat.

But, 'mid their drink and clatter, he would fly.—
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, wanderer! on thy trace;
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks,
I ask if thou hast passed their quiet place;
Or in my boat I lie
Moored to the cool bank in the summer-heats,
'Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm, green-muffled Cumner hills,
And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground:
Thee, at the ferry, Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer-nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bablockhithe,
Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
As the punt's rope chops round;
And leaning backward in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Plucked in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers;
And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen no more!—
Maidens who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,
Or cross a stile into the public way.
Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers: the frail-leafed white anemony,
Dark bluebells drenched with dews of summer eves,
And purple orchises with spotted leaves;
But none hath words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay-time's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass,
Where black-winged swallows haunt the glittering Thames,
To bathe in the abandoned lasher[5] pass,
Have often passed thee near,
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;
Marked thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air:
But when they came from bathing, thou wast gone!

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen; or hanging on a gate,
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
Children, who early range these slopes, and late,
For cresses from the rills,
Have known thee eying, all an April day,
The springing pastures and the feeding kine;
And marked thee, when the stars come out and shine,
Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley Wood,
(Where most the gipsies by the turf-edged way
Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagged, and shreds of grey,
Above the forest-ground called Thessaly,)
The blackbird, picking food,
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;
So often has he known thee past him stray,
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a withered spray,
And waiting for the spark from heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill,
Where home through flooded fields foot-travellers go,
Have I not passed thee on the wooden bridge,
Wrapt in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
Thy face toward Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
And thou hast climbed the hill,
And gained the white brow of the Cumner range;
Turned once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ-Church hall[6];
Then sought thy straw in some sequestered grange.

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown,
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
And the grave Glanvil did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wandered from the studious walls
To learn strange arts, and join a gipsy-tribe:

[5] the pool below a weir.

[6] the dining hall of Christ Church College, Oxford.

And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid?
Some country-nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
Under a dark red-fruited yew-tree's shade.

No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!
For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
Exhaust the energy of strongest souls,
And numb the elastic powers.
Till, having used our nerves with bliss and teen,[7]
And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,
To the just-pausing Genius we remit
Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

Thou hast not lived, why shouldst thou perish, so?
Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire;
Else wert thou long since numbered with the dead,
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire!
The generations of thy peers are fled,
And we ourselves shall go;
But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvil's page,
Because thou hadst what we, alas! have not.

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.
O life unlike to ours!
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,
And each half-lives a hundred different lives;
Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly willed,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
Whose vague resolves never have been fulfilled;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose to-morrow the ground won to-day:
Ah! do not we, wanderer! await it too?

Yes, we await it! but it still delays,
And then we suffer! and amongst us, one
Who most has suffered, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,
And all his hourly-varied anodynes.

This for our wisest: and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear,
With close-lipped patience for our only friend,
Sad patience, too near neighbor to despair.
But none has hope like thine!
Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
Roaming the country-side, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames,
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife—
Fly hence, our contact fear!
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did, with gesture stern,
From her false friend's[8] approach in Hades turn,
Wave us away; and keep thy solitude!

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free onward impulse brushing through,
By night, the silvered branches of the glade,
Far on the forest-skirts, where none pursue,
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge; and resting on the moonlit pales,

[7] sadness.

[8] Æneas, who had deserted Dido, queen of Carthage.

Freshen thy flowers, as in former years,
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
From the dark dingles, to the nightingales!

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfixed thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!
As some grave Tyrian[9] trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-haired creepers stealthily,
The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Ægæan isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes and Chian wine,
Green bursting figs, and tunnies steeped in brine,
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young light-hearted masters of the waves!
And snatched his rudder, and shook out more sail;
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the western straits; and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians[10] come;
And on the beach undid his corded bales.

(pub. 1853)

Thyrsis

A Monody, *to commemorate the author's friend,* Arthur Hugh Clough, *who died at Florence, 1861.*

How changed is here each spot man makes or fills!
In the two Hinkseys[1] nothing keeps the same;
The village street its haunted mansion lacks,
And from the sign is gone Sibylla's name,
And from the roofs the twisted chimney-stacks—
Are ye too changed, ye hills?
See, 'tis no foot of unfamiliar men
To-night from Oxford up your pathway strays!
Here came I often, often, in old days—
Thyrsis[2] and I; we still had Thyrsis then.

Runs it not here, the track by Childsworth Farm,
Past the high wood, to where the elm-tree crowns
The hill behind whose ridge the sunset flames?
The signal-elm, that looks on Ilsley Downs,
The Vale, the three lone weirs, the youthful Thames?—
This winter-eve is warm,
Humid the air! leafless, yet soft as spring,
The tender purple spray on copse and briers!
And that sweet city[3] with her dreaming spires,
She needs not June for beauty's heightening.

Lovely all times she lies, lovely to-night!
Only, methinks, some loss of habit's power
Befalls me wandering through this upland dim.
Once pass'd I blindfold here, at any hour;
Now seldom come I, since I came with him.
That single elm-tree bright
Against the west—I miss it! is it gone?
We prized it dearly; while it stood, we said,
Our friend, the Gipsy-Scholar, was not dead;
While the tree lived, he in these fields lived on.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here,
But once I knew each field, each flower, each stick;

[9] from Tyre, in Phoenicia.
[1] All the places mentioned in the poem are near Oxford.
[2] Clough.
[10] Spanish traders come to Gibraltar.
[3] Oxford.

And with the country-folk acquaintance made
By barn in threshing-time, by new-built rick.
Here, too, our shepherd-pipes we first assay'd.
Ah me! this many a year
My pipe is lost, my shepherd's holiday!
Needs must I lose them, needs with heavy heart
Into the world and wave of men depart;
But Thyrsis of his own will went away.

It irked him to be here, he could not rest.
He loved each simple joy the country yields,
He loved his mates; but yet he could not keep,
For that a shadow lowered on the fields,
Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep.
Some life of men unblest
He knew, which made him droop, and filled his head.
He went; his piping took a troubled sound
Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;
He could not wait their passing, he is dead.

So, some tempestuous morn in early June,
When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,
Before the roses and the longest day—
When garden-walks and all the grassy floor
With blossoms red and white of fallen May
And chestnut-flowers are strewn—
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vexed garden-trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing breeze:
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go I!

Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go?
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come on,
Soon will the musk carnations break and swell,
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
Sweet-William with its homely cottage-smell,
And stocks in fragrant blow;
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,
And groups under the dreaming garden-trees,
And the full moon, and the white evening-star.

He hearkens not! light comer, he is flown!
What matters it? next year he will return,
And we shall have him in the sweet spring-days,
With whitening hedges, and uncrumpling fern,
And blue-bells trembling by the forest-ways,
And scent of hay new-mown.
But Thyrsis[4] never more we swains shall see;
See him come back, and cut a smoother reed,
And blow a strain the world at last shall heed—
For Time, not Corydon, hath conquer'd thee!

Alack, for Corydon no rival now!—
But when Sicilian shepherds lost a mate,
Some good survivor with his flute would go,
Piping a ditty sad for Bion's[5] fate;
And cross the unpermitted ferry's flow,
And relax Pluto's brow,
And make leap up with joy the beauteous head
Of Proserpine,[6] among whose crowned hair
Are flowers first open'd on Sicilian air,
And flute his friend, like Orpheus, from the dead.[7]

O easy access to the hearer's grace
When Dorian shepherds sang to Proserpine!
For she herself had trod Sicilian fields,
She knew the Dorian water's gush divine,
She knew each lily white which Enna[8] yields,
Each rose with blushing face;
She loved the Dorian pipe, the Dorian strain.
But ah, of our poor Thames she never heard!
Her foot the Cumner cowslips never stirred;
And we should tease her with our plaint in vain!

Well! wind-dispersed and vain the words will be,
Yet, Thyrsis, let me give my grief its hour
In the old haunt, and find our tree-topped hill!
Who, if not I, for questing here hath power?
I know the wood which hides the daffodil,
I know the Fyfield tree,
I know what white, what purple fritillaries
The grassy harvest of the river-fields,
Above by Ensham, down by Sanford, yields,
And what sedged brooks are Thames's tributaries;

[4] Thyrsis and Corydon are conventional names of shepherds in ancient pastoral poetry. Cf. Theocritus *Idyll I*, Vol. I, p. 244, and Virgil, *Eclogue IV*, Vol. I, p. 248.

[5] Cf. Moschus, *A Lament for Bion*, Vol. II, p. 268.

[6] wife of Pluto, and queen of the nether world.

[7] Orpheus because of his music received permission to bring his wife, Eurydice, back from the dead.

[8] where Proserpine was gathering flowers when she was carried off by Pluto.

I know these slopes; who knows them if not I?—
But many a dingle on the loved hill-side,
With thorns once studded, old, white-blossomed trees,
Where thick the cowslips grew, and far descried
High towered the spikes of purple orchises,
Hath since our day put by
The coronals of that forgotten time;
Down each green bank hath gone the ploughboy's team,
And only in the hidden brookside gleam
Primroses, orphans of the flowery prime.

Where is the girl, who by the boatman's door,
Above the locks, above the boating throng,
Unmoored our skiff when through the Wytham flats,
Red loosestrife and blond meadow-sweet among,
And darting swallows and light water-gnats,
We tracked the shy Thames shore?
Where are the mowers, who, as the tiny swell
Of our boat passing heaved the river-grass,
Stood with suspended scythe to see us pass?—
They all are gone, and thou art gone as well!

Yes, thou art gone! and round me too the night
In ever-nearing circle weaves her shade.
I see her veil draw soft across the day,
I feel her slowly chilling breath invade
The cheek grown thin, the brown hair sprent with grey;
I feel her finger light
Laid pausefully upon life's headlong train;—
The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew,
The heart less bounding at emotion new,
And hope, once crush'd, less quick to spring again.

And long the way appears, which seem'd so short
To the less practised eye of sanguine youth;
And high the mountain-tops, in cloudy air,
The mountain-tops where is the throne of Truth,
Tops in life's morning-sun so bright and bare!
Unbreachable the fort
Of the long-batter'd world uplifts its wall;
And strange and vain the earthly turmoil grows,
And near and real the charm of thy repose,
And night as welcome as a friend would fall.

But hush! the upland hath a sudden loss
Of quiet!—Look, adown the dusk hill-side,
A troop of Oxford hunters going home,
As in old days, jovial and talking, ride!
From hunting with the Berkshire hounds they come.
Quick! let me fly, and cross
Into yon farther field!—'Tis done; and see,
Back'd by the sunset, which doth glorify
The orange and pale violet evening-sky,
Bare on its lonely ridge, the Tree! the Tree!

I take the omen! Eve lets down her veil,
The white fog creeps from bush to bush about,
The west unflushes, the high stars grow bright,
And in the scatter'd farms the lights come out.
I cannot reach the signal-tree to-night,
Yet, happy omen, hail!
Hear it from thy broad lucent Arno-vale[9]
(For there thine earth-forgetting eyelids keep
The morningless and unawakening sleep
Under the flowery oleanders pale),

Hear it, O Thyrsis, still our tree is there!—
Ah, vain! These English fields, this upland dim,
These brambles pale with mist engarlanded,
That lone, sky-pointing tree, are not for him;
To a boon southern country he is fled,
And now in happier air,
Wandering with the great Mother's[10] train divine
(And purer or more subtle soul than thee,
I trow, the mighty Mother doth not see)
Within a folding of the Apennine,

Thou hearest the immortal chants of old!—
Putting his sickle to the perilous grain
In the hot cornfield of the Phrygian king,[11]
For thee the Lityerses-song again
Young Daphnis with his silver voice doth sing;
Sings his Sicilian fold,
His sheep, his hapless love, his blinded eyes—
And how a call celestial round him rang,

[9] Clough is buried in Florence by the River Arno.

[10] Cybele, the Great Mother of the Gods.

[11] Lityerses who challenged strangers to a reaping-contest, with death the punishment for failure. The Lityerses-song was sung as a dirge for those slain in these contests. Daphnis, with the help of Hercules, won the contest and slew Lityerses.

And heavenward from the fountain-brink he sprang,
And all the marvel of the golden skies.

There thou art gone, and me thou leavest here
Sole in these fields! yet will I not despair.
Despair I will not, while I yet descry
'Neath the mild canopy of English air
That lonely tree against the western sky.
Still, still these slopes, 'tis clear,
Our Gipsy-Scholar haunts, outliving thee!
Fields where soft sheep from cages pull the hay,
Woods with anemones in flower till May,
Know him a wanderer still; then why not me?

A fugitive and gracious light he seeks,
Shy to illumine; and I seek it too.
This does not come with houses or with gold,
With place, with honor, and a flattering crew;
'Tis not in the world's market bought and sold—
But the smooth-slipping weeks
Drop by, and leave its seeker still untired;
Out of the heed of mortals he is gone,
He wends unfollowed, he must house alone;
Yet on he fares, by his own heart inspired.

Thou too, O Thyrsis, on like quest wast bound;
Thou wanderedst with me for a little hour!
Men gave thee nothing; but this happy quest,
If men esteemed thee feeble, gave thee power,
If men procured thee trouble, gave thee rest.
And this rude Cumner ground,
Its fir-stopped Hurst, its farms, its quiet fields,
Here cam'st thou in thy jocund youthful time,
Here was thine height of strength, thy golden prime!
And still the haunt beloved a virtue yields.

What though the music of thy rustic flute
Kept not for long its happy, country tone;
Lost it too soon, and learned a stormy note
Of men contention-tossed, of men who groan,
Which tasked thy pipe too sore, and tired thy throat—
It failed, and thou wast mute!
Yet hadst thou alway visions of our light,
And long with men of care thou couldst not stay,
And soon thy foot resumed its wandering way,
Left human haunt, and on alone till night.

Too rare, too rare, grow now my visits here!
'Mid city-noise, not, as with thee of yore,
Thyrsis! in reach of sheep-bells is my home.
—Then through the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar,
Let in thy voice a whisper often come,
To chase fatigue and fear:
Why faintest thou? I wandered till I died.
Roam on! The light we sought is shining still.
Dost thou ask proof? Our tree yet crowns the hill,
Our Scholar travels yet the loved hill-side.

(pub. 1866)

Dover Beach

The sea is calm tonight,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window; sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanched land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles[1] long ago
Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled,
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles[2] of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,

[1] Greek dramatist (496-406 B.C.).
[2] beaches.

So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

(pub. 1867)

Growing Old

What is it to grow old?
Is it to lose the glory of the form,
The luster of the eye?
Is it for beauty to forego her wreath?
—Yes, but not this alone.

Is it to feel our strength—
Not our bloom only, but our strength—decay?
Is it to feel each limb
Grow stiffer, every function less exact,
Each nerve more loosely strung?

Yes, this, and more; but not
Ah, 'tis not what in youth we dreamed 'twould be!
'Tis not to have our life
Mellowed and softened as with sunset-glow,
A golden day's decline.

'Tis not to see the world
As from a height, with rapt prophetic eyes,
And heart profoundly stirred;
And weep, and feel the fullness of the past,
The years that are no more.

It is to spend long days
And not once feel that we were ever young;
It is to add, immured
In the hot prison of the present, month
To month with weary pain.

It is to suffer this,
And feel but half, and feebly, what we feel.
Deep in our hidden heart
Festers the dull remembrance of a change,
But no emotion—none.

It is—last stage of all—
When we are frozen up within, and quite
The phantom of ourselves,
To hear the world applaud the hollow ghost
Which blamed the living man.

(pub. 1867)

The Austerity of Poetry

That son of Italy[1] who tried to blow,
Ere Dante came, the trump of sacred song,
In his light youth amid a festal throng
Sat with his bride to see a public show.
Fair was the bride, and on her front did glow
Youth like a star; and what to youth belong—
Gay raiment, sparkling gauds, elation strong.
A prop gave way! crash fell a platform! lo,
'Mid struggling sufferers, hurt to death, she lay!
Shuddering, they drew her garments off—and found
A robe of sackcloth next the smooth, white skin.
Such, poets, is your bride, the Muse! young, gay,
Radiant, adorned outside; a hidden ground
Of thought and of austerity within.

(pub. 1867)

Rugby Chapel

NOVEMBER, 1857

Coldly, sadly descends
The autumn-evening. The field
Strewn with its dank yellow drifts
Of withered leaves, and the elms,
Fade into dimness apace,
Silent;—hardly a shout
From a few boys late at their play!
The lights come out in the street,
In the school-room windows;—but cold,
Solemn, unlighted, austere,
Through the gathering darkness, arise
The chapel-walls, in whose bound
Thou, my father![1] art laid.

There thou dost lie, in the gloom
Of the autumn evening. But ah!
That word, *gloom*, to my mind
Brings thee back, in the light
Of thy radiant vigor again;
In the gloom of November we passed
Days not dark at thy side;
Seasons impaired not the ray
Of thy buoyant cheerfulness clear.
Such thou wast! and I stand

[1] Giacopone di Todi, an Italian poet of the thirteenth century.

[1] Dr. Thomas Arnold (1795-1842), headmaster of Rugby and one of the most successful of all English schoolmasters.

In the autumn evening, and think
Of bygone autumns with thee.

Fifteen years have gone round
Since thou arosest to tread,
In the summer-morning, the road
Of death, at a call unforeseen,
Sudden. For fifteen years,
We who till then in thy shade
Rested as under the boughs
Of a mighty oak, have endured
Sunshine and rain as we might,
Bare, unshaded, alone,
Lacking the shelter of thee.

O strong soul, by what shore
Tarriest thou now? For that force,
Surely, has not been left in vain!
Somewhere, surely, afar,
In the sounding labor-house vast
Of being, is practised that strength,
Zealous, beneficent, firm!

Yes, in some far-shining sphere,
Conscious or not of the past,
Still thou performest the word
Of the Spirit in whom thou dost live—
Prompt, unwearied, as here!
Still thou upraisest with zeal
The humble good from the ground,
Sternly repressest the bad!
Still, like a trumpet, doth rouse
Those who with half-open eyes
Tread the border-land dim
'Twixt vice and virtue; reviv'st,
Succorest!—this was thy work,
This was thy life upon earth.

What is the course of the life
Of mortal men on the earth?
Most men eddy about
Here and there—eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, are hurled in the dust,
Striving blindly, achieving
Nothing; and then they die—
Perish;—and no one asks
Who or what they have been,
More than he asks what waves,
In the moonlit solitudes mild
Of the midmost Ocean, have swelled,
Foamed for a moment, and gone.

And there are some, whom a thirst
Ardent, unquenchable, fires,
Not with the crowd to be spent,
Not without aim to go round
In an eddy of purposeless dust,
Effort unmeaning and vain.
Ah yes! some of us strive
Not without action to die
Fruitless, but something to snatch
From dull oblivion, nor all
Glut the devouring grave!
We, we have chosen our path—
Path to a clear-purposed goal,
Path of advance!—but it leads
A long, steep journey, through sunk
Gorges, o'er the mountains in snow.
Cheerful, with friends, we set forth—
Then, on the height, comes the storm.
Thunder crashes from rock
To rock, the cataracts reply,
Lightnings dazzle our eyes.
Roaring torrents have breached
The track, the stream-bed descends
In the place where the wayfarer once
Planted his footstep—the spray
Boils o'er its borders! aloft
The unseen snow-beds dislodge
Their hanging ruin; alas,
Havoc is made in our train!
Friends, who set forth at our side,
Falter, are lost in the storm.
We, we only are left!
With frowning foreheads, with lips
Sternly compressed, we strain on,
On—and at nightfall at last
Come to the end of our way,
To the lonely inn 'mid the rocks;
Where the gaunt and taciturn host
Stands on the threshold, the wind
Shaking his thin white hairs—
Holds his lantern to scan
Our storm-beat figures, and asks:
Whom in our party we bring?
Whom we have left in the snow?

Sadly we answer: We bring
Only ourselves! we lost
Sight of the rest in the storm.
Hardly ourselves we fought through,
Stripped, without friends, as we are.
Friends, companions, and train,
The avalanche swept from our side.

But thou would'st not *alone*
Be saved, my father! *alone*
Conquer and come to thy goal,
Leaving the rest in the wild.
We were weary, and we
Fearful, and we in our march
Fain to drop down and to die.
Still thou turnedst, and still
Beckonedst the trembler, and still
Gavest the weary thy hand.
If, in the paths of the world,
Stones might have wounded thy feet,
Toil or dejection have tried
Thy spirit, of that we saw
Nothing—to us thou wast still
Cheerful, and helpful and firm!
Therefore to thee it was given
Many to save with thyself;
And, at the end of thy day,
O faithful shepherd! to come,
Bringing thy sheep in thy hand.
And through thee I believe
In the noble and great who are gone;
Pure souls honored and blest
By former ages, who else—
Such, so soulless, so poor,
Is the race of men whom I see—
Seemed but a dream of the heart,
Seemed but a cry of desire.
Yes! I believe that there lived
Others like thee in the past,
Not like the men of the crowd
Who all round me to-day
Bluster or cringe, and make life
Hideous, and arid, and vile;
But souls tempered with fire,
Fervent, heroic, and good,
Helpers and friends of mankind.

Servants of God!—or sons
Shall I not call you? because
Not as servants ye knew
Your Father's innermost mind,
His, who unwillingly sees
One of his little ones lost—
Yours is the praise, if mankind
Hath not as yet in its march
Fainted, and fallen, and died!

See! In the rocks of the world
Marches the host of mankind,
A feeble, wavering line.
Where are they tending?—A God
Marshalled them, gave them their goal.
Ah, but the way is so long!
Years they have been in the wild!
Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks,
Rising all round, overawe;
Factions divide them, their host
Threatens to break, to dissolve.
—Ah, keep, keep them combined!
Else, of the myriads who fill
That army, not one shall arrive;
Sole they shall stray; in the rocks
Stagger for ever in vain,
Die one by one in the waste.

Then, in such hour of need
Of your fainting, dispirited race,
Ye, like angels, appear,
Radiant with ardor divine!
Beacons of hope, ye appear!
Languor is not in your heart,
Weakness is not in your word,
Weariness not on your brow.
Ye alight in our van! at your voice,
Panic, despair, flee away.
Ye move through the ranks, recall
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,
Praise, re-inspire the brave!
Order, courage, return.
Eyes rekindling, and prayers,
Follow your steps as ye go.
Ye fill up the gaps in our files,
Strengthen the wavering line,
Stablish, continue our march,
On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God.

(pub. 1867)

The Last Word

Creep into thy narrow bed,
Creep, and let no more be said!
Vain thy onset! all stands fast.
Thou thyself must break at last.

Let the long contention cease!
Geese are swans, and swans are geese.
Let them have it how they will!
Thou are tired; best be still.

They out-talk'd thee, hiss'd thee, tore thee!
Better men fared thus before thee;

Fired their ringing shot and pass'd,
Hotly charged—and sank at last.

Charge once more, then, and be dumb!
Let the victors, when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall.

(pub. 1867)

Preface to *Essays in Criticism*

(FIRST SERIES)

Several of the Essays which are here collected and reprinted had the good or the bad fortune to be much criticized at the time of their first appearance. I am not now going to inflict upon the reader a reply to those criticisms; for one or two explanations which are desirable, I shall elsewhere, perhaps, be able some day to find an opportunity; but, indeed, it is not in my nature,—some of my critics would rather say, not in my power,—to dispute on behalf of any opinion, even my own, very obstinately. To try and approach truth on one side after another, not to strive or cry, nor to persist in pressing forward, on any one side, with violence and self-will,—it is only thus, it seems to me, that mortals may hope to gain any vision of the mysterious Goddess, whom we shall never see except in outline, but only thus even in outline. He who will do nothing but fight impetuously towards her on his own, one, favorite, particular line, is inevitably destined to run his head into the folds of the black robe in which she is wrapped.

So it is not to reply to my critics that I write this Preface, but to prevent a misunderstanding, of which certain phrases that some of them use make me apprehensive. Mr. Wright, one of the many translators of Homer, has published a letter to the Dean of Canterbury, complaining of some remarks of mine, uttered now a long while ago, on his version of the *Iliad*.[1] One cannot be always studying one's own works, and I was really under the impression, till I saw Mr. Wright's complaint, that I had spoken of him with all respect. The reader may judge of my astonishment, therefore, at finding, from Mr. Wright's pamphlet, that I had "declared with much solemnity that there is not any proper reason for his existing." That I never said; but, on looking back at my Lectures on Translating Homer, I find that I did say, not that Mr. Wright, but that Mr. Wright's version of the *Iliad*, repeating in the main the merits and defects of Cowper's version, as Mr. Sotheby's repeated those of Pope's version, had, if I might be pardoned for saying so, no proper reason for existing. Elsewhere I expressly spoke of the merit of his version; but I confess that the phrase, qualified as I have shown, about its want of a proper reason for existing, I used. Well, the phrase had, perhaps, too much vivacity; we have all of us a right to exist, we and our works; an unpopular author should be the last person to call in question this right. So I gladly withdraw the offending phrase, and I am sorry for having used it; Mr. Wright, however, would perhaps be more indulgent to my vivacity, if he considered that we are none of us likely to be lively much longer. My vivacity is but the last sparkle of flame before we are all in the dark, the last glimpse of color before we all go into drab,—the drab of the earnest, prosaic, practical, austerely literal future. Yes, the world will soon be the Philistines'! and then, with every voice, not of thunder, silenced, and the whole earth filled and ennobled every morning by the magnificent roaring of the young lions of the *Daily Telegraph*, we shall all yawn in one another's faces with the dismalest, the most unimpeachable gravity.

But I return to my design in writing this Preface. That design was, after apologizing to Mr. Wright for my vivacity of five years ago, to beg him and others to let me bear my own burdens, without saddling the great and famous University to which I have the honor to belong with any portion of them. What I mean to deprecate is such phrases as, "his professorial assault," "his assertions issued *ex cathedra*,"[2] "the sanction of his name as the representative of poetry," and so on. Proud as I am of my connection with the University of Oxford,[3] I can truly say that, knowing how unpopular a task one is undertaking when one tries to pull out a few more stops in that powerful but at present somewhat narrow-toned organ, the modern Englishman, I have sought always to stand by myself, and to compromise others as little as possible. Besides this, my native modesty is such that I have always been shy of assuming the honorable

[1] in Arnold's *On Translating Homer*.

[2] from the throne.

[3] as Professor of Poetry.

style of Professor, because this is a title I share with so many distinguished men,—Professor Pepper, Professor Anderson, Professor Frickel, and others, —who adorn it, I feel, much more than I do.

However, it is not merely out of modesty that I prefer to stand alone, and to concentrate on myself, as a plain citizen of the republic of letters, and not as an office-bearer in a hierarchy, the whole responsibility for all I write; it is much more out of genuine devotion to the University of Oxford, for which I feel, and always must feel, the fondest, the most reverential attachment. In an epoch of dissolution and transformation, such as that on which we are now entered, habits, ties, and associations are inevitably broken up, the action of individuals becomes more distinct, the shortcomings, errors, heats, disputes, which necessarily attend individual action, are brought into greater prominence. Who would not gladly keep clear, from all these passing clouds, an august institution which was there before they arose, and which will be there when they have blown over?

It is true, the *Saturday Review* maintains that our epoch of transformation is finished; that we have found our philosophy; that the British nation has searched all anchorages for the spirit, and has finally anchored itself, in the fulness of perfected knowledge, on Benthamism.[4] This idea at first made a great impression on me; not only because it is so consoling in itself, but also because it explained a phenomenon which in the summer of last year had, I confess, a good deal troubled me. At that time my avocations led me to travel almost daily on one of the Great Eastern Lines,—the Woodford Branch. Every one knows that the murderer, Müller, perpetrated his detestable act on the North London Railway, close by. The English middle class, of which I am myself a feeble unit, travel on the Woodford Branch in large numbers. Well, the demoralization of our class,—the class which (the newspapers are constantly saying it, so I may repeat it without vanity) has done all the great things which have ever been done in England,—the demoralization, I say, of our class, caused by the Bow tragedy, was something bewildering. Myself a transcendentalist (as the *Saturday Review* knows), I escaped the infection; and, day after day, I used to ply my agitated fellow-travellers with all the consolations which my transcendentalism would naturally suggest to me. I reminded them how Caesar refused to take precautions against assassination, because life was not worth having at the price of an ignoble solicitude for it. I reminded them what insignificant atoms we all are in the life of the world. "Suppose the worst to happen," I said, addressing a portly jeweller from Cheapside; "suppose even yourself to be the victim; *il n'y a pas d'homme nécessaire*.[5] We should miss you for a day or two upon the Woodford Branch; but the great mundane movement would still go on, the gravel walks of your villa would still be rolled, dividends would still be paid at the Bank, omnibuses would still run, there would still be the old crush at the corner of Fenchurch Street." All was of no avail. Nothing could moderate, in the bosom of the great English middle class, their passionate, absorbing, almost bloodthirsty clinging to life. At the moment I thought this over-concern a little unworthy; but the *Saturday Review* suggests a touching explanation of it. What I took for the ignoble clinging to life of a comfortable worldling, was, perhaps, only the ardent longing of a faithful Benthamite, traversing an age still dimmed by the last mists of transcendentalism, to be spared long enough to see his religion in the full and final blaze of its triumph. This respectable man, whom I imagined to be going up to London to serve his shop, or to buy shares, or to attend an Exeter Hall meeting, or to assist at the deliberations of the Marylebone Vestry, was even, perhaps, in real truth, on a pious pilgrimage, to obtain from Mr. Bentham's executors a secret bone of his great, dissected master.[6]

And yet, after all, I cannot but think that the *Saturday Review* has here, for once, fallen a victim to an idea,—a beautiful but deluding idea,—and that the British nation has not yet, so entirely as the reviewer seems to imagine, found the last word of its philosophy. No, we are all seekers still! seekers often make mistakes, and I wish mine to redound to my own discredit only, and not to touch Oxford. Beautiful city! so venerable, so lovely, so unravaged, by the fierce intellectual life of our century, so serene!

"There are our young barbarians, all at play!"

And yet, steeped in sentiment as she lies, spreading her gardens to the moonlight, and whispering from her towers the last enchantments of the Middle Age, who will deny that Oxford, by her ineffable charm, keeps ever calling us nearer to the true

[4] the utilitarian philosophy of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832).

[5] no man is really necessary.

[6] Bentham gave his body to be dissected and his skeleton to be preserved at University College, London.

goal of all of us, to the ideal, to perfection,—to beauty, in a word, which is only truth seen from another side?—nearer, perhaps, than all the science of Tübingen. Adorable dreamer, whose heart has been so romantic! who hast given thyself so prodigally, given thyself to sides and to heroes not mine, only never to the Philistines! home of lost causes, and forsaken beliefs, and unpopular names, and impossible loyalties! what example could ever so inspire us to keep down the Philistine in ourselves, what teacher could ever so save us from that bondage to which we are all prone, that bondage which Goethe, in his incomparable lines on the death of Schiller, makes it his friend's highest praise (and nobly did Schiller deserve the praise) to have left miles out of sight behind him;—the bondage of *"was uns alle bändigt, das Gemeine!"*[7] She will forgive me, even if I have unwittingly drawn upon her a shot or two aimed at her unworthy son; for she is generous, and the cause in which I fight is, after all, hers. Apparitions of a day, what is our puny warfare against the Philistines, compared with the warfare which this queen of romance has been waging against them for centuries, and will wage after we are gone?

(1865)

The Function of Criticism at the Present Time

This, the first of the *Essays in Criticism*, is a full statement of Arnold's opposition to the materialism and insularity of his compatriots. His insistence on the creative function of criticism has had important consequences on literary criticism.

Many objections have been made to a proposition which, in some remarks of mine on translating Homer I ventured to put forth; a proposition about criticism, and its importance at the present day. I said that "of the literature of France and Germany, as of the intellect of Europe in general, the main effort, for now many years, has been a critical effort; the endeavor, in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is." I added, that owing to the operation in English literature of certain causes, "almost the last thing for which one would come to English literature is just that very thing which now Europe most desires,—criticism"; and that the power and value of English literature was thereby impaired. More than one rejoinder declared that the importance I here assigned to criticism was excessive, and asserted the inherent superiority of the creative effort of the human spirit over its critical effort. And the other day, having been led by an excellent notice of Wordsworth, published in the *North British Review*, to turn again to his biography, I found, in the words of this great man, whom I, for one, must always listen to with the profoundest respect, a sentence passed on the critic's business, which seems to justify every possible disparagement of it. Wordsworth says in one of his letters:

"The writers in these publications" (the Reviews), "while they prosecute their inglorious employment, cannot be supposed to be in a state of mind very favorable for being affected by the finer influences of a thing so pure as genuine poetry."

And a trustworthy reporter of his conversation quotes a more elaborate judgment to the same effect:

"Wordsworth holds the critical power very low, infinitely lower than the inventive; and he said today that if the quantity of time consumed in writing critiques on the works of others were given to original composition, of whatever kind it might be, it would be much better employed; it would make a man find out sooner his own level, and it would do infinitely less mischief. A false or malicious criticism may do much injury to the minds of others; a stupid invention, either in prose or verse, is quite harmless."

It is almost too much to expect of poor human nature, that a man capable of producing some effect in one line of literature, should, for the greater good of society, voluntarily doom himself to impotence and obscurity in another. Still less is this to be expected from men addicted to the composition of the "false or malicious criticism" of which Wordsworth speaks. However, everybody would admit that a false or malicious criticism had better never have been written. Everybody, too, would be willing to admit, as a general proposition, that the critical faculty is lower than the inventive. But is

[7] that which binds us all, the Commonplace.

it true that criticism is really, in itself, a baneful and injurious employment? is it true that all time given to writing critiques on the works of others would be much better employed if it were given to original composition, of whatever kind this may be? Is it true that Johnson had better have gone on producing more *Irenes*[1] instead of writing his *Lives of the Poets*? nay, is it certain that Wordsworth himself was better employed in making his Ecclesiastical Sonnets than when he made his celebrated Preface,[2] so full of criticism, and criticism of the works of others? Wordsworth was himself a great critic, and it is to be sincerely regretted that he has not left us more criticism; Goethe was one of the greatest of critics, and we may sincerely congratulate ourselves that he has left us so much criticism. Without wasting time over the exaggeration which Wordsworth's judgment on criticism clearly contains, or over an attempt to trace the causes,—not difficult, I think, to be traced,—which may have led Wordsworth to this exaggeration, a critic may with advantage seize an occasion for trying his own conscience, and for asking himself of what real service, at any given moment, the practice of criticism either is, or may be made, to his own mind and spirit, and to the minds and spirits of others.

The critical power is of lower rank than the creative. True; but in assenting to this proposition, one or two things are to be kept in mind. It is undeniable that the exercise of a creative power, that a free creative activity, is the true function of man; it is proved to be so by man's finding in it his true happiness. But it is undeniable, also, that men may have the sense of exercising this free creative activity in other ways than in producing great works of literature or art; if it were not so, all but a very few men would be shut out from the true happiness of all men. They may have it in well-doing, they may have it in learning, they may have it even in criticizing. This is one thing to be kept in mind. Another is, that the exercise of the creative power in the production of great works of literature or art, however high this exercise of it may rank, is not at all epochs and under all conditions possible; and that therefore labor may be vainly spent in attempting it, which might with more fruit be used in preparing for it, in rendering it possible. This creative power works with elements, with materials; what if it has not those materials, those elements, ready for its use? In that case it must surely wait till they are ready. Now, in literature,—I will limit myself to literature, for it is about literature that the question arises,—the elements with which the creative power works are ideas; the best ideas on every matter which literature touches, current at the time. At any rate we may lay it down as certain that in modern literature no manifestation of the creative power not working with these can be very important or fruitful. And I say *current* at the time, not merely accessible at the time; for creative literary genius does not principally show itself in discovering new ideas, that is rather the business of the philosopher. The grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery; its gift lies in the faculty of being happily inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas, when it finds itself in them; of dealing divinely with these ideas, presenting them in the most effective and attractive combinations, making beautiful works with them, in short. But it must have the atmosphere, it must find itself amidst the order of ideas, in order to work freely; and these it is not so easy to command. This is why great creative epochs in literature are so rare; this is why there is so much that is unsatisfactory in the productions of many men of real genius; because, for the creation of a master-work of literature two powers must concur, the power of the man and the power of the moment, and the man is not enough without the moment; the creative power has, for its happy exercise, appointed elements, and those elements are not in its own control.

Nay, they are more within the control of the critical power. It is the business of the critical power, as I said in the words already quoted, "in all branches of knowledge, theology, philosophy, history, art, science, to see the object as in itself it really is." Thus it tends, at last, to make an intellectual situation of which the creative power can profitably avail itself. It tends to establish an order of ideas, if not absolutely true, yet true by comparison with that which it displaces; to make the best ideas prevail. Presently these new ideas reach society, the touch of truth is the touch of life, and there is a stir and growth everywhere; out of this stir and growth come the creative epochs of literature.

Or, to narrow our range, and quit these considerations of the general march of genius and of society, —considerations which are apt to become too abstract and impalpable,—every one can see that a poet, for instance, ought to know life and the

[1] A heavy tragedy produced by Johnson in 1749.
[2] Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*.

world before dealing with them in poetry; and life and the world being in modern times very complex things, the creation of a modern poet, to be worth much, implies a great critical effort behind it; else it would be a comparatively poor, barren, and short-lived affair. This is why Byron's poetry had so little endurance in it, and Goethe's so much; both Byron and Goethe had a great productive power, but Goethe's was nourished by a great critical effort providing the true materials for it, and Byron's was not; Goethe knew life and the world, the poet's necessary subjects, much more comprehensively and thoroughly than Byron. He knew a great deal more of them, and he knew them much more as they really are.

It has long seemed to me that the burst of creative activity in our literature, through the first quarter of this century, had about it in fact something premature; and that from this cause its productions are doomed, most of them, in spite of the sanguine hopes which accompanied and do still accompany them, to prove hardly more lasting than the productions of far less splendid epochs. And this prematureness comes from its having proceeded without having its proper data, without sufficient materials to work with. In other words, the English poetry of the first quarter of this century, with plenty of energy, plenty of creative force, did not know enough. This makes Byron so empty of matter, Shelley so incoherent, Wordsworth even, profound as he is, yet so wanting in completeness and variety. Wordsworth cared little for books, and disparaged Goethe. I admire Wordsworth, as he is, so much that I cannot wish him different; and it is vain, no doubt, to imagine such a man different from what he is, to suppose that he could have been different. But surely the one thing wanting to make Wordsworth an even greater poet than he is,—his thought richer, and his influence of wider application,—was that he should have read more books, among them, no doubt, those of that Goethe whom he disparaged without reading him.

But to speak of books and reading may easily lead to a misunderstanding here. It was not really books and reading that lacked to our poetry at this epoch; Shelley had plenty of reading, Coleridge had immense reading. Pindar and Sophocles—as we all say so glibly, and often with so little discernment of the real import of what we are saying—had not many books; Shakespeare was no deep reader. True; but in the Greece of Pindar and Sophocles, in the England of Shakespeare, the poet lived in a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power; society was, in the fullest measure, permeated by fresh thought, intelligent and alive. And this state of things is the true basis for the creative power's exercise, in this it finds its data, its materials, truly ready for its hand; all the books and reading in the world are only valuable as they are helps to this. Even when this does not actually exist, books and reading may enable a man to construct a kind of semblance of it in his own mind, a world of knowledge and intelligence in which he may live and work. This is by no means an equivalent to the artist for the nationally diffused life and thought of the epochs of Sophocles or Shakespeare; but, besides that it may be a means of preparation for such epochs, it does really constitute, if many share in it, a quickening and sustaining atmosphere of great value. Such an atmosphere the many-sided learning and the long and widely-combined critical effort of Germany formed for Goethe, when he lived and worked. There was no national glow of life and thought there, as in the Athens of Pericles or the England of Elizabeth. That was the poet's weakness. But there was a sort of equivalent for it in the complete culture and unfettered thinking of a large body of Germans. That was his strength. In the England of the first quarter of this century there was neither a national glow of life and thought, such as we had in the age of Elizabeth, nor yet a culture and a force of learning and criticism such as were to be found in Germany. Therefore the creative power of poetry wanted, for success in the highest sense, materials and a basis; a thorough interpretation of the world was necessarily denied to it.

At first sight it seems strange that out of the immense stir of the French Revolution and its age should not have come a crop of works of genius equal to that which came out of the stir of the great productive time of Greece, or out of that of the Renaissance, with its powerful episode the Reformation. But the truth is that the stir of the French Revolution took a character which essentially distinguished it from such movements as these. These were, in the main, disinterestedly intellectual and spiritual movements; movements in which the human spirit looked for its satisfaction in itself and in the increased play of its own activity. The French Revolution took a political, practical character. The movement which went on in France under the old régime, from 1700 to 1789, was far more really akin than that of the Revolution itself to the movement of the Renais

sance; the France of Voltaire and Rousseau told far more powerfully upon the mind of Europe than the France of the Revolution. Goethe reproached this last expressly with having "thrown quiet culture back." Nay, and the true key to how much in our Byron, even in our Wordsworth, is this!—that they had their source in a great movement of feeling, not in a great movement of mind. The French Revolution, however, that object of so much blind love and so much blind hatred,—found undoubtedly its motive-power in the intelligence of men, and not in their practical sense;—this is what distinguishes it from the English Revolution of Charles the First's time. This is what makes it a more spiritual event than our Revolution, an event of much more powerful and world-wide interest, though practically less successful—it appeals to an order of ideas which are universal, certain, permanent. 1789 asked of a thing, Is it rational? 1642 asked of a thing, Is it legal? or, when it went furthest, Is it according to conscience? This is the English fashion, a fashion to be treated, within its own sphere, with the highest respect; for its success, within its own sphere, has been prodigious. But what is law in one place is not law in another; what is law here to-day is not law even here to-morrow; and as for conscience, what is binding on one man's conscience is not binding on another's. The old woman[8] who threw her stool at the head of the surpliced minister in the Tron Church at Edinburgh obeyed an impulse to which millions of the human race may be permitted to remain strangers. But the prescriptions of reason are absolute, unchanging, of universal validity; *to count by tens is the easiest way of counting*—that is a proposition of which every one, from here to the Antipodes, feels the force; at least I should say so if we did not live in a country where it is not impossible that any morning we may find a letter in the *Times* declaring that a decimal coinage is an absurdity. That a whole nation should have been penetrated with an enthusiasm for pure reason, and with an ardent zeal for making its prescriptions triumph, is a very remarkable thing, when we consider how little of mind or anything so worthy and quickening as mind, comes into the motives which alone, in general, *impel* great masses of men. In spite of the extravagant direction given to this enthusiasm, in spite of the crimes and follies in which it lost itself, the French Revolution derives from the force, truth, and universality of the ideas which it took for its law, and from the passion with which it could inspire a multitude for these ideas, a unique and still living power; it is—it will probably long remain—the greatest, the most animating event in history. And as no sincere passion for the things of the mind even though it turn out in many respects an unfortunate passion, is ever quite thrown away and quite barren of good, France has reaped from hers one fruit,—the natural and legitimate fruit, though not precisely the grand fruit she expected: she is the country in Europe where *the people* is most alive.

But the mania for giving an immediate political and practical application to all these fine ideas of the reason was fatal. Here an Englishman is in his element: on this theme we can all go for hours. And all we are in the habit of saying on it has undoubtedly a great deal of truth. Ideas cannot be too much prized in and for themselves, cannot be too much lived with; but to transport them abruptly into the world of politics and practice, violently to revolutionize this world to their bidding,—that is quite another thing. There is the world of ideas and there is the world of practice; the French are often for suppressing the one and the English the other; but neither is to be suppressed. A member of the House of Commons said to me the other day: "That a thing is an anomaly, I consider to be no objection to it whatever." I venture to think he was wrong; that a thing is an anomaly *is* an objection to it, but absolutely and in the sphere of ideas: it is not necessarily, under such and such circumstances, or at such and such a moment, an objection to it in the sphere of politics and practice. Joubert[4] has said beautifully: "C'est la force et le droit qui règlent toutes choses dans le monde; la force en attendant le droit." Force and right are the governors of this world; force till right is ready. *Force till right is ready;* and till right is ready, force, the existing order of things, is justified, is the legitimate ruler. But right is something moral, and implies inward recognition, free assent of the will; we are not ready for right,—*right,* so far as we are concerned, *is not ready,*—until we have attained this sense of seeing it and willing it. The way in which for us it may change and transform force, the existing order of things, and become, in its turn, the legitimate ruler of the world, will depend on the way in which, when our time comes, we see it and will it. Therefore for other people enamored of their own newly discerned right, to attempt to impose it upon us as ours, and violently to substi-

[8] Janet Geddes, who thus resisted the imposition of the English liturgy in 1637.

[4] Joseph Joubert (1754-1824), a French moralist. Arnold devoted an essay to him.

tute their right for our force, is an act of tyranny, and to be resisted. It sets at nought the second great half of our maxim, *force till right is ready*. This was the grand error of the French Revolution; and its movement if ideas, by quitting the intellectual sphere and rushing furiously into the political sphere, ran, indeed, a prodigious and memorable course, but produced no such intellectual fruit as the movement of ideas of the Renaissance, and created, in opposition to itself, what I may call an *epoch of concentration*. The great force of that epoch of concentration was England; and the great voice of that epoch of concentration was Burke. It is the fashion to treat Burke's writings on the French Revolution as superannuated and conquered by the event; as the eloquent but unphilosophical tirades of bigotry and prejudice. I will not deny that they are often disfigured by the violence and passion of the moment, and that in some directions Burke's view was bounded, and his observation therefore at fault. But on the whole, and for those who can make the needful corrections, what distinguishes these writings is their profound, permanent, fruitful, philosophical truth. They contain the true philosophy of an epoch of concentration, dissipate the heavy atmosphere which its own nature is apt to engender round it, and make its resistance rational instead of mechanical.

But Burke is so great because, almost alone in England, he brings thought to bear upon politics, he saturates politics with thought. It is his accident that his ideas were at the service of an epoch of concentration, not of an epoch of expansion; it is his characteristic that he so lived by ideas, and had such a source of them welling up within him, that he could float even an epoch of concentration and English Tory politics with them. It does not hurt him that Dr. Price[5] and the Liberals were displeased with him; it does not even hurt him that George the Third and the Tories were enchanted with him. His greatness is that he lived in a world which neither English Liberalism nor English Toryism is apt to enter;—the world of ideas, not the world of catchwords and party habits. So far is it from being really true of him that he "to party gave up what was meant for mankind," that at the very end of his fierce struggle with the French Revolution, after all his invectives against its false pretensions, hollowness, and madness, with his sincere conviction of its mischievousness, he can close a memorandum on the best means of combating it, some of the last pages he ever wrote,—the *Thoughts on French Affairs*, in December 1791,—with these striking words:—

"The evil is stated, in my opinion, as it exists. The remedy must be where power, wisdom, and information, I hope, are more united with good intentions than they can be with me. I have done with this subject, I believe, for ever. It has given me many anxious moments for the last two years. *If a great change is to be made in human affairs, the minds of men will be fitted to it; the general opinions and feelings will draw that way. Every fear, every hope will forward it; and then they who persist in opposing this mighty current in human affairs, will appear rather to resist the decrees of Providence itself, than the mere designs of men. They will not be resolute and firm, but perverse and obstinate.*"

That return of Burke upon himself has always seemed to me one of the finest things in English literature, or indeed in any literature. That is what I call living by ideas: when one side of a question has long had your earnest support, when all your feelings are engaged, when you hear all round you no language but one, when your party talks this language like a steam-engine and can imagine no other,—still to be able to think, still to be irresistibly carried, if so it be, by the current of thought to the opposite side of the question, and, like Balaam, to be unable to speak anything *but what the Lord has put in your mouth*. I know nothing more striking, and I must add that I know nothing more un-English.

For the Englishman in general is like my friend the Member of Parliament, and believes, point-blank, that for a thing to be an anomaly is absolutely no objection to it whatever. He is like the Lord Auckland of Burke's day, who, in a memorandum on the French Revolution, talks, of "certain miscreants, assuming the name of philosophers, who have presumed themselves capable of establishing a new system of society." The Englishman has been called a political animal, and he values what is political and practical so much that ideas easily become objects of dislike in his eyes, and thinkers "miscreants," because ideas and thinkers have rashly meddled with politics and practice. This would be all very well if the dislike and neglect confined themselves to ideas transported out of their own sphere, and meddling rashly with practice; but they are inevitably extended to ideas as such, and to the whole life of intelligence; practice is everything,

[5] Richard Price (1723-1791), a Unitarian clergyman, whose address in defense of the French Revolution called forth Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*.

a free play of the mind is nothing. The notion of the free play of the mind upon all subjects being a pleasure in itself, being an object of desire, being an essential provider of elements without which a nation's spirit, whatever compensations it may have for them, must, in the long run, die of inanition, hardly enters into an Englishman's thoughts. It is noticeable that the word *curiosity*, which in other languages is used in a good sense, to mean, as a high and fine quality of man's nature, just this disinterested love of a free play of the mind on all subjects, for its own sake,—it is noticeable, I say, that this word has in our language no sense of the kind, no sense but a rather bad and disparaging one. But criticism, real criticism, is essentially the exercise of this very quality. It obeys an instinct prompting it to try to know the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics, and everything of the kind; and to value knowledge and thought as they approach this best, without the intrusion of any other considerations whatever. This is an instinct for which there is, I think, little original sympathy in the practical English nature, and what there was of it has undergone a long benumbing period of blight and suppression in the epoch of concentration which followed the French Revolution.

But epochs of concentration cannot well endure for ever; epochs of expansion, in the due course of things, follow them. Such an epoch of expansion seems to be opening in this country. In the first place all danger of a hostile forcible pressure of foreign ideas upon our practice has long disappeared; like the traveller in the fable, therefore, we begin to wear our cloak a little more loosely. Then, with a long peace, the ideas of Europe steal gradually and amicably in, and mingle, though in infinitesimally small quantities at a time, with our own notions. Then, too, in spite of all that is said about the absorbing and brutalizing influence of our passionate material progress, it seems to me indisputable that this progress is likely, though not certain, to lead in the end to an apparition of intellectual life; and that man, after he has made himself perfectly comfortable and has now to determine what to do with himself next, may begin to remember that he has a mind, and that the mind may be made the source of great pleasure. I grant it is mainly the privilege of faith, at present, to discern this end to our railways, our business, and our fortune-making; but we shall see if, here as elsewhere, faith is not in the end the true prophet. Our ease, our travelling, and our unbounded liberty to hold just as hard and securely as we please to the practice to which our notions have given birth, all tend to beget an inclination to deal a little more freely with these notions themselves, to canvass them a little, to penetrate a little into their real nature. Flutterings of curiosity, in the foreign sense of the word, appear amongst us, and it is in these that criticism must look to find its account. Criticism first; a time of true creative activity, perhaps,—which, as I have said, must inevitably be preceded amongst us by a time of criticism,—hereafter, when criticism has done its work.

It is of the last importance that English criticism should clearly discern what rule for its course, in order to avail itself of the field now opening to it, and to produce fruit for the future, it ought to take. The rule may be summed up in one word,—disinterestedness. And how is criticism to show disinterestedness? By keeping aloof from what is called "the practical view of things"; by resolutely following the law of its own nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches. By steadily refusing to lend itself to any of those ulterior, political, practical considerations about ideas, which plenty of people will be sure to attach to them, which perhaps ought often to be attached to them, which in this country at any rate are certain to be attached to them quite sufficiently, but which criticism has really nothing to do with. Its business is, as I have said, simply to know the best that is known and thought in the world, and by in its turn making this known, to create a current of true and fresh ideas. Its business is to do this with inflexible honesty, with due ability; but its business is to do no more, and to leave alone all questions of practical consequences and applications, questions which will never fail to have due prominence given to them. Else criticism, besides being really false to its own nature, merely continues in the old rut which it has hitherto followed in this country, and will certainly miss the chance now given to it.

For what is at present the bane of criticism in this country? It is that practical considerations cling to it and stifle it. It subserves interests not its own. Our organs of criticism are organs of men and parties having practical ends to serve, and with them those practical ends are the first thing and the play of mind the second; so much play of mind as is compatible with the prosecution of those practical ends is all that is wanted. An organ like the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, having for its main function to understand and utter the best that is known and thought in the world, existing, it may be said, as

just an organ for a free play of the mind, we have not. But we have the *Edinburgh Review*, existing as an organ of the old Whigs, and for as much play of the mind as may suit its being that; we have the *Quarterly Review*, existing as an organ of the Tories, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that; we have the *British Quarterly Review*, existing as an organ of the political Dissenters, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that; we have the *Times*, existing as an organ of the common, satisfied, well-to-do Englishman, and for as much play of mind as may suit its being that. And so on through all the various fractions, political and religious, of our society; every fraction has, as such, its organ of criticism, but the notion of combining all fractions in the common pleasure of a free disinterested play of mind meets with no favor. Directly this play of mind wants to have more scope, and to forget the pressure of practical considerations a little, it is checked, it is made to feel the chain. We saw this the other day in the extinction, so much to be regretted, of the *Home and Foreign Review*. Perhaps in no organ of criticism in this country was there so much knowledge, so much play of mind; but these could not save it. The *Dublin Review* subordinates play of mind to the practical business of English and Irish Catholicism, and lives. It must needs be that men should act in sects and parties, that each of these sects and parties should have its organ, and should make this organ subserve the interests of its action; but it would be well, too, that there should be a criticism, not the minister of these interests, not their enemy, but absolutely and entirely independent of them. No other criticism will ever attain any real authority or make any real way towards its end,—the creating a current of true and fresh ideas.

It is because criticism has so little kept in the pure intellectual sphere, has so little detached itself from practice, has been so directly polemical and controversial, that it has so ill accomplished, in this country, its best spiritual work; which is to keep man from a self-satisfaction which is retarding and vulgarizing, to lead him towards perfection, by making his mind dwell upon what is excellent in itself, and the absolute beauty and fitness of things. A polemical practical criticism makes men blind even to the ideal imperfection of this practice, makes them willingly assert its ideal perfection, in order the better to secure it against attack; and clearly this is narrowing and baneful for them. If they were reassured on the practical side, speculative considerations of ideal perfection they might be brought to entertain, and their spiritual horizon would thus gradually widen. Sir Charles Adderley[6] says to the Warwickshire farmers:

"Talk of the improvement of breed! Why, the race we ourselves represent, the men and women, the old Anglo-Saxon race, are the best breed in the whole world. . . . The absence of a too enervating climate, too unclouded skies, and a too luxurious nature, has produced so vigorous a race of people, and has rendered us so superior to all the world."

Mr. Roebuck[7] says to the Sheffield cutlers:

"I look around me and ask what is the state of England? Is not property safe? Is not every man able to say what he likes? Can you not walk from one end of England to the other in perfect security? I ask you whether, the world over or in past history, there is anything like it? Nothing. I pray that our unrivalled happiness may last."

Now obviously there is a peril for poor human nature in words and thoughts of such exuberant self-satisfaction, until we find ourselves safe in the streets of the Celestial City.

"Das wenige verschwindet leicht dem Blicke
Der vorwärts sieht, wie viel noch übrig bleibt—"

says Goethe; "the little that is done seems nothing when we look forward and see how much we have yet to do." Clearly this is a better line of reflection for weak humanity, so long as it remains on this earthly field of labor and trial.

But neither Sir Charles Adderley nor Mr. Roebuck is by nature inaccessible to considerations of this sort. They only lose sight of them owing to the controversial life we all lead, and the practical form which all speculation takes with us. They have in view opponents whose aim is not ideal, but practical; and in their zeal to uphold their own practice against these innovators, they go so far as even to attribute to this practice an ideal perfection. Somebody has been wanting to introduce a six-pound franchise, or to abolish church-rates, or to collect agricultural statistics by force, or to diminish local self-government. How natural, in reply to such proposals, very likely improper or ill-timed, to go a little beyond the mark and to say stoutly, "Such a race of people as we stand, so superior to all the world! The old Anglo-Saxon race, the best breed

[6] Sir Charles Bowyer Adderley, Baron Norton (1814 1905), a Tory politician.

[7] John Arthur Roebuck (1802-1879), Member of Parliament for Sheffield.

in the whole world! I pray that our unrivalled happiness may last! I ask you whether, the world over or in past history, there is anything like it?" And so long as criticism answers this dithyramb by insisting that the old Anglo-Saxon race would be still more superior to all others if it had no church-rates, or that our unrivalled happiness would last yet longer with a six-pound franchise, so long will the strain, "The best breed in the whole world!" swell louder and louder, everything ideal and refining will be lost out of sight, and both the assailed and their critics will remain in a sphere, to say the truth, perfectly unvital, a sphere in which spiritual progression is impossible. But let criticism leave church-rates and the franchise alone, and in the most candid spirit, without a single lurking thought of practical innovation, confront with our dithyramb this paragraph on which I stumbled in a newspaper immediately after reading Mr. Roebuck:

"A shocking child murder has just been committed at Nottingham. A girl named Wragg left the workhouse there on Saturday morning with her young illegitimate child. The child was soon afterwards found dead on Mapperly Hills, having been strangled. Wragg is in custody."

Nothing but that; but, in juxtaposition with the absolute eulogies of Sir Charles Adderley and Mr. Roebuck, how eloquent, how suggestive are those few lines! "Our old Anglo-Saxon breed, the best in the whole world!"—how much that is harsh and ill-favored there is in this best! *Wragg!* If we are to talk of ideal perfection, of "the best in the whole world," has any one reflected what a touch of grossness in our race, what an original shortcoming in the more delicate spiritual perceptions, is shown by the natural growth amongst us of such hideous names,—Higginbottom, Stiggins, Bugg! In Ionia and Attica they were luckier in this respect than "the best race in the world;" by the Ilissus there was no Wragg, poor thing! And "our unrivalled happiness;"—what an element of grimness, bareness, and hideousness mixes with it and blurs it; the workhouse, the dismal Mapperly Hills,—how dismal those who have seen them will remember;—the gloom, the smoke, the cold, the strangled illegitimate child! "I ask you whether, the world over or in past history, there is anything like it?" Perhaps not, one is inclined to answer; but at any rate, in that case, the world is very much to be pitied. And the final touch,—short, bleak and inhuman: *Wragg is in custody*. The sex lost in the confusion of our unrivalled happiness; or (shall I say?) the superfluous Christian name lopped off by the straightforward vigor of our old Anglo-Saxon breed! There is profit for the spirit in such contrasts as this; criticism serves the cause of perfection by establishing them. By eluding sterile conflict, by refusing to remain in the sphere where alone narrow and relative conceptions have any worth and validity, criticism may diminish its momentary importance, but only in this way has it a chance of gaining admittance for those wider and more perfect conceptions to which all its duty is really owed. Mr. Roebuck will have a poor opinion of an adversary who replies to his defiant songs of triumph only by murmuring under his breath, *Wragg is in custody*; but in no other way will these songs of triumph be induced gradually to moderate themselves, to get rid of what in them is excessive and offensive, and to fall into a softer and truer key.

It will be said that it is a very subtle and indirect action which I am thus prescribing for criticism, and that, by embracing in this manner the Indian virtue of detachment and abandoning the sphere of practical life, it condemns itself to a slow and obscure work. Slow and obscure it may be, but it is the only proper work of criticism. The mass of mankind will never have any ardent zeal for seeing things as they are; very inadequate ideals will always satisfy them. On these inadequate ideas reposes, and must repose, the general practice of the world. That is as much as saying that whoever sets himself to see things as they are will find himself one of a very small circle; but it is only by this small circle resolutely doing its own work that adequate ideas will ever get current at all. The rush and roar of practical life will always have a dizzying and attracting effect upon the most collected spectator, and tend to draw him into its vortex; most of all will this be the case where that life is so powerful as it is in England. But it is only by remaining collected, and refusing to lend himself to the point of view of the practical man, that the critic can do the practical man any service; and it is only by the greatest sincerity in pursuing his own course, and by at last convincing even the practical man of his sincerity, that he can escape misunderstandings which perpetually threaten him.

For the practical man is not apt for fine distinctions, and yet in these distinctions truth and the highest culture greatly find their account. But it is not easy to lead a practical man,—unless you reassure him as to your practical intentions, you have no chance of leading him,—to see that a thing which he has always been used to look at from one side only,

which he greatly values, and which, looked at from that side, quite deserves, perhaps, all the prizing and admiring which he bestows upon it,—that this thing, looked at from another side, may appear much less beneficent and beautiful, and yet retain all its claims to our practical allegiance. Where shall we find language innocent enough, how shall we make the spotless purity of our intentions evident enough, to enable us to say to the political Englishman that the British constitution itself, which, seen from the practical side, looks such a magnificent organ of progress and virtue, seen from the speculative side,—with its compromises, its love of facts, its horror of theory, its studied avoidance of clear thoughts,—that, seen from this side, our august constitution sometimes looks,—forgive me, shade of Lord Somers![8]—a colossal machine for the manufacture of Philistines? How is Cobbett[9] to say this and not be misunderstood, blackened as he is with the smoke of a lifelong conflict in the field of political practice? how is Mr. Carlyle to say it and not be misunderstood, after his furious raid into this field with his *Latter-day Pamphlets*? how is Mr. Ruskin, after his pugnacious political economy? I say, the critic must keep out of the region of immediate practice in the political, social, humanitarian sphere, if he wants to make a beginning for that more free speculative treatment of things, which may perhaps one day make its benefits felt even in this sphere, but in a natural and thence irresistible manner.

Do what he will, however, the critic will still remain exposed to frequent misunderstandings, and nowhere so much as in this country. For here people are particularly indisposed even to comprehend that without this free disinterested treatment of things, truth and the highest culture are out of the question. So immersed are they in practical life, so accustomed to take all their notions from this life and its processes, that they are apt to think that truth and culture themselves can be reached by the processes of this life, and that it is an impertinent singularity to think of reaching them in any other. "We are all *terræ filii*,"[10] cries their eloquent advocate; "all Philistines together. Away with the notion of proceeding by any other way than the way dear to the Philistines; let us have a social movement, let us organize and combine a party to pursue truth and new thought, let us call it *the liberal party*, and let us all stick to each other, and back each other up. Let us have no nonsense about independent criticism, and intellectual delicacy, and the few and the many. Don't let us trouble ourselves about foreign thought; we shall invent the whole thing for ourselves as we go along. If one of us speaks well, applaud him; if one of us speaks ill, applaud him too; we are all in the same movement, we are all liberals, we are all in pursuit of truth." In this way the pursuit of truth becomes really a social, practical, pleasurable affair, almost requiring a chairman, a secretary, and advertisements; with the excitement of a little resistance, an occasional scandal, to give the happy sense of difficulty overcome; but, in general, plenty of bustle and very little thought. To act is so easy, as Goethe says; to think is so hard! It is true that the critic has many temptations to go with the stream, to make one of the party movement, one of these *terræ filii*; it seems ungracious to refuse to be a *terræ filius*, when so many excellent people are; but the critic's duty is to refuse, or, if resistance is vain, at least to cry with Obermann:[11] *Périssons en résistant*.[12]

How serious a matter it is to try and resist, I had ample opportunity of experiencing when I ventured some time ago to criticize the celebrated first volume of Bishop Colenso.[13] The echoes of the storm which was then raised I still, from time to time, hear grumbling round me. That storm arose out of a misunderstanding almost inevitable. It is a result of no little culture to attain to a clear perception that science and religion are two wholly different things; the multitude will for ever confuse them; but happily that is of no great real importance, for while it imagines itself to live by its false science, it does really live by its true religion. Dr. Colenso, however, in his first volume did all he could to strengthen the confusion, and to make it dangerous. He did this with the best intentions, I freely admit, and with the most candid ignorance that this was the natural effect of what he was doing; but, says Joubert, "Ignorance, which in matters of morals extenuates the crime, is itself, in intellectual matters, a crime of the first order." I criticized Bishop Colenso's speculative confusion. Immediately there was a cry raised: "What is this? here is a liberal attacking a liberal. Do not you belong to the movement?

[8] John Somers (1651-1716), a noted defender of the English constitution.

[9] William Cobbett (1762-1835), a democratic agitator.

[10] children of the earth.

[11] the hero of a romance of that name by Etienne Pivert de Sénancourt (1770-1846).

[12] Let us perish in resisting.

[13] J. W. Colenso (1814-1883), Bishop of Natal, who had written a *Critical Examination of the Pentateuch* in which he had contended that the first five books of the Bible are inconsistent with the theory of Mosaic authorship.

are not you a friend of truth? Is not Bishop Colenso in pursuit of truth? then speak with proper respect of his book. Dr. Stanley is another friend of truth, and you speak with proper respect of his book; why make these invidious differences? both books are excellent, admirable, liberal; Bishop Colenso's perhaps the most so, because it is the boldest, and will have the best practical consequences for the liberal cause. Do you want to encourage to the attack of a brother liberal his, and your, and our implacable enemies, the *Church and State Review* or the *Record*,—the High Church rhinoceros and the Evangelical hyæna? Be silent, therefore; or rather speak, speak as loud as ever you can! and go into ecstasies over the eighty and odd pigeons."

But criticism cannot follow this coarse and indiscriminate method. It is unfortunately possible for a man in pursuit of truth to write a book which reposes upon a false conception. Even the practical consequences of a book are to genuine criticism no recommendation of it, if the book is, in the highest sense, blundering. I see that a lady who herself, too, is in pursuit of truth, and who writes with great ability, but a little too much, perhaps, under the influence of the practical spirit of the English liberal movement, classes Bishop Colenso's book and M. Renan's together, in her survey of the religious state of Europe, as facts of the same order, works, both of them, of "great importance;" "great ability, power, and skill;" Bishop Colenso's, perhaps, the most powerful; at least, Miss Cobbe[14] gives special expression to her gratitude that to Bishop Colenso "has been given the strength to grasp, and the courage to teach, truths of such deep import." In the same way, more than one popular writer has compared him to Luther. Now it is just this kind of false estimate which the critical spirit is, it seems to me, bound to resist. It is really the strongest possible proof of the low ebb at which, in England, the critical spirit is, that while the critical hit in the religious literature of Germany is Dr. Strauss's book,[15] in that of France M. Renan's book, the book of Bishop Colenso is the critical hit in the religious literature of England. Bishop Colenso's book reposes on a total misconception of the essential elements of the religious problem, as that problem is now presented for solution. To criticism therefore, which seeks to have the best that is known and thought on this problem, it is, however well meant, of no importance whatever. M. Renan's book attempts a new synthesis of the elements furnished to us by the Four Gospels. It attempts, in my opinion, a synthesis, perhaps premature, perhaps impossible, certainly not successful. Perhaps we shall always have to acquiesce in Fleury's sentence on such recastings of the Gospel-story: *Quiconque s'imagine la pouvoir mieux écrire, ne l'entend pas.*[16] M. Renan had himself passed by anticipation a like sentence on his own work, when he said: "If a new presentation of the character of Jesus were offered to me, I would not have it; its very clearness would be, in my opinion, the best proof of its insufficiency." His friends may with perfect truth rejoin that at the sight of the Holy Land, and of the actual scene of the Gospel-story, all the current of M. Renan's thoughts may have naturally changed, and a new casting of that story irresistibly suggested itself to him; and that this is just a case for applying Cicero's maxim: Change of mind is not inconsistency—*nemo doctus unquam mutationem consilii inconstantiam dixit esse.*[17] Nevertheless, for criticism, M. Renan's first thought must still be the truer one, as long as his new casting so fails more fully to commend itself, more fully (to use Coleridge's happy phrase about the Bible) to *find* us. Still M. Renan's attempt is, for criticism, of the most real interest and importance, since, with all its difficulty, a fresh synthesis of the New Testament *data*,—not a making war on them, in Voltaire's fashion, not a leaving them out of mind in the world's fashion, but the putting a new construction upon them, the taking them from under the old traditional, conventional point of view and placing them under a new one,—is the very essence of the religious problem, as now presented; and only by efforts in this direction can it receive a solution.

Again, in the same spirit in which she judges Bishop Colenso, Miss Cobbe, like so many earnest liberals of our practical race, both here and in America, herself sets vigorously about a positive re-construction of religion, about making a religion of the future out of hand, or at least setting about making it. We must not rest, she and they are always thinking and saying, in negative criticism,

[14] Frances Power Cobbe (1882-1904), a writer on religious topics.

[15] David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), German theologian, and Joseph Ernest Renan (1823-1892), French scholar, both wrote lives of Jesus which strive to rationalize the miraculous events recorded in the Bible.

[16] Whoever imagines that he can write it better does not understand it.

[17] No wise man ever said that a change of mind was an inconsistency.

we must be creative and constructive; hence we have such works as her recent *Religious Duty*, and works still more considerable, perhaps, by others, which will be in every one's mind. These works often have much ability; they often spring out of sincere convictions, and a sincere wish to do good; and they sometimes, perhaps, do good. Their fault is (if I may be permitted to say so) one which they have in common with the British College of Health, in the New Road. Every one knows the British College of Health; it is that building with the lion and the statue of the Goddess Hygeia before it; at least I am sure about the lion, though I am not absolutely certain about the Goddess Hygeia. This building does credit, perhaps, to the resources of Dr. Morrison[18] and his disciples; but it falls a good deal short of one's idea of what a British College of Health ought to be. In England, where we hate public interference and love individual enterprise, we have a whole crop of places like the British College of Health; the grand name without the grand thing. Unluckily, creditable to individual enterprise as they are, they tend to impair our taste by making us forget what more grandiose, noble, or beautiful character properly belongs to a public institution. The same may be said of the religions of the future of Miss Cobbe and others. Creditable, like the British College of Health, to the resources of their authors, they yet tend to make us forget what more grandiose, noble, or beautiful character properly belongs to religious constructions. The historic religions, with all their faults, have had this; it certainly belongs to the religious sentiment, when it truly flowers, to have this; and we impoverish our spirit if we allow a religion of the future without it. What then is the duty of criticism here? To take the practical point of view, to applaud the liberal movement and all its works,—its New Road religions of the future into the bargain,—for their general utility's sake? By no means; but to be perpetually dissatisfied with these works, while they perpetually fall short of a high and perfect ideal.

For criticism, these are elementary laws; but they never can be popular, and in this country they have been very little followed, and one meets with immense obstacles in following them. That is a reason for asserting them again and again. Criticism must maintain its independence of the practical spirit and its aims. Even with well-meant efforts of the practical spirit it must express dissatisfaction, if in the sphere of the ideal they seem impoverishing and limiting. It must not hurry on to the goal because of its practical importance. It must be patient, and know how to wait; and flexible, and know how to attach itself to things and how to withdraw from them. It must be apt to study and praise elements that for the fulness of spiritual perfection are wanted, even though they belong to a power which in the practical sphere may be maleficent. It must be apt to discern the spiritual shortcomings or illusions of powers that in the practical sphere may be beneficent. And this without any notion of favoring or injuring, in the practical sphere, one power or the other; without any notion of playing off, in this sphere, one power against the other. When one looks, for instance, at the English Divorce Court,—an institution which perhaps has its practical conveniences, but which in the ideal sphere is so hideous; an institution which neither makes divorce impossible nor makes it decent, which allows a man to get rid of his wife, or a wife of her husband, but makes them drag one another first, for the public edification, through a mire of unutterable infamy,—when one looks at this charming institution, I say, with its crowded trials, its newspaper reports, and its money compensations, this institution in which the gross unregenerate British Philistine has indeed stamped an image of himself,—one may be permitted to find the marriage theory of Catholicism refreshing and elevating. Or when Protestantism, in virtue of its supposed rational and intellectual origin, gives the law to criticism too magisterially, criticism may and must remind it that its pretensions, in this respect, are illusive and do it harm; that the Reformation was a moral rather than an intellectual event; that Luther's theory of grace no more exactly reflects the mind of the spirit than Bossuet's philosophy of history reflects it; and that there is no more antecedent probability of the Bishop of Durham's stock of ideas being agreeable to perfect reason than of Pope Pius the Ninth's. But criticism will not on that account forget the achievements of Protestantism in the practical and moral sphere; nor that, even in the intellectual sphere, Protestantism, though in a blind and stumbling manner, carried forward the Renaissance, while Catholicism threw itself violently across its path.

I lately heard a man of thought and energy contrasting the want of ardor and movement which he now found amongst young men in this country with what he remembered in his own youth,

[18] Discoverer of pills which were supposed to be a universal remedy.

twenty years ago. What reformers we were then!" he exclaimed; "what a zeal we had! how we canvassed every institution in Church and State, and were prepared to remodel them all on first principles!" He was inclined to regret, as a spiritual flagging, the lull which he saw. I am disposed rather to regard it as a pause in which the turn to a new mode of spiritual progress is being accomplished. Everything was long seen, by the young and ardent amongst us, in inseparable connection with politics and practical life. We have pretty well exhausted the benefits of seeing things in this connection, we have got all that can be got by so seeing them. Let us try a more disinterested mode of seeing them; let us betake ourselves more to the serener life of the mind and spirit. This life, too, may have its excesses and dangers; but they are not for us at present. Let us think of quietly enlarging our stock of true and fresh ideas, and not, as soon as we get an idea or half an idea, be running out with it into the street, and trying to make it rule there. Our ideas will, in the end, shape the world all the better for maturing a little. Perhaps in fifty years' time it will in the English House of Commons be an objection to an institution that it is an anomaly, and my friend the Member of Parliament will shudder in his grave. But let us in the meanwhile rather endeavor that in twenty years' time it may, in English literature, be an objection to a proposition that it is absurd. That will be a change so vast, that the imagination almost fails to grasp it. *Ab integro sæculorum nascitur ordo.*[19]

If I have insisted so much on the course which criticism must take where politics and religion are concerned, it is because, where these burning matters are in question, it is most likely to go astray. I have wished, above all, to insist on the attitude which criticism should adopt toward things in general; on its right tone and temper of mind. But then comes another question as to the subject-matter which literary criticism should seek. Here in general, its course is determined for it by the idea which is the law of its being; the idea of a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world, and thus to establish a current of fresh and true ideas. By the very nature of things, as England is not all the world, much of the best that is known and thought in the world cannot be of English growth, must be foreign; by the nature of things, again, it is just this that we are least likely to know, while English thought is streaming in upon us from all sides, and takes excellent care that we shall not be ignorant of its existence. The English critic, therefore, must dwell much on foreign thought, and with particular heed on any part of it, which, while significant and fruitful in itself, is for any reason specially likely to escape him. Again, judging is often spoken of as the critic's one business, and so in some sense it is; but the judgment which almost insensibly forms itself in a fair and clear mind, along with fresh knowledge, is the valuable one; and thus knowledge, and ever fresh knowledge, must be the critic's great concern for himself. And it is by communicating fresh knowledge, and letting his own judgment pass along with it,—but insensibly, and in the second place, not the first, as a sort of companion and clue, not as an abstract lawgiver,—that he will generally do most good to his readers. Sometimes, no doubt, for the sake of establishing an author's place in literature, and his relation to a central standard (and if this is not done, how are we to get at our *best in the world*?) criticism may have to deal with a subject-matter so familiar that fresh knowledge is out of the question, and then it must be all judgment; an enunciation and detailed application of principles. Here the great safeguard is never to let oneself become abstract, always to retain an intimate and lively consciousness of the truth of what one is saying, and, the moment this fails us, to be sure that something is wrong. Still, under all circumstances, this mere judgment and application of principles is, in itself, not the most satisfactory work to the critic; like mathematics, it is tautological, and cannot well give us, like fresh learning, the sense of creative activity.

But stop, someone will say; all this talk is of no practical use to us whatever; this criticism of yours is not what we have in our minds when we speak of criticism; when we speak of critics and criticism, we mean critics and criticism of the current English literature of the day; when you offer to tell criticism of its function, it is to this criticism that we expect you to address yourself. I am sorry for it for I am afraid I must disappoint these expectations. I am bound by my own definition of criticism: *a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world.* How much of current English literature comes into this "best that is known and thought in the world"? Not very much, I fear; certainly less, at this moment, than of the current literature of France or Germany. Well, then, am I to alter

[19] From the renewal of the generations order is born.

my definition of criticism, in order to meet the requirements of a number of practising English critics, who, after all, are free in their choice of a business? that would be making criticism lend itself to one of those alien practical considerations, which, I have said, are so fatal to it. One may say, indeed, to those who have to deal with the mass—so much better disregarded—of current English literature, that they may at all events endeavor, in dealing with this, to try it, so far as they can, by the standard of the best that is known and thought in the world: one may say, that to get anywhere near this standard, every critic should try and possess one great literature, at least, besides his own; and the more unlike his own, the better. But, after all, the criticism I am really concerned with—the criticism which alone can much help us for the future, the criticism which, throughout Europe, is at the present moment meant, when so much stress is laid on the importance of criticism and the critical spirit—is a criticism which regards Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result; and whose members have, for their proper outfit, a knowledge of Greek, Roman, and Eastern antiquity, and of one another. Special, local, and temporary advantages being put out of account, that modern nation will in the intellectual and spiritual sphere make most progress, which most thoroughly carries out this programme. And what is that but saying that we too, all of us, as individuals, the more thoroughly we carry it out, shall make the more progress?

There is so much inviting us!—what are we to take? what will nourish us in growth towards perfection? That is the question which, with the immense field of life and literature lying before him, the critic has to answer: for himself first, afterwards for others. In this idea of the critic's business the essays brought together in the following pages have had their origin; in this idea, widely different as are their subjects, they have, perhaps, their unity.

I conclude with what I said at the beginning: to have the sense of creative activity is the great happiness and the great proof of being alive, and it is not denied to criticism to have it; but then criticism must be sincere, simple, flexible, ardent, ever widening its knowledge. Then it may have, in no contemptible measure, a joyful sense of creative activity; a sense which a man of insight and conscience will prefer to what he might derive from a poor, starved, fragmentary, inadequate creation. And at some epochs no other creation is possible.

Still, in full measure, the sense of creative activity belongs only to genuine creation; in literature we must never forget that. But what true man of letters ever can forget it? It is no such common matter for a gifted nature to come into possession of a current of true and living ideas, and to produce amidst the inspiration of them, that we are likely to underrate it. The epochs of Æschylus and Shakespeare make us feel their pre-eminence. In an epoch like those is, no doubt, the true life of literature; there is the promised land, towards which criticism can only beckon. That promised land it will not be ours to enter, and we shall die in the wilderness: but to have desired to enter it, to have saluted it from afar, is already, perhaps, the best distinction among contemporaries; it will certainly be the best title to esteem with posterity.

(1865)

Sweetness and Light

Culture and Anarchy, first published as a series in the *Cornhill Magazine* (1867-68), is Arnold's clearest indictment of Philistinism in English middle-class life. *Sweetness and Light,* whose title is taken from a passage in Swift's *Battle of the Books,* is the first of the essays. It is here that Arnold expounds his "Hellenistic" ideal of the pursuit of perfection through culture.

The disparagers of culture make its motive curiosity; sometimes, indeed, they make its motive mere exclusiveness and vanity. The culture which is supposed to plume itself on a smattering of Greek and Latin is a culture which is begotten by nothing so intellectual as curiosity; it is valued either out of sheer vanity and ignorance or else as an engine of social and class distinction, separating

its holder, like a badge or title, from other people who have not got it. No serious man would call this *culture*, or attach any value to it, as culture, at all. To find the real ground for the very different estimate which serious people will set upon culture, we must find some motive for culture in the terms of which may lie a real ambiguity; and such a motive the word *curiosity* gives us.

I have before now pointed out that we English do not, like the foreigners, use this word in a good sense as well as in a bad sense. With us the word is always used in a somewhat disapproving sense. A liberal and intelligent eagerness about the things of the mind may be meant by a foreigner when he speaks of curiosity, but with us the word always conveys a certain notion of frivolous and unedifying activity. In the *Quarterly Review*, some little time ago, was an estimate of the celebrated French critic, M. Sainte-Beuve,[1] and a very inadequate estimate it in my judgment was. And its inadequacy consisted chiefly in this: that in our English way it left out of sight the double sense really involved in the word *curiosity*, thinking enough was said to stamp M. Sainte-Beuve with blame if it was said that he was impelled in his operations as a critic by curiosity, and omitting either to perceive that M. Sainte-Beuve himself, and many other people with him, would consider that this was praiseworthy and not blameworthy, or to point out why it ought really to be accounted worthy of blame and not of praise. For, as there is a curiosity about intellectual matters which is futile, and merely a disease, so there is certainly a curiosity,—a desire after the things of the mind simply for their own sakes and for the pleasure of seeing them as they are,—which is, in an intelligent being, natural and laudable. Nay, and the very desire to see things as they are implies a balance and regulation of mind which is not often attained without fruitful effort, and which is the very opposite of the blind and diseased impulse of mind which is what we mean to blame when we blame curiosity. Montesquieu[2] says: "The first motive which ought to impel us to study is the desire to augment the excellence of our nature, and to render an intelligent being yet more intelligent." This is the true ground to assign for the genuine scientific passion, however manifested, and for culture, viewed simply as a fruit of this passion; and it is a worthy ground, even though we let the term *curiosity* stand to describe it.

But there is of culture another view, in which not solely the scientific passion, the sheer desire to see things as they are, natural and proper in an intelligent being, appears as the ground of it. There is a view in which all the love of our neighbor, the impulses towards action, help, and beneficence, the desire for removing human error, clearing human confusion, and diminishing human misery, the noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it,—motives eminently such as are called social,—come in as part of the grounds of culture, and the main and preëminent part. Culture is then properly described not as having its origin in curiosity, but as having its origin in the love of perfection; it is a *study of perfection*. It moves by the force, not merely or primarily of the scientific passion for pure knowledge, but also of the moral and social passion for doing good. As, in the first view of it, we took for its worthy motto Montesquieu's words: "To render an intelligent being yet more intelligent!" so, in the second view of it, there is no better motto which it can have than these words of Bishop Wilson:[3] "To make reason and the will of God prevail!"

Only, whereas the passion for doing good is apt to be over-hasty in determining what reason and the will of God say, because its turn is for acting rather than thinking and it wants to be beginning to act; and whereas it is apt to take its own conceptions, which proceed from its own state of development and share in all the imperfections and immaturities of this, for a basis of action; what distinguishes culture is, that it is possessed by the scientific passion as well as by the passion of doing good; that it demands worthy notions of reason and the will of God, and does not readily suffer its own crude conceptions to substitute themselves for them. And knowing that no action or institution can be salutary and stable which is not based on reason and the will of God, it is not so bent on acting and instituting, even with the great aim of diminishing human error and misery ever before its thoughts, but that it can remember that acting and instituting are of little use, unless we know how and what we ought to act and to institute.

This culture is more interesting and more far-reaching than that other, which is founded solely on the scientific passion for knowing. But it needs

[1] Charles Augustin Sainte-Beuve (1804-1869), a French critic who exerted a strong influence on Arnold.

[2] Montesquieu (1689-1755), author of *The Spirit of Laws* (1748).

[3] Thomas Wilson (d. 1755), author of *Maxims*.

times of faith and ardor, times when the intellectual horizon is opening and widening all around us, to flourish in. And is not the close and bounded intellectual horizon within which we have long lived and moved now lifting up, and are not new lights finding free passage to shine in upon us? For a long time there was no passage for them to make their way in upon us, and then it was of no use to think of adapting the world's action to them. Where was the hope of making reason and the will of God prevail among people who had a routine which they had christened reason and the will of God, in which they were inextricably bound, and beyond which they had no power of looking? But now the iron force of adhesion to the old routine—social, political, religious—has wonderfully yielded; the iron force of exclusion of all which is new has wonderfully yielded. The danger now is, not that people should obstinately refuse to allow anything but their old routine to pass for reason and the will of God, but either that they should allow some novelty or other to pass for these too easily, or else that they should underrate the importance of them altogether, and think it enough to follow action for its own sake, without troubling themselves to make reason and the will of God prevail therein. Now, then, is the moment for culture to be of service, culture which believes in making reason and the will of God prevail, believes in perfection, is the study and pursuit of perfection, and is no longer debarred, by a rigid invincible exclusion of whatever is new, from getting acceptance for its ideas, simply because they are new.

The moment this view of culture is seized, the moment it is regarded not solely as the endeavor to see things as they are, to draw towards a knowledge of the universal order which seems to be intended and aimed at in the world, and which it is a man's happiness to go along with or his misery to go counter to,—to learn, in short, the will of God,—the moment, I say, culture is considered not merely as the endeavor to *see* and *learn* this, but as the endeavor, also, to make it *prevail*, the moral, social, and beneficent character of culture becomes manifest. The mere endeavor to see and learn the truth for our own personal satisfaction is indeed a commencement for making it prevail, a preparing the way for this, which always serves this, and is wrongly, therefore, stamped with blame absolutely in itself and not only in its caricature and degeneration. But perhaps it has got stamped with blame, and disparaged with the dubious title of curiosity, because in comparison with this wider endeavor of such great and plain utility it looks selfish, petty, and unprofitable.

And religion, the greatest and most important of the efforts by which the human race has manifested its impulse to perfect itself,—religion, that voice of the deepest human experience,—does not only enjoin and sanction the aim which is the great aim of culture, the aim of setting ourselves to ascertain what perfection is and to make it prevail; but also, in determining generally in what human perfection consists, religion comes to a conclusion identical with that which culture—culture seeking the determination of this question through *all* the voices of human experience which have been heard upon it, of art, science, poetry, philosophy, history, as well as of religion, in order to give a greater fulness and certainty to its solution—likewise reaches. Religion says: *The kingdom of God is within you;* and culture, in like manner, places human perfection in an *internal* condition, in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animality. It places it in the ever-increasing efficacy and in the general harmonious expansion of those gifts of thought and feeling, which make the peculiar dignity, wealth, and happiness of human nature. As I have said on a former occasion: "It is in making endless additions to itself, in the endless expansion of its powers, in endless growth in wisdom and beauty, that the spirit of the human race finds its ideal. To reach this ideal, culture is an indispensable aid, and that is the true value of culture." Not a having and a resting, but a growing and a becoming, is the character of perfection as culture conceives it; and here, too, it coincides with religion.

And because men are all members of one great whole, and the sympathy which is in human nature will not allow one member to be indifferent to the rest or to have a perfect welfare independent of the rest, the expansion of our humanity, to suit the idea of perfection which culture forms, must be a *general* expansion. Perfection, as culture conceives it, is not possible while the individual remains isolated. The individual is required, under pain of being stunted and enfeebled in his own development if he disobeys, to carry others along with him in his march towards perfection, to be continually doing all he can to enlarge and increase the volume of the human stream sweeping thitherward. And here, once more, culture lays on us the same obligation as religion, which says, as Bishop Wilson has

admirably put it, that "to promote the kingdom of God is to increase and hasten one's own happiness."

But, finally, perfection—as culture from a thorough disinterested study of human nature and human experience learns to conceive it—is a harmonious expansion of *all* the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature, and is not consistent with the over-development of any one power at the expense of the rest. Here culture goes beyond religion, as religion is generally conceived by us.

If culture, then, is a study of perfection, and of harmonious perfection, general perfection, and perfection which consists in becoming something rather than in having something, in an inward condition of the mind and spirit, not in an outward set of circumstances,—it is clear that culture, instead of being the frivolous and useless thing which Mr. Bright,[4] and Mr. Frederic Harrison,[5] and many other Liberals are apt to call it, has a very important function to fulfil for mankind. And this function is particularly important in our modern world, of which the whole civilization is, to a much greater degree than the civilization of Greece and Rome, mechanical and external, and tends constantly to become more so. But above all in our own country has culture a weighty part to perform, because here that mechanical character, which civilization tends to take everywhere, is shown in the most eminent degree. Indeed nearly all the characters of perfection, as culture teaches us to fix them, meet in this country with some powerful tendency which thwarts them and sets them at defiance. The idea of perfection as an *inward* condition of the mind and spirit is at variance with the mechanical and material civilization in esteem with us, and nowhere, as I have said, so much in esteem as with us. The idea of perfection as a *general* expansion of the human family is at variance with our strong individualism, our hatred of all limits to the unrestrained swing of the individual's personality, our maxim of "every man for himself." Above all, the idea of perfection as a *harmonious* expansion of human nature is at variance with our want of flexibility, with our inaptitude for seeing more than one side of a thing, with our intense energetic absorption in the particular pursuit we happen to be following. So culture has a rough task to achieve in this country. Its preachers have, and are likely long to have, a hard time of it, and they will much oftener be regarded, for a great while to come, as elegant or spurious Jeremiahs than as friends and benefactors. That, however, will not prevent their doing in the end good service if they persevere. And, meanwhile, the mode of action they have to pursue, and the sort of habits they must fight against, ought to be made quite clear for every one to see, who may be willing to look at the matter attentively and dispassionately.

Faith in machinery is, I said, our besetting danger; often in machinery most absurdly disproportioned to the end which this machinery, if it is to do any good at all, is to serve; but always in machinery, as if it had a value in and for itself. What is freedom but machinery? what is population but machinery? what is coal but machinery? what are railroads but machinery? what is wealth but machinery? what are, even, religious organizations but machinery? Now almost every voice in England is accustomed to speak of these things as if they were precious ends in themselves, and therefore had some of the characters of perfection indisputably joined to them. I have before now noticed Mr. Roebuck's[6] stock argument for proving the greatness and happiness of England as she is, and for quite stopping the mouths of all gainsayers. Mr. Roebuck is never weary of reiterating this argument of his, so I do not know why I should be weary of noticing it. "May not every man in England say what he likes?"—Mr. Roebuck perpetually asks; and that, he thinks, is quite sufficient, and when every man may say what he likes, our aspirations ought to be satisfied. But the aspirations of culture, which is the study of perfection, are not satisfied, unless what men say, when they may say what they like, is worth saying,—has good in it, and more good than bad. In the same way the *Times*, replying to some foreign strictures on the dress, looks, and behavior of the English abroad, urges that the English ideal is that every one should be free to do and to look just as he likes. But culture indefatigably tries, not to make what each raw person may like the rule by which he fashions himself, but to draw ever nearer to a sense of what is indeed beautiful, graceful, and becoming, and to get the raw person to like that.

And in the same way with respect to railroads and coal. Every one must have observed the strange language current during the late discussions as to the possible failure of our supplies of coal. Our coal, thousands of people were saying, is the real

[4] John Bright (1811-1889), a liberal parliamentarian.

[5] Frederic Harrison (1831-1923), leader for many years of the Positivists, who advocated a rationalistic religion.

[6] Cf. *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time*, p. 647.

basis of our national greatness; if our coal runs short, there is an end of the greatness of England. But what *is* greatness?—culture makes us ask. Greatness is a spiritual condition worthy to excite love, interest, and admiration; and the outward proof of possessing greatness is that we excite love, interest, and admiration. If England were swallowed up by the sea to-morrow, which of the two, a hundred years hence, would most excite the love, interest, and admiration of mankind,—would most, therefore, show the evidences of having possessed greatness,—the England of the last twenty years, or the England of Elizabeth, of a time of splendid spiritual effort, but when our coal, and our industrial operations depending on coal, were very little developed? Well, then, what an unsound habit of mind it must be which makes us talk of things like coal or iron as constituting the greatness of England, and how salutary a friend is culture, bent on seeing things as they are, and thus dissipating delusions of this kind and fixing standards of perfection that are real!

Wealth, again, that end to which our prodigious works for material advantage are directed,—the commonest of commonplaces tells us how men are always apt to regard wealth as a precious end in itself; and certainly they have never been so apt thus to regard it as they are in England at the present time. Never did people believe anything more firmly than nine Englishmen out of ten at the present day believe that our greatness and welfare are proved by our being so very rich. Now, the use of culture is that it helps us, by means of its spiritual standard of perfection, to regard wealth as but machinery, and not only to say as a matter of words that we regard wealth as but machinery, but really to perceive and feel that it is so. If it were not for this purging effect wrought upon our minds by culture, the whole world, the future as well as the present, would inevitably belong to the Philistines. The people who believe most that our greatness and welfare are proved by our being very rich, and who most give their lives and thoughts to becoming rich, are just the very people whom we call Philistines. Culture says: "Consider these people, then, their way of life, their habits, their manners, the very tones of their voice; look at them attentively; observe the literature they read, the things which give them pleasure, the words which come forth out of their mouths, the thoughts which make the furniture of their minds; would any amount of wealth be worth having with the condition that one was to become just like these people by having it?" And thus culture begets a dissatisfaction which is of the highest possible value in stemming the common tide of men's thoughts in a wealthy and industrial community, and which saves the future, as one may hope, from being vulgarized, even if it cannot save the present.

Population, again, and bodily health and vigor, are things which are nowhere treated in such an unintelligent, misleading, exaggerated way as in England. Both are really machinery; yet how many people all around us do we see rest in them and fail to look beyond them! Why, one has heard people, fresh from reading certain articles of the *Times* on the Registrar-General's returns of marriages and births in this country, who would talk of our large English families in quite a solemn strain, as if they had something in itself beautiful, elevating, and meritorious in them; as if the British Philistine would have only to present himself before the Great Judge with his twelve children, in order to be received among the sheep as a matter of right!

But bodily health and vigor, it may be said, are not to be classed with wealth and population as mere machinery; they have a more real and essential value. True; but only as they are more intimately connected with a perfect spiritual condition than wealth or population are. The moment we disjoin them from the idea of a perfect spiritual condition, and pursue them, as we do pursue them, for their own sake and as ends in themselves, our worship of them becomes as mere worship of machinery, as our worship of wealth or population, and as unintelligent and vulgarizing a worship as that is. Every one with anything like an adequate idea of human perfection has distinctly marked this subordination to higher and spiritual ends of the cultivation of bodily vigor and activity. "Bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things," says the author of the Epistle to Timothy. And the utilitarian Franklin says just as explicitly:—"Eat and drink such an exact quantity as suits the constitution of thy body, *in reference to the services of the mind*." But the point of view of culture, keeping the mark of human perfection simply and broadly in view, and not assigning to this perfection, as religion or utilitarianism assigns to it, a special and limited character, this point of view, I say, of culture is best given by these words of Epictetus: "It is a sign of ἀφυία," says he,—that is, of a nature not finely tempered,—"to give yourselves up to things which relate to the body; to make, for instance, a great fuss about exercise, a great fuss about eating, a great fuss about drinking,

a great fuss about walking, a great fuss about riding. All these things ought to be done merely by the way: the formation of the spirit and character must be our real concern." This is admirable; and, indeed, the Greek word εὐφυία, a finely tempered nature, gives exactly the notion of perfection as culture brings us to conceive it: a harmonious perfection, a perfection in which the characters of beauty and intelligence are both present, which unites "the two noblest of things,"—as Swift, who of one of the two, at any rate, had himself all too little, most happily calls them in his *Battle of the Books*,—"the two noblest of things, *sweetness and light*." The εὐφυής is the man who tends towards sweetness and light; the ἀφυής, on the other hand, is our Philistine. The immense spiritual significance of the Greeks is due to their having been inspired with this central and happy idea of the essential character of human perfection; and Mr. Bright's misconception of culture, as a smattering of Greek and Latin, comes itself, after all, from this wonderful significance of the Greeks having affected the very machinery of our education, and is in itself a kind of homage to it.

In thus making sweetness and light to be characters of perfection, culture is of like spirit with poetry, follows one law with poetry. Far more than on our freedom, our population, and our industrialism, many amongst us rely upon our religious organizations to save us. I have called religion a yet more important manifestation of human nature than poetry, because it has worked on a broader scale for perfection, and with greater masses of men. But the idea of beauty and of a human nature perfect on all its sides, which is the dominant idea of poetry, is a true and invaluable idea, though it has not yet had the success that the idea of conquering the obvious faults of our animality, and of a human nature perfect on the moral side,—which is the dominant idea of religion,—has been enabled to have; and it is destined, adding to itself the religious idea of a devout energy, to transform and govern the other.

The best art and poetry of the Greeks, in which religion and poetry are one, in which the idea of beauty and of a human nature perfect on all sides adds to itself a religious and devout energy, and works in the strength of that, is on this account of such surpassing interest and instructiveness for us, though it was—as, having regard to the human race in general, and, indeed, having regard to the Greeks themselves, we must own—a premature attempt, an attempt which for success needed the moral and religious fibre in humanity to be more braced and developed than it had yet been. But Greece did not err in having the idea of beauty, harmony, and complete human perfection, so present and paramount. It is impossible to have this idea too present and paramount; only, the moral fibre must be braced too. And we, because we have braced the moral fibre, are not on that account in the right way, if at the same time the idea of beauty, harmony, and complete human perfection, is wanting or misapprehended amongst us; and evidently it *is* wanting or misapprehended at present. And when we rely as we do on our religious organizations, which in themselves do not and cannot give us this idea, and think we have done enough if we make them spread and prevail, then, I say, we fall into our common fault of overvaluing machinery.

Nothing is more common than for people to confound the inward peace and satisfaction which follows the subduing of the obvious faults of our animality with what I may call absolute inward peace and satisfaction,—the peace and satisfaction which are reached as we draw near to complete spiritual perfection, and not merely to moral perfection, or rather to relative moral perfection. No people in the world have done more and struggled more to attain this relative moral perfection than our English race has. For no people in the world has the command to *resist the devil*, to *overcome the wicked one*, in the nearest and most obvious sense of those words, had such a pressing force and reality. And we have had our reward, not only in the great worldly prosperity which our obedience to this command has brought us, but also, and far more, in great inward peace and satisfaction. But to me few things are more pathetic than to see people, on the strength of the inward peace and satisfaction which their rudimentary efforts towards perfection have brought them, employ, concerning their incomplete perfection and the religious organizations within which they have found it, language which properly applies only to complete perfection, and is a far-off echo of the human soul's prophecy of it. Religion itself, I need hardly say, supplies them in abundance with this grand language. And very freely do they use it; yet it is really the severest possible criticism of such an incomplete perfection as alone we have yet reached through our religious organizations.

The impulse of the English race towards moral development and self-conquest has nowhere so powerfully manifested itself as in Puritanism.

Nowhere has Puritanism found so adequate an expression as in the religious organization of the Independents. The modern Independents have a newspaper, the *Nonconformist*, written with great sincerity and ability. The motto, the standard, the profession of faith which this organ of theirs carries aloft, is: "The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion."[7] There is sweetness and light, and an ideal of complete harmonious human perfection! One need not go to culture and poetry to find language to judge it. Religion, with its instinct for perfection, supplies language to judge it,—language, too, which is in our mouths every day. "Finally, be of one mind, united in feeling," says St. Peter. There is an ideal which judges the Puritan ideal: "The Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion!" And religious organizations like this are what people believe in, rest in, would give their lives for! Such, I say, is the wonderful virtue of even the beginnings of perfection, of having conquered even the plain faults of our animality, that the religious organization which has helped us to do it can seem to us something precious, salutary, and to be propagated, even when it wears such a brand of imperfection on its forehead as this. And men have got such a habit of giving to the language of religion a special application, of making it a mere jargon, that for the condemnation which religion itself passes on the shortcomings of their religious organizations they have no ear; they are sure to cheat themselves and to explain this condemnation away. They can only be reached by the criticism which culture, like poetry, speaking a language not to be sophisticated, and resolutely testing these organizations by the ideal of a human perfection complete on all sides, applies to them.

But men of culture and poetry, it will be said, are again and again failing, and failing conspicuously, in the necessary first stage to a harmonious perfection, in the subduing of the great obvious faults of our animality, which it is the glory of these religious organizations to have helped us to subdue. True, they do often so fail. They have often been without the virtues as well as the faults of the Puritan; it has been one of their dangers that they so felt the Puritan's faults that they too much neglected the practice of his virtues. I will not, however, exculpate them at the Puritan's expense. They have often failed in morality, and morality is indispensable. And they have been punished for their failure, as the Puritan has been rewarded for his performance. They have been punished wherein they erred; but their ideal of beauty, of sweetness and light, and a human nature complete on all its sides, remains the true ideal of perfection still; just as the Puritan's ideal of perfection remains narrow and inadequate, although for what he did well he has been richly rewarded. Notwithstanding the mighty results of the Pilgrim Fathers' voyage, they and their standard of perfection are rightly judged when we figure to ourselves Shakespeare or Virgil—souls in whom sweetness and light, and all that in human nature is most humane, were eminent—accompanying them on their voyage, and think what intolerable company Shakespeare and Virgil would have found them! In the same way let us judge the religious organizations which we see all around us. Do not let us deny the good and the happiness which they have accomplished; but do not let us fail to see clearly that their idea of human perfection is narrow and inadequate, and that the Dissidence of Dissent and the Protestantism of the Protestant religion will never bring humanity to its true goal. As I said with regard to wealth: Let us look at the life of those who live in and for it,—so I say with regard to the religious organizations. Look at the life imaged in such a newspaper as the *Nonconformist*,—a life of jealousy of the Establishment, disputes, tea-meetings, openings of chapels, sermons; and then think of it as an ideal of a human life completing itself on all sides, and aspiring with all its organs after sweetness, light, and perfection!

Another newspaper, representing, like the *Nonconformist*, one of the religious organizations of this country, was a short time ago giving an account of the crowd at Epsom on the Derby day, and of all the vice and hideousness which was to be seen in that crowd; and then the writer turned suddenly round upon Professor Huxley, and asked him how he proposed to cure all this vice and hideousness without religion. I confess I felt disposed to ask the asker this question: and how do you propose to cure it with such a religion as yours? How is the ideal of a life so unlovely, so unattractive, so incomplete, so narrow; so far removed from a true and satisfying ideal of human perfection, as is the life of your religious organization as you yourself reflect it, to conquer and transform all this vice and hideousness? Indeed, the strongest plea for the study of perfection as pursued by culture, the clearest proof of the actual inadequacy of the idea of perfection held by the religious organizations,—expressing, as I have said, the

[7] From Burke's speech on *Conciliation with America*.

most widespread effort which the human race has yet made after perfection,—is to be found in the state of our life and society with these in possession of it, and having been in possession of it I know not how many hundred years. We are all of us included in some religious organization or other; we all call ourselves, in the sublime and aspiring language of religion which I have before noticed, *children of God*. Children of God;—it is an immense pretension!—and how are we to justify it? By the works which we do, and the words which we speak. And the work which we collective children of God do, our grand centre of life, our *city* which we have builded for us to dwell in, is London! London, with its unutterable external hideousness, and with its internal canker of *publice egestas, privatim opulentia*,[8]—to use the words which Sallust puts into Cato's mouth about Rome,—unequalled in the world! The word, again, which we children of God speak, the voice which most hits our collective thought, the newspaper with the largest circulation in England, nay, with the largest circulation in the whole world, is the *Daily Telegraph*! I say that when our religious organizations—which I admit to express the most considerable effort after perfection that our race has yet made—land us in no better result than this, it is high time to examine carefully their idea of perfection, to see whether it does not leave out of account sides and forces of human nature which we might turn to great use; whether it would not be more operative if it were more complete. And I say that the English reliance on our religious organizations and on their ideas of human perfection just as they stand, is like our reliance on freedom, on muscular Christianity, on population, on coal, on wealth,—mere belief in machinery, and unfruitful; and that it is wholesomely counteracted by culture, bent on seeing things as they are, and on drawing the human race onwards to a more complete, a harmonious perfection. . . .

The pursuit of perfection, then, is the pursuit of sweetness and light. He who works for sweetness and light, works to make reason and the will of God prevail. He who works for machinery, he who works for hatred, works only for confusion. Culture looks beyond machinery, culture hates hatred; culture has one great passion, the passion for sweetness and light. It has one even yet greater!—the passion for making them *prevail*. It is not satisfied till we *all* come to a perfect man; it knows that the sweetness and light of the few must be imperfect until the raw and unkindled masses of humanity are touched with sweetness and light. If I have not shrunk from saying that we must work for sweetness and light, so neither have I shrunk from saying that we must have a broad basis, must have sweetness and light for as many as possible. Again and again I have insisted how those are the happy moments of humanity, how those are the marking epochs of a people's life, how those are the flowering times for literature and art and all the creative power of genius, when there is a *national* glow of life and thought, when the whole of society is in the fullest measure permeated by thought, sensible to beauty, intelligent and alive. Only it must be *real* thought and *real* beauty; *real* sweetness and *real* light. Plenty of people will try to give the masses, as they call them, an intellectual food prepared and adapted in the way they think proper for the actual condition of the masses. The ordinary popular literature is an example of this way of working on the masses. Plenty of people will try to indoctrinate the masses with the set of ideas and judgments constituting the creed of their own profession or party. Our religious and political organizations give an example of this way of working on the masses. I condemn neither way: but culture works differently. It does not try to teach down to the level of inferior classes; it does not try to win them for this or that sect of its own, with ready-made judgments and watchwords. It seeks to do away with classes; to make the best that has been thought and known in the world, current everywhere; to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas, as it uses them itself, freely,—nourished. and not bound by them.

This is the *social idea*; and the men of culture are the true apostles of equality. The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have labored to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanize it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned, yet still remaining the *best* knowledge and thought of the time, and a true source, therefore, of sweetness and light. Such a man was Abelard[9] in the Middle Ages, in spite of all his imperfections; and thence the boundless

[8] poverty among the many, wealth among the few (Sallust, *Cataline*, lii, 22).

[9] Peter Abelard (1079-1142), French scholastic theologian.

emotion and enthusiasm which Abelard excited. Such were Lessing and Herder[10] in Germany, at the end of the last century; and their services to Germany were in this way inestimably precious. Generations will pass, and literary monuments will accumulate, and works far more perfect than the works of Lessing and Herder will be produced in Germany; and yet the names of these two men will fill a German with a reverence and enthusiasm such as the names of the most gifted masters will hardly awaken. And why? Because they *humanized* knowledge; because they broadened the basis of life and intelligence; because they worked powerfully to diffuse sweetness and light, to make reason and the will of God prevail. With Saint Augustine they said: "Let us not leave thee alone to make in the secret of thy knowledge, as thou didst before the creation of the firmament, the division of light from darkness; let the children of thy spirit, placed in their firmament, make their light shine upon the earth, mark the division of night and day, and announce the revolution of the times; for the old order is passed, and the new arises; the night is spent, the day is come forth; and thou shalt crown the year with thy blessing, when thou shalt send forth laborers into thy harvest sown by other hands than theirs; when thou shalt send forth new laborers to new seed-times, whereof the harvest shall be not yet."

(1867)

Edward FitzGerald

(1809-1883)

It would be hard to find an English writer who lived a less eventful life than Edward FitzGerald. His biography consists primarily of a record of friendships, punctuated at long intervals by some literary activity.

He was born on March 31, 1809, into a family of considerable wealth and social prestige. On his mother's side he belonged to the family of FitzGeralds, Earls of Kildare. In 1818 his father, John Purcell, assumed his wife's surname on the occasion of her inheriting the vast FitzGerald estates. The financial independence thus secured to Edward FitzGerald was of very great importance in directing the whole course of his life. He never felt the spur of necessity and, as a consequence, passed years of relative inactivity without other directing forces than his mere whim or the influence of some friend.

FitzGerald's education, first at Bury St. Edmunds and later at Trinity College, Cambridge, is interesting chiefly for the remarkable group of men whom he came to know. Many of these were to be lifelong friends, and to a man of FitzGerald's temperament, friendship was the most valuable possession a man could have. His close friends were not always chosen from among the great, but he numbered among his intimates such persons as Tennyson, Thackeray, and Carlyle.

For its influence on his most significant life work, the friendship with E. B. Cowell, the Orientalist, was second to none. With Cowell, in 1853, he learned to read Persian and became acquainted with some of the important literary works in that language. In 1856 he published a translation of Jami's *Sálaman and Absál*. Soon afterward he was at work reading the rubáiyát (quatrains) of Omar Khayyám from a manuscript which Cowell had transcribed for him in the British Museum. After much experimenting, FitzGerald began to work out English translations of the quatrains. But he took the greatest liberties with his original, so that in its final form FitzGerald's poem (1859) is more a free paraphrase than a translation.

Omar Khayyám, the author of the original verses, lived in Persia around the year 1100. The date of his death is usually given as 1123. There are few records of his life, but we know that he held repute as an astronomer and mathematician and that he

[10] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-1781) and Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), German men of letters and critics.

helped reform the Persian calendar. He is represented as being a combination of philosopher and epicurean: indeed, some legends represent him as almost wholly given over in his later years to gross self-indulgence. He left behind him some five hundred quatrains expressive of his attitude toward life. These were arranged quite without logical order and many of them were repetitious. In making his translation, FitzGerald freely rearranged his material and had no hesitancy in combining ideas from various quatrains or in separating nonunified stanzas into their logical divisions. Moreover, he has even brought in a few stanzas from other Persian writers and has boldly added several of his own.

Whatever violence FitzGerald may have done to the letter of the poem, he appears to have successfully retained its spirit. There were many points of view shared in common between FitzGerald and Omar. As Arthur Christopher Benson has said, "FitzGerald happened to light upon an ancient poet, through whose writings, in spite of much tedious iteration and dreary moralizing, much sensual imagery and commonplace Epicureanism, ran a vein of thought strangely familiar to his own temperament. Omar was a sentimentalist, and a lover of beauty, both human and natural; so was FitzGerald. Omar tended to linger over golden memories of the past, and was acutely alive to the pathos of sweet things that have an ending; and such was FitzGerald. Omar was penetrated with a certain dark philosophy, the philosophy of the human spirit at bay, when all refuge has failed; and this was the case with FitzGerald.

"The result was that out of the ore which was afforded him, FitzGerald, by this time a practised craftsman without a subject, was enabled to chase and chisel his delicate stanzas, like little dainty vessels of pure gold. He brought to the task a rich and stately vocabulary, and a style adapted to solemn and somewhat rhetorical musings of a philosophical kind. FitzGerald's love of slow-moving verse adorned by beautiful touches of natural observation and of pathetic presentment stood him in good stead. The result was that a man of high literary taste found for once a subject precisely adapted to his best faculty; a subject, the strength of which was his own strength, and the limitations of which were his own limitations."

The poem is filled with expressions of several philosophies, some of them quite inconsistent with one another. Mingled with a profound skepticism are found traces of pantheism, of predestination, and of epicureanism. Though the public paid absolutely no attention to the book when it first appeared, it was eventually discovered by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and introduced to his friends of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. To such men as Rossetti and Swinburne the poem came as almost magically representative of poetic ideals. They were especially attracted to the stanzas expressive of man's inability to know the answer to the riddle of existence, and likewise to the lusciously seductive quatrains urging us to enjoy the short day that lies before us. For the generation toward the close of the nineteenth century the *Rubáiyát* was the most popular of all English poems, since it seemed to its readers to be a great voice from the past giving validity to their own thoughts and their own attitudes.

FitzGerald began his publishing with *Selections from the Poems and Letters of Bernard Barton* in 1849. In this volume he writes a memoir of Barton, an old Quaker friend who had recently died, and whose sister FitzGerald subsequently married. In 1851 appeared his *Euphranor*, a Platonic dialogue. And this was followed in 1852 by *Polonius*, a collection of aphorisms. Thereafter all his output consisted of translations and editorial work. His Oriental translation, *Salámán and Absál* (1856), has already been mentioned. Throughout the last years of his life he published at intervals English versions of a number of the plays of Calderon. He also translated several of the Greek tragedies, notably the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus (1865) and the *Oedipus in Thebes* (*Oedipus the King*) of Sophocles (1880-81). His very last work was a selection from the poet George Crabbe, which he did as a labor of love, since he had been a lifelong friend of both the poet's son and grandson.

Except for the *Omar Khayyám*, nothing of FitzGerald seems destined to be of permanent value. He was not a great creative genius, but needed the initial effort of someone else to act as a guide for all that he wrote. But he produced one of the most influential poems of the century.

The standard edition of FitzGerald was issued in three volumes by Macmillan and Company in 1889. Editions of his letters—a very important part of FitzGerald's activity—appeared in 1895 and 1901. His *Omar Khayyám* has been edited so frequently that it is next to impossible to list the editions. There is a *Chronological List* of Fitzgerald's books printed by the Caxton Club (Chicago, 1899), and *Notes for a Bibliography of Edward FitzGerald,* reprinted from *Notes and Queries* (1900). Several biographies have appeared: by John Glyde (1900), Thomas Wright (1904), and A. C. Benson (1905).

*Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám of Naisháp*úr

1

Wake! For the Sun who scattered into flight
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
  Drives Night along with them from Heav'n, and strikes
The Sultán's Turret with a Shaft of Light.

2

Before the phantom of False morning[1] died,
Methought a Voice within the Tavern cried,
  "When all the Temple is prepared within,
Why nods the drowsy Worshipper outside?"

3

And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted—"Open then the door!
  You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."

4

Now the New Year[2] reviving old Desires,
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,
  Where the WHITE HAND OF MOSES[3] on the Bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.[4]

[1] a transient light on the horizon shortly before dawn.
[2] The Persian New Year came in the Spring.
[3] The hand of Moses miraculously turned white (*Exodus* 4:6). Here the metaphor refers to the blossoming of flowers.
[4] From the belief that the healing power of Jesus resided in his breath.

5

Iram[5] indeed is gone with all his Rose,
And Jamshyd's[6] Sev'n-ringed Cup[7] where no one knows;
  But still a Ruby gushes from the Vine,
And many a Garden by the Water blows.

6

And David's lips are lockt; but in divine
High-piping Péhlevi,[8] with "Wine! Wine! Wine!
  Red Wine!"—the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That sallow cheek of hers to incarnadine.

7

Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring
Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:
  The Bird of Time has but a little way
To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.

8

Whether at Naisháp*úr*[9] or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
  The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

[5] an ancient Persian garden.
[6] legendary king of Persia.
[7] a ring for each planet.
[8] ancient Persian language.
[9] Omar's native village, contrasted with Babylon, the great city.

9

Each Morn a thousand Roses brings, you say;
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday?
And this first Summer month that brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobád[10] away.

10

Well, let it take them! What have we to do
With Kaikobád the Great, or Kaikhosrú?
Let Zál and Rustum thunder as they will,
Or Hátim[11] call to Supper—heed not you.

11

With me along the strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of Slave and Sultán is forgot—
And Peace to Máhmúd[12] on his golden Throne!

12

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

13

Some for the Glories of This World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Credit go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!

14

Look to the blowing Rose about us—"Lo,
Laughing," she says, "into the world I blow,
At once the silken tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw."

15

And those who husbanded the Golden grain,[13]
And those who flung it to the winds like Rain,
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turned
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.

[10] an ancient Persian king.
[11] all Persian legendary heroes.
[12] the Sultan.
[13] wealth.

16

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes—or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face,
Lighting a little hour or two—was gone.

17

Think, in this battered Caravanserai[14]
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp
Abode his destined Hour, and went his way.

18

They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:
And Bahrám, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.

19

I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.

20

And this reviving Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean—
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!

21

Ah, my Belovéd, fill the cup that clears
To-day of past Regret and future Fears:
To-morrow!—Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.[15]

22

For some we loved, the loveliest and the best
That from his Vintage rolling Time has prest,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to rest.

[14] inn, where caravans stop overnight.
[15] a thousand years for each planet.

23

And we, that now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new bloom,
  Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
Descend—ourselves to make a Couch—for whom?

24

Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
  Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie,
Sans[16] Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and—sans End!

25

Alike for those who for To-day prepare,
And those that after some To-morrow stare,
  A Muezzín[17] from the Tower of Darkness cries,
"Fools, your Reward is neither Here nor There."

26

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discussed
Of the Two Worlds so learnedly are thrust
  Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to Scorn
Are scattered, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.

27

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument
  About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door where in I went.

28

With them the seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with my own hand wrought to make it grow;
  And this was all the Harvest that I reaped—
"I came like Water, and like Wind I go."

29

Into this Universe, and *Why* not knowing,
Nor *Whence*, like Water willy-nilly flowing;
  And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not *Whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

[16] without.
[17] a crier who summons the faithful to prayer.

30

What, without asking, hither hurried *Whence?*
And, without asking, *Whither* hurried hence!
  Oh, many a Cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence!

31

Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn[18] sate,
  And many a Knot unravelled by the Road;
But not the Master-knot of Human Fate.

32

There was the Door to which I found no Key;
There was the Veil through which I could not see:
  Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee
There was—and then no more of Thee and Me.

33

Earth could not answer; nor the Seas that mourn
In flowing Purple, of their Lord forlorn;
  Nor rolling Heaven, with all his Signs[19] revealed
And hidden by the sleeve of Night and Morn.

34

Then of the Thee in Me who works behind
The Veil, I lifted up my hands to find
  A Lamp amid the Darkness; and I heard,
As from Without—"The Me within Thee blind!"

35

Then to the Lip of this poor earthen Urn
I leaned, the Secret of my Life to learn:
  And Lip to Lip it murmured—"While you live,
Drink!—for, once dead, you never shall return."

36

I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
Articulation answered, once did live,
  And drink; and Ah! the passive Lip I kissed,
How many Kisses might it take—and give!

[18] According to the idea of Omar's time, Saturn governed the seventh of the concentric spheres surrounding the earth.
[19] the signs of the Zodiac.

37

For I remember stopping by the way
To watch a Potter thumping his wet Clay:
And with its all-obliterated Tongue
It murmured—"Gently, Brother, gently, pray!"

38

And has not such a Story from of Old
Down Man's successive generations roll'd
Of such a clod of saturated Earth
Cast by the Maker into Human mould?

39

And not a drop that from our Cups we throw
For Earth to drink of, but may steal below
To quench the fire of Anguish in some Eye
There hidden—far beneath, and long ago.

40

As then the Tulip for her morning sup
Of Heav'nly Vintage from the soil looks up,
Do you devoutly do the like, till Heav'n
To Earth invert you like an empty Cup.

41

Perplext no more with Human or Divine,
To-morrow's tangle to the winds resign,
And lose your fingers in the tresses of
The Cypress-slender Minister of Wine.

42

And if the Wine you drink, the Lip you press,
End in what All begins and ends in—Yes;
Think then you are To-day what Yesterday
You were—To-morrow you shall not be less.

43

So when the Angel of the darker Drink
At last shall find you by the river-brink,
And, offering his Cup, invite your Soul
Forth to your Lips to quaff—you shall not shrink.

44

Why, if the Soul can fling the Dust aside,
And naked on the Air of Heaven ride,
Wer't not a Shame—wer't not a Shame for him
In this clay carcase crippled to abide?

45

'Tis but a Tent where takes his one-day's rest
A Sultan to the realm of Death addrest;
The Sultan rises, and the dark Ferrásh[20]
Strikes, and prepares it for another Guest.

46

And fear not lest Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like no more;
The Eternal Sáki[21] from that Bowl has poured
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

47

When You and I behind the Veil are past,
Oh but the long long while the World shall last,
Which of our Coming and Departure heeds
As the Sea's self should heed a pebble-cast.

48

A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste
Of Being from the Well amid the Waste—
And Lo!—the phantom Caravan has reached
The Nothing it set out from—Oh, make haste!

49

Would you that spangle of Existence spend
About the secret—quick about it, Friend!
A Hair perhaps divides the False and True—
And upon what, prithee, does Life depend?

50

A Hair perhaps divides the False and True;
Yes; and a single Alif[22] were the clue—
Could you but find it—to the Treasure-house,
And peradventure to The Master too;

51

Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins
Running Quicksilver-like eludes your pains;

[20] servant. [21] wine-bearer. [22] the letter A.

Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi;[23] and
They change and perish all—but He remains;

52

A moment guessed—then back behind the Fold
Immerst of Darkness round the Drama rolled
  Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
He does Himself contrive, enact, behold.

53

But if in vain, down on the stubborn floor
Of Earth, and up to Heav'n's unopening Door,
  You gaze To-DAY, while You are You—how then
To-MORROW, when You shall be You no more?

54

Waste not your Hour, nor in the vain pursuit
Of This and That endeavor and dispute:
  Better be jocund with the fruitful Grape
Than sadden after none, or bitter, Fruit.

55

You know, my Friends, with what a brave Carouse
I made a Second Marriage in my house;
  Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.

56

For "Is" and "Is-NOT" though with Rule And Line,
And "UP-AND-DOWN" by Logic I define,
  Of all that one should care to fathom, I
Was never deep in anything but—Wine.

57

Ah, but my Computation, People say,
Reduced the Year to better reckoning?[24]—Nay,
  'Twas only striking from the Calendar
Unborn To-morrow, and dead Yesterday.

58

And lately, by the Tavern Door agape,
Came shining through the Dusk an Angel Shape
  Bearing a Vessel on his Shoulder; and
He bid me taste of it; and 'twas—the Grape!

59

The Grape that can with Logic absolute
The Two-and-Seventy jarring Sects confute:
  The sovereign Alchemist that in a trice
Life's leaden metal into Gold transmute:

60

The mighty Mahmúd, Allah-breathing[25] Lord,
That all the misbelieving and black Horde
  Of Fears and Sorrows that infest the Soul
Scatters before him with his whirlwind Sword.

61

Why, be this Juice the growth of God, who dare
Blaspheme the twisted tendril as a Snare?
  A Blessing, we should use it, should we not?
And if a Curse—why, then, Who set it there?

62

I must abjure the Balm of Life, I must,
Scared by some After-reckoning ta'en on trust,
  Or lured with Hope of some Diviner Drink,
To fill the Cup—when crumbled into Dust!

63

O threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise!
One thing at least is certain,—*This* Life flies;
  One thing is certain and the rest is Lies;
The Flower that once has blown forever dies.

64

Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us passed the door of Darkness through
  Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

65

The Revelations of Devout and Learned
Who rose before us, and as Prophets burned,
  Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep
They told their fellows, and to Sleep returned.

[23] from fish to moon.
[24] Omar was a famous mathematician and helped reform the calendar.
[25] Allah-worshipping.

66

I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell:
And by and by my Soul returned to me,
And answered "I Myself am Heav'n and Hell."

67

Heav'n but the Vision of fulfilled Desire,
And Hell the Shadow of a Soul on fire,
Cast on the Darkness into which Ourselves,
So late emerged from, shall so soon expire.

68

We are no other than a moving row
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
Round with this Sun-illumined Lantern held
In Midnight by the Master of the Show;

69

Impotent Pieces of the Game He plays
Upon this Checker-board of Nights and Days;
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And one by one back in the Closet lays.

70

The Ball[26] no question makes of Ayes and Noes
But Right or Left as strikes the Player goes;
And He that tossed you down into the Field,
He knows about it all—HE knows—HE knows!

71

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,
Moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

72

And that inverted Bowl they call the sky,
Whereunder crawling cooped we live and die,
Lift not your hands to *It* for help—for It
As impotently rolls as you or I.

[26] of the polo-player.

73

With Earth's first Clay They did the Last Man knead,
And there of the Last Harvest sowed the Seed:
And the first Morning of Creation wrote
What the Last Dawn of Reckoning shall read.

74

YESTERDAY *This* Day's Madness did prepare;
TO-MORROW's Silence, Triumph, or Despair:
Drink! for you know not whence you came, nor why:
Drink! for you know not why you go, nor where.

75

I tell you this—When, started from the Goal,
Over the flaming shoulders of the Foal
Of Heav'n Parwín[27] and Mushtari[28] they flung,
In my predestined Plot of Dust and Soul

76

The Vine had struck a fibre: which about
If clings my Being—let the Dervish flout;
Of my Base metal may be filed a Key,
That shall unlock the Door he howls without.

77

And this I know: whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath-consume me quite,
One Flash of It within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.

78

What! out of senseless Nothing to provoke
A conscious Something to resent the yoke
Of unpermitted Pleasure, under pain
Of Everlasting Penalties, if broke!

79

What, from his helpless Creature be repaid
Pure Gold for what he lent us dross-allayed—
Sue for a Debt we never did contract,
And cannot answer—Oh the sorry trade!

[27] Pleiades.
[28] Jupiter.

80

Oh Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin[29]
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin!

81

Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake:
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blackened—Man's Forgiveness give—and take!

82

As under cover of departing Day
Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazán[30] away,
Once more within the Potter's house alone
I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of Clay.

83

Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and small,
That stood along the floor and by the wall;
And some loquacious Vessels were; and some
Listened perhaps, but never talked at all.

84

Said one among them—"Surely not in vain
My substance of the common Earth was ta'en
And to this Figure moulded, to be broke,
Or trampled back to shapeless Earth again."

85

Then said a Second—"Ne'er a peevish Boy
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in joy:
And He that with his hand the Vessel made
Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."

86

After a momentary silence spake
Some Vessel of a more ungainly Make:
"They sneer at me for leaning all awry:
What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?"

87

Whereat some one of the loquacious Lot—
I think a Súfi[31] pipkin—waxing hot—
"All this of Pot and Potter—Tell me then,
Who makes—Who sells—Who buys—Who *is* the Pot?"

88

"Why," said another, "Some there are who tell
Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell
The luckless Pots he marred in making—Pish!
He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well."

89

"Well," murmured one, "Let whoso make or buy,
My Clay with long Oblivion is gone dry:
But fill me with the old familiar Juice,
Methinks I might recover by and by."

90

So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
The little Moon[32] looked in that all were seeking:
And then they jogged each other, "Brother! Brother!
Now for the Porter's shoulder-knot a-creaking!"[33]

91

Ah, with the Grape my fading Life provide,
And wash the Body whence the Life has died,
And lay me, shrouded in the living Leaf,
By some not unfrequented Garden-side.

92

That ev'n my buried Ashes such a snare
Of Vintage shall fling up into the Air
As not a True-believer passing by
But shall be overtaken unaware.

93

Indeed the Idols I have loved so long
Have done my credit in Men's eyes much wrong:
Have drowned my Glory in a shallow Cup,
And sold my Reputation for a Song.

[29] a trap.
[30] the month of fasting.
[31] member of a Mohammedan sect.
[32] the new moon which would end the month of fasting.
[33] with a heavy load of wine.

94

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?
And then and then came Spring, and Rose-in-hand
My thread-bare Penitence apieces tore.

95

And much as Wine has played the Infidel,
And robbed me of my Robe of Honor—Well.
I wonder often what the Vintners buy
One half so precious as the stuff they sell.

96

Yet Ah, that Spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that in the branches sang,
Ah whence, and whither flown again, who knows!

97

Would but the Desert of the Fountain yield
One glimpse—if dimly, yet indeed, revealed,
To which the fainting Traveller might spring,
As springs the trampled herbage of the field!

98

Would but some wingèd Angel ere too late
Arrest the yet unfolded Roll of Fate,
And make the stern Recorder otherwise
Enregister, or quite obliterate!

99

Ah Love! could you and I with Him conspire
To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,
Would not we shatter it to bits—and then
Re-mold it nearer to the Heart's Desire!

100

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for *one* in vain!

101

And when like her, oh Sáki, you shall pass
Among the Guests Star-scattered on the Grass,
And in your blissful errand reach the spot
Where I made One—turn down an empty Glass!

(pub. 1859)

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

(1828-1882)

Dante Gabriel Rossetti was born in London on May 12, 1828. His father was a political refugee from Italy and his mother was of Italian parentage. By virtue of this heritage Rossetti was able to bring to English literature the warmth and rich sensuousness characteristic of the Latin temperament, and an opulence exotic to English letters. It was, indeed, the artistic contributions of Italy rather than the life of the Rossetti household which influenced him, for, although his parents' home was a gathering place for political exiles, he had little taste at any time of his life for politics or sociological problems. Above all things he was an artist, and, more particularly, a painter. He lavished his care chiefly on his canvases, and wrote poetry by way of avocation (often to complement his paintings). Time has, however, already accorded a higher place to his poetry. Although his paintings are likely always to be interesting as representative of a movement and because of their imaginative use of color, they do not claim rank among the world's best. The reputation of Rossetti the poet, however, is still in the ascendant.

When but a boy he studied at an art school, and at the age of eighteen he entered the school of the Royal Academy. By this time, however, he was already an avid reader of

poetry, and had developed an intense admiration for Browning, whose works had not been long before the public. Charmed by the elder poet's pictures of Renaissance Italy, Rossetti began to study the Middle Ages, and to translate Dante's *Vita Nuova* (cf. Vol. I, p. 101). In 1848 Rossetti formed, with two fellow students at the Royal Academy, John Everett Millais and Holman Hunt, the soon notorious Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. The name was chosen out of their conviction that sincerity and truth had vanished in the painters who succeeded Raphael, the master of the Italian Renaissance. The Pre-Raphaelite creed read: "We must protest against the intellectual emptiness of our so-called painters. . . . It is for us to bring dignity and sincerity back to art; for us to strip art of conventionality and go to Nature. . . . We must be sincere in our invention, truthful in our representation. We must be Early Christian—Pre-Raphaelite!" These enthusiastic youths also drew up a "list of Immortals," and added that "there exists no other Immortality than what is centred in their names and in the names of their contemporaries." The list included Christ, the author of the Book of Job, Shakespeare, Keats, Shelley, Byron, Browning, Bellini (the composer), Joan of Arc, and Mrs. Browning. In their own canvases, Rossetti, Hunt, and Millais used primary colors boldly as a protest against the subdued tones of Academy painters, and paid much attention to the realism of details from nature and life.

Their numbers expanded among their friends. Rossetti's brother, William Michael, became the critic of the group, and his sister, Christina (cf. *below*), the poet, although she never actually became a "member." Among other notables who later became allied with them were William Morris (cf. *below*), the painter Burne-Jones, Coventry Patmore, Swinburne (cf. *below*), and the sculptor Woolner. In 1850 the Brotherhood published their magazine, *The Germ,* under the editorship of William Michael Rossetti. It was to observe in its contents "a rigid adherence to the simplicity of nature." Here Rossetti's *The Blessed Damozel* (cf. *below*) and several of his poems first appeared. But the general public was not impressed and the magazine ran only to four issues.

In this same year Rossetti fell in love with Elizabeth Siddal, who became the favorite model of the Brotherhood. "I knew," he prophetically confessed to a friend, "from the moment I met her my destiny was defined." Hers is the face that appears again and again in his paintings and drawings, and that haunted his days after her death. Her delicate health caused the postponement of their marriage for ten years, years during which Rossetti became confirmed in the irregular mode of a Bohemian life. In the meantime he had made friends with John Ruskin (cf. *above*), England's leading art critic, who willingly undertook the role of Maecenas to Rossetti. With characteristic generosity, Ruskin volunteered to pay his young friend for each water color he produced. Thus encouraged, Rossetti was free to devote himself to painting. Ruskin also took a personal interest in Rossetti's romance, and constantly urged him to marry Miss Siddal. At length, in 1860, though Rossetti knew her to be dying, they were married.

Their life together was brief and tragic in its consequences. His pagan nature and Bohemian habits provoked many quarrels and accusations against his infidelities real and imagined. On February 10, 1862, he left her at home while he went to teach at the Workingmen's College, in which Ruskin was interested. When he returned just before midnight, he found her unconscious, a "phial on a table at the bedside, which had contained laudanum." She died without waking from her comatose state. Rossetti never knew for the rest of his life whether she had died from an accidental overdose of the drug, which she often had taken in search of sleep, or had deliberately committed suicide. Never was he to escape the haunting conviction that she had died by her own hand. As Frances Winwar vividly sums up the mental condition under which he was thereafter to exist: "In vain the jury, overthrowing the suspicion of poisoning or suicide, returned a verdict of accidental death; he in his mind could never feel guiltless. Perhaps not that night or any recent night had he given her cause to surrender to oblivion; the guilt was in his soul whether the world saw it or not." His self-condemnation required some great sacrifice.

"While the coffin still lay open, Gabriel, stricken with remorseful anguish, took the sole manuscript of his poems, the poems he had written to her, read to her, inspired, even before she came, by the presage of her, and laid it between her cheek and the folds of her hair."

After her death, Rossetti went to live in a large house in Chelsea which he shared with William Michael, and for a very brief time with Swinburne, and George Meredith (cf. *below*). The temperaments of these four were not compatible, and they had frequent frictions. Thus far Rossetti had published only a few poems in *The Germ* and in the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856), and a collection of translations, *The Early Italian Poets* (1861). Now, in 1868, he began to write again, though his mind, tortured by guilt and remorse, was turning to morbid superstition and suspicion. His friends, many of them now winning literary success, urged him to publish his original poems. In vain he tried to remember the buried texts. At last, beset by doubts, he agreed to have the manuscript exhumed, though he would not consent to be present. From the "sad wreck" of the pages he copied out the verses, and in 1870 his volume, *Poems,* appeared.

The book at once achieved great esteem and went into many printings. But Rossetti's hour of triumph was short. Robert Buchanan, in rancor against Rossetti's brother, William Michael, and his friend Swinburne, determined to take his revenge upon both by attacking Dante Gabriel; his article, *The Fleshly School of Poetry,* was one of the most vicious onslaughts ever leveled at an English poet. The barbs sank into Rossetti's soul, and he soon came to look upon Buchanan's review as retribution for his having broken faith with his dead wife. He rapidly sank into despair, took copiously of drugs to deaden his mind, lived more and more like a recluse within the confines of his house, and hastened his end. He suffered from delusions of persecution, even suspecting Browning and Lewis Carroll of ridiculing him in their verse, and lived in a kind of nightmare of disordered thoughts and self-torture. He found some release in poetic composition, however, and in 1881 issued a two-volume edition of his poems. He died in April 1882.

Though the Pre-Raphaelites in their boyhood had framed an elaborate program, it is not easy to describe their movement. It is perhaps simpler to point out what they did not stand for. They did not believe that poetry should concern itself with philosophy, prophecy, or social questions, and herein differed from Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold. Because of these exclusions their talk of "sincerity and truth" is open to misconstruction. The sincerity and truth they sought was of a strictly artistic kind, and Rossetti best explained their intention as a scrupulousness over minute detail. From Keats, whom they worshiped, they learned to bring a sensuous richness to their art. Their particular contribution, however, is their introduction of symbolism to English poetry, in which, until they wrote, it was fairly uncommon.

That simplicity for which Rossetti sought was achieved by constant rewriting and recreating. As Burne-Jones well said of him, "he wanted to keep a poem at boiling-point all the way through, and he did it to that degree that it went into ether with fervent glowing heat before he had done with it." *The Blessed Damozel,* first written when he was nineteen, was recast three times. In his sonnets in *The House of Life* (cf. *below*), he often followed the strict Italian form, and put "all of his mind and craft into every word."

Like his fellow Pre-Raphaelites, Rossetti was actually a latter-day romanticist. His revolt against Victorian materialism and bad taste was accomplished by going back, as Ruskin and Newman had gone back, to the Middle Ages for inspiration. He was equally happy in narrative or sonnet, but some of his most notable successes were with the ballad form. His *Sister Helen* (cf. *below*), for example, is a wonderful transfiguration of an old medium. Even the theme here is an old one—it may be found in Theocritus. But the ballad, as it came from Rossetti's pen, partook of that strange marriage of spiritual exaltation and sensuousness which is the peculiar stamp of his genius. Throughout his poetry, Rossetti's gift in painting is manifest. But the one distinctive quality which is indeed unique in his work is his marvelous ability to paint silence (see, for example, *Silent Noon, below*).

He not only deliberately paints moments of mystical silence, but often gives us an amazing sense that all movement—even time itself—has ceased.

The authoritative edition of Rossetti's works was edited with a preface by his brother W. M. Rossetti (1911). The fullest account of the Pre-Raphaelite movement and the men who made it will be found in F. Winwar's *Poor Splendid Wings: The Rossettis and Their Circle* (1933). Other good studies of Rossetti are by R. L. Mégroz (1929), R. D. Waller (1932), and W. M. Rossetti (1889, 1895, 1899, 1900, and 1903).

The Blessed Damozel

Rossetti is reported to have said concerning his purposes in this poem: "Poe had done [i.e. in *The Raven*] the utmost it was possible to do with the grief of the lover on earth, and so I determined to reverse the conditions, and give utterance to the yearning of the loved one in heaven."

The blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Herseemed she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.
. . . Yet now, and in this place,
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
Fell all about my face . . .
Nothing; the autumn fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house
That she was standing on;
By God built over the sheer depth
The which is space begun;
So high, that looking downward thence
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in heaven, across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath, the tides of day and night
With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,
Spoke evermore among themselves
Their heart-remembered names;
And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed herself and stooped
Out of the circling charm;
Until her bosom must have made
The bar she leaned on warm,
And the lilies lay as if asleep
Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of heaven she saw
Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
Within the gulf to pierce
Its path; and now she spoke as when
The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now; the curled moon
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
Had when they sang together.

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,
Strove not her accents there,
Fain to be hearkened? When those bells
Possessed the mid-day air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side
Down all the echoing stair?)

"I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come," she said.

"Have I not prayed in heaven?—on earth,
Lord, Lord, has he not prayed?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
And shall I feel afraid?

"When round his head the aureole clings,
And he is clothed in white,
I'll take his hand and go with him
To the deep wells of light;
As unto a stream we will step down,
And bathe there in God's sight.

"We two will stand beside that shrine,
Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirred continually
With prayers sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.

"We two will lie i' the shadow of
That living, mystic tree
Within whose secret growth the Dove
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His Name audibly.

"And I myself will teach to him,
I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here; which his voice
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause,
Or some new thing to know."

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say'st!
Yea, one wast thou with me
That once of old. But shall God lift
To endless unity
The soul whose likeness with thy soul
Was but its love for thee?)

"We two," she said, "will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret, and Rosalys.

"Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
And foreheads garlanded;
Into the fine cloth, white like flame,
Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robes for them
Who are just born, being dead.

"He shall fear, haply, and be dumb;
Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abashed or weak;
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak.

"Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads
Bowed with their aureoles;
And angels meeting us shall sing,
To their citherns and citoles.

"There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me—
Only to live as once on earth
With Love, only to be,
As then awhile, forever now
Together, I and he."

She gazed and listened and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild—
"All this is when he comes." She ceased.
The light thrilled toward her, filled
With angels in strong, level flight.
Her eyes prayed, and she smiled.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres;
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

(1847)

Sister Helen

"Why did you melt your waxen man,[1]
Sister Helen?
To-day is the third since you began."
"The time was long, yet the time ran,
Little brother."
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Three days to-day, between Hell and Heaven!)

"But if you have done your work aright,
Sister Helen,

[1] This poem is based on the widespread belief that one can cause an enemy to waste away by making a waxen figure of him and gradually melting it. Helen is here punishing her faithless lover.

You'll let me play, for you said I might."
"Be very still in your play to-night,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Third night, to-night, between Hell and Heaven!)

"You said it must melt ere vesper-bell,
Sister Helen;
If now it be molten, all is well."
"Even so,—nay, peace! you cannot tell,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
O what is this, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh the waxen knave was plump to-day,
Sister Helen;
How like dead folk he has dropped away!"
"Nay now, of the dead what can you say,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What of the dead, between Hell and Heaven?)

"See, see, the sunken pile of wood,
Sister Helen,
Shines through the thinned wax red as blood!"
"Nay now, when looked you yet on blood,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
How pale she is, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Now close your eyes, for they're sick and sore,
Sister Helen,
And I'll play without the gallery door."
"Aye, let me rest,—I'll lie on the floor,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What rest to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Here high up in the balcony,
Sister Helen,
The moon flies face to face with me."
"Aye, look and say whatever you see,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What sight to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Outside it's merry in the wind's wake,
Sister Helen;
In the shaken trees the chill stars shake."
"Hush, heard you a horse-tread as you spake,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What sound to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)

"I hear a horse-tread, and I see,
Sister Helen,
Three horsemen that ride terribly."
"Little brother, whence come the three,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Whence should they come, between Hell and Heaven?)

"They come by the hill-verge from Boyne Bar,
Sister Helen,
And one draws nigh, but two are afar."
"Look, look, do you know them who they are,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Who should they be, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh, it's Keith of Eastholm rides so fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white mane on the blast."
"The hour has come, has come at last,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Her hour at last, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He has made a sign and called 'Hallo!'
Sister Helen,
And he says that he would speak with you."
"Oh tell him I fear the frozen dew,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Why laughs she thus, between Hell and Heaven?)

"The wind is loud, but I hear him cry,
Sister Helen,
That Keith of Ewern's like to die."
"And he and thou, and thou and I,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
And they and we, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Three days ago, on his marriage-morn,
Sister Helen,
He sickened, and lies since then forlorn."
"For bridegroom's side is the bride a thorn,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Cold bridal cheer, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Three days and nights he has lain abed,
Sister Helen,
And he prays in torment to be dead."

"The thing may chance, if he have prayed,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
If he have prayed, between Hell and Heaven!)

"But he has not ceased to cry to-day,
Sister Helen,
That you should take your curse away."
"*My* prayer was heard,—he need but pray,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Shall God not hear, between Hell and Heaven?)

"But he says, till you take back your ban,
Sister Helen,
His soul would pass, yet never can."
"Nay then, shall I slay a living man,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
A living soul, between Hell and Heaven!)

"But he calls forever on your name,
Sister Helen,
And says that he melts before a flame."
"My heart for his pleasure fared the same,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Fire at the heart, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Here's Keith of Westholm riding fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white plume on the blast."
"The hour, the sweet hour I forecast,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Is the hour sweet, between Hell and Heaven?)

"He stops to speak, and he stills his horse,
Sister Helen;
But his words are drowned in the wind's course."
"Nay hear, nay hear, you must hear perforce,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What word now heard, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh he says that Keith of Ewern's cry,
Sister Helen,
Is ever to see you ere he die."
"In all that his soul sees, there am I,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
The soul's one sight, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He sends a ring and a broken coin,
Sister Helen,
And bids you mind the banks of Boyne."
"What else he broke will he ever join,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
No, never joined, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He yields you these and craves full fain,
Sister Helen,
You pardon him in his mortal pain."
"What else he took will he give again,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Not twice to give, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He calls your name in an agony,
Sister Helen,
That even dead Love must weep to see."
"Hate, born of Love, is blind as he,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Love turned to hate, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Oh it's Keith of Keith now that rides fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white hair on the blast."
"The short, short hour will soon be past,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Will soon be past, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He looks at me and he tries to speak,
Sister Helen,
But oh his voice is sad and weak!"
"What here should the mighty Baron seek,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Is this the end, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh his son still cries, if you forgive,
Sister Helen,
The body dies, but the soul shall live."
"Fire shall forgive me as I forgive,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
As she forgives, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Oh he prays you, as his heart would rive,
Sister Helen,
To save his dear son's soul alive."
"Fire cannot slay it, it shall thrive,
Little brother!"

(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Alas, alas, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He cries to you, kneeling in the road,
Sister Helen,
To go with him for the love of God!"
"The way is long to his son's abode,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
The way is long, between Hell and Heaven!)

"A lady's here, by a dark steed brought,
Sister Helen,
So darkly clad, I saw her not."
"See her now or never see aught,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What more to see, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Her hood falls back, and the moon shines fair,
Sister Helen,
On the Lady of Ewern's golden hair."
"Blest hour of my power and her despair,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Hour blest and banned, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Pale, pale her cheeks, that in pride did glow,
Sister Helen,
'Neath the bridal-wreath three days ago."
"One morn for pride and three days for woe,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Three days, three nights, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Her clasped hands stretch from her bending head,
Sister Helen;
With the loud wind's wail her sobs are wed."
"What wedding-strains hath her bridal-bed,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What strain but death's, between Hell and Heaven?)

"She may not speak, she sinks in a swoon,
Sister Helen,—
She lifts her lips and gasps on the moon."
"Oh! might I but hear her soul's blithe tune,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Her woe's dumb cry, between Hell and Heaven!)

"They've caught her to Westholm's saddle-bow,
Sister Helen,
And her moonlit hair gleams white in its flow."
"Let it turn whiter than winter snow,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Woe-withered gold, between Hell and Heaven!)

"O Sister Helen, you heard the bell,
Sister Helen;
More loud than the vesper-chime it fell."
"No vesper-chime, but a dying knell,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
His dying knell, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Alas! but I fear the heavy sound,
Sister Helen;
Is it in the sky or in the ground?"
"Say, have they turned their horses round,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What would she more, between Hell and Heaven?)

"They have raised the old man from his knee,
Sister Helen,
And they ride in silence hastily."
"More fast the naked soul doth flee,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
The naked soul, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Flank to flank are the three steeds gone,
Sister Helen,
But the lady's dark steed goes alone."
"And lonely her bridegroom's soul hath flown,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
The lonely ghost, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Oh the wind is sad in the iron chill,
Sister Helen,
And weary sad they look by the hill."
"But he and I are sadder still,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Most sad of all, between Hell and Heaven!)

"See, see, the wax has dropped from its place,
Sister Helen,
And the flames are winning up apace!"

"Yet here they burn but for a space,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Here for a space, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Ah! what white thing at the door has crossed,
Sister Helen,
Ah! what is this that sighs in the frost?"
"A soul that's lost as mine is lost,
Little brother!"
(O Mother, Mary Mother,
Lost, lost, all lost, between Hell and Heaven!)

(pub. 1853)

The House of Life

The title of this, one of the greatest of English sonnet-sequences, Rossetti took from the name of the first of the twelve astrological "houses" of the heavens. Though many of them are an expression of his love for his wife, Elizabeth Siddal, they are not all, as has been usually taken for granted, inspired by her. The later sonnets (e.g. *Sonnet 65*) may, in some cases, be better understood as the reflection of his bitter war with himself over his desire to be faithful to his wife's memory and his love for Jane Burden, Morris's wife. A strange union of burning passion and intellectual handling of the sonnet form makes these sonnets like no others in our literature.

The Sonnet

A Sonnet is a moment's monument,—
Memorial from the Soul's eternity
To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fulness reverent:
Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.
A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
The soul,—its converse, to what Power 'tis due:—
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
It serve; or, 'mid the dark wharf's[1] cavernous breath,
In Charon's palm[2] it pay the toll to Death.

4. Love-Sight

When do I see thee most, beloved one?
When in the light the spirits of mine eyes
Before thy face, their altar, solemnize
The worship of that Love through thee made known?
Or when in the dusk hours (we two alone),
Close kissed and eloquent of still replies,
Thy twilight-hidden glimmering visage lies,
And my soul only sees thy soul its own?
O love, my love! if I no more should see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring,—
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

19. Silent Noon

Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass,—
The finger-points look through like rosy blooms:
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
Are golden kingcup-fields with silver edge,
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge.
'Tis visible silence, still as the hour-glass.
Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragon-fly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky:—
So this winged hour is dropped to us from above.
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,

[1] of the River Lethe.
[2] Charon ferried the dead and demanded a piece of money for the passage.

This close-companioned, inarticulate hour
When twofold silence was the song of love.

55. *Stillborn Love*

The hour which might have been yet might not be,
Which man's and woman's heart conceived and bore
Yet whereof life was barren,—on what shore
Bides it the breaking of Time's weary sea?
Bondchild of all consummate joys set free,
It somewhere sighs and serves, and mute before
The house of Love, hears through the echoing door
His hours elect in choral consonancy.
But lo! what wedded souls now hand in hand
Together tread at last the immortal strand
With eyes where burning memory lights love home?
Lo! how the little outcast hour has turned
And leaped to them and in their faces yearned:—
"I am your child: O parents, ye have come!"

63. *Inclusiveness*

The changing guests, each in a different mood,
Sit at the roadside table and arise:
And every life among them in likewise
Is a soul's board set daily with new food.
What man has bent o'er his son's sleep, to brood
How that face shall watch his when cold it lies?—
Or thought, as his own mother kissed his eyes,
Of what her kiss was when his father wooed?
May not this ancient room thou sit'st in dwell
In separate living souls for joy or pain?
Nay, all its corners may be painted plain
Where Heaven shows pictures of some life spent well;
And may be stamped, a memory all in vain,
Upon the sight of lidless eyes in Hell.

65. *Known in Vain*

As two whose love, first foolish, widening scope,
Knows suddenly, to music high and soft,
The Holy of holies; who because they scoff'd
Are now amazed with shame, nor dare to cope
With the whole truth aloud, lest heaven should ope;
Yet, at their meetings, laugh not as they laugh'd
In speech; nor speak, at length; but sitting oft
Together, within hopeless sight of hope
For hours are silent:—So it happeneth
When Work and Will awake too late, to gaze
After their life sailed by, and hold their breath
Ah! who shall dare to search through what sad maze
Thenceforth their incommunicable ways
Follow the desultory feet of Death?

71. 72. 73. *The Choice*

1

Eat thou and drink; to-morrow thou shalt die.
Surely the earth, that's wise being very old,
Needs not our help. Then loose me, love, and hold
Thy sultry hair up from my face; that I
May pour for thee this golden wine, brim-high,
Till round the glass thy fingers glow like gold.
We'll drown all hours: thy song, while hours are tolled,
Shall leap, as fountains veil the changing sky.
Now kiss, and think that there are really those,
My own high-bosomed beauty, who increase
Vain gold, vain lore, and yet might choose our way!
Through many years they toil; then on a day
They die not,—for their life was death,—but cease;
And round their narrow lips the mould falls close.

2

Watch thou and fear; to-morrow thou shalt die.
Or art thou sure thou shalt have time for death?
Is not the day which God's word promiseth
To come man knows not when? In yonder sky,
Now while we speak, the sun speeds forth: can I
Or thou assure him of his goal? God's breath
Even at this moment haply quickeneth
The air to a flame; till spirits, always nigh
Though screened and hid, shall walk the day-light here.
And dost thou prate of all that man shall do?
Canst thou, who hast but plagues, presume to be
Glad in his gladness that comes after thee?

Will *his* strength slay *thy* worm in Hell? Go to:
Cover thy countenance, and watch, and fear.

3

Think thou and act; to-morrow thou shalt die.
Outstretched in the sun's warmth upon the shore,
Thou say'st: "Man's measured path is all gone o'er;
Up all his years, steeply, with strain and sigh,
Man clomb until he touched the truth; and I,
Even I, am he whom it was destined for."
How should this be? Art thou, then, so much more
Than they who sowed, that thou shouldst reap thereby?
Nay, come up hither. From this wave-washed mound
Unto the furthest flood-brim look with me;
Then reach on with thy thought till it be drowned.
Miles and miles distant though the last line be,
And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond,
Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea.

85. *Vain Virtues*

What is the sorriest thing that enters Hell?
None of the sins,—but this and that fair deed
Which a soul's sin at length could supersede.
These yet are virgins, whom death's timely knell
Might once have sainted; whom the fiends compel
Together now, in snake-bound shuddering sheaves
Of anguish, while the pit's pollution leaves
Their refuse maidenhood abominable.
Night sucks them down, the tribute of the pit,
Whose names, half entered in the book of Life,
Were God's desire at noon. And as their hair
And eyes sink last, the Torturer deigns no whit
To gaze, but, yearning, waits his destined wife,
The Sin still blithe on earth that sent them there.

86. *Lost Days*

The lost days of my life until to-day,
What were they, could I see them on the street
Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat
Sown once for food but trodden into clay?
Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?
Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?
Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?
I do not see them here; but after death
God knows I know the faces I shall see,
Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.
"I am thyself,—what hast thou done to me?"
"And I—and I—thyself" (lo! each one saith),
"And thou thyself to all eternity!"

97. *A Superscription*

Look in my face; my name is Might-have-been:
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Fare-well;
Unto thine[1] ear I hold the dead-sea shell.
Cast up thy Life's foam-fretted feet between;
Unto thine eyes the glass where that is seen
Which had Life's form and Love's, but by my spell
Is now a shaken shadow intolerable,
Of ultimate things unuttered the frail screen.
Mark me, how still I am! But should there dart
One moment through thy soul the soft surprise
Of that winged Peace which lulls the breath of sighs,—
Then shalt thou see me smile, and turn apart
Thy visage to mine ambush at thy heart
Sleepless with cold commemorative eyes.

101. *The One Hope*

When vain desire at last and vain regret
Go hand in hand to death, and all is vain,
What shall assuage the unforgotten pain
And teach the unforgetful to forget?
Shall Peace be still a sunk stream long unmet,—
Or may the soul at once in a green plain
Stoop through the spray of some sweet life-fountain
And cull the dew-drenched flowering amulet?
Ah! when the wan soul in that golden air
Between the scriptured petals softly blown
Peers breathless for the gift of grace unknown,—
Ah! let none other alien spell soe'er
But only the one Hope's one name be there,—
Not less nor more, but even that word alone.

(pub. 1870)

[1] the poet's.

The Cloud Confines

The day is dark and the night
To him that would search their heart;
No lips of cloud that will part
Nor morning song in the light:
Only, gazing alone,
To him wild shadows are shown,
Deep under deep unknown
And height above unknown height.
Still we say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

The Past is over and fled;
Named new, we name it the old;
Thereof some tale hath been told
But no word comes from the dead;
Whether at all they be,
Or whether as bond or free,
Or whether they too were we,
Or by what spell they have sped.
Still we say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

What of the heart of hate
That beats in thy breast, O Time?—
Red strife from the furthest prime,
And anguish of fierce debate;
War that shatters her slain,
And peace that grinds them as grain,
And eyes fixed ever in vain
On the pitiless eyes of Fate.
Still we say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

What of the heart of love
That bleeds in thy breast, O Man?—
Thy kisses snatched 'neath the ban
Of fangs that mock them above;
Thy bells prolonged unto knells,
Thy hope that a breath dispels,
Thy bitter forlorn farewells
And the empty echoes thereof?
Still we say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

The sky leans dumb on the sea,
Aweary with all its wings;
And oh! the song the sea sings
Is dark everlastingly.
Our past is clean forgot,
Our present is and is not,
Our future's a sealed seedplot,
And what betwixt them are we?—
We who say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know
That shall we know one day."

(pub. 1872)

FRANÇOIS VILLON (1431-146-?)

That rogue, vagabond, Master of Arts, and poet who was named Villon has stimulated the genius of many writers, from Hugo to Stevenson, to recreate his reckless person in their pages. Twice he escaped hanging by the narrowest of margins, and much of his verse was written in prison. His *Petit Testament* and *Grand Testament*, which contain most of his ballades, show his great originality. Though composing in the conventionally complicated and artificial forms of the medieval poets, he infused into these traditional modes of expression a new note—that of poignant personal feeling. This appealing egoism makes him one of the first of the moderns, for it marks a break with the allegorizing of the Middle Ages.

His simplicity and directness have won him many admirers. But his Bohemianism and his concern with the neglected and the pathetic caused him to be a particular favorite of the later Victorians. His ability to "smile in tears" and his tender irony sounded an echo in the breasts of Rossetti and Swinburne, both of whom (cf. *below*) paraphrased some of his ballades. His technical dexterity within the confines of charming, if artificial, French forms made him all the more delectable to them (cf. Vol. I, p. 894).

D. B. Wyndham Lewis's *François Villon* (1928) is a masterful study.

THE BALLAD OF DEAD LADIES

(*Translated by D. G. Rossetti*)

Tell me now in what hidden way is
Lady Flora the lovely Roman?
Where's Hipparchia, and where is Thaïs,[1]

[1] Famous ladies of antiquity. Flora may be the Goddess of Flowers or else a courtesan mentioned by Juvenal (Satire II, line 49). Hipparchia has been a puzzle to scholars. Thaïs was mistress of Alexander the Great.

Neither of them the fairer woman?
Where is Echo,[2] beheld of no man,
Only heard on river and mere,—
She whose beauty was more than human? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Where's Héloïse, the learned nun,
For whose sake Abeillard, I ween,
Lost manhood and put priesthood on?[3]
(From Love he won such dule and teen![4])
And where, I pray you, is the Queen
Who willed that Buridan should steer
Sewed in a sack's mouth down the Seine? . . .[5]
But where are the snows of yester-year?

White Queen Blanche, like a queen of lilies,
With a voice like any mermaiden,—
Bertha Broadfoot, Beatrice, Alice,
And Ermengarde the lady of Maine,—
And that good Joan[6] whom Englishmen
At Rouen doomed and burned her there,—
Mother of God, where are they then? . . .
But where are the snows of yester-year?

Nay, never ask this week, fair lord,
Where they are gone, nor yet this year,
Except with this for an overword,—
"But where are the snows of yester-year?"

Christina Rossetti

(1830-1894)

Christina, sister of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (cf. *above*), led a life whose drama was all internal. When young she presented a soft and womanly appearance which belied the sharp intensity of her soul, and which won the affection of a timid young man, James Collinson, who was for a time associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. It was tacitly understood that they would marry until Collinson decided to study for the priesthood in the Roman Catholic Church. She never forgot him or her love for him, even after he had changed his mind and wedded another woman. When she was twenty-seven the scholarly Charles Bagot Cayley paid court to her, and awoke love in her heart again. He was a slow, unimaginative man, and by the time he proposed to her she felt compelled to reject him. She could not be certain that she had banished Collinson from her heart, and, moreover, she could not bear the thought of being separated from her mother and brothers. So she continued to live uneventfully, a devoted daughter and sister, masking an ardent temperament behind a calm exterior. She worshiped Dante Gabriel to the extent that she was even, against her will, jealous of his wife. As she grew older, she more and more sublimated her unfulfilled life by turning to the Anglican Church, to which she became a devout and mystical adherent. She was privileged, however, beyond the opportunities of most Victorian women, to enjoy the conversation of men of talent and genius, her brothers' friends, among whom she was acknowledged to be a poet of great gifts.

She is the author of over nine hundred English and sixty Italian poems, most of them brief and none of them long. Her first efforts appeared in the *Athenæum* (1848) and *The Germ* (1850). Beginning in 1862, she issued a series of volumes of poems: *Goblin Market* (1862), *The Prince's Progress* (1866), *Sing-Song* (1872), and *A Pageant* (1881). After her death *New Poems* appeared in 1896. Her verse is of three kinds: fanciful, religious, and impassioned. *Goblin Market* is one of the most original of English poems in the realm of fantasy, and a masterpiece of technical dexterity. The greater bulk of her poetry is religious, and in it she achieved stature equal to that of her forerunner in High Anglican

[2] The nymph in Greek mythology who was reduced to a voice.

[3] Abelard, a famous scholar and theologian of the early twelfth century, won the love of Heloise, his pupil. They eloped and were married. Her uncle caused him to be emasculated.

[4] grief and pain.

[5] Marguerite, queen of Louis X of France who entertained lovers, among them Buridan, and then threw them into the Seine.

[6] Joan of Arc.

poetry, George Herbert (cf. Vol. I, p. 383). Like her brother she was a severe metrist. But her genius did not tend, as did his, toward sensuous opulence. Her fount of inspiration was the King James Bible (cf. Vol. I, p. 346), and the austerity of her language often resembles the somber cadences of the prophets. Some of her poems are the personal, though chastened, expression of her blighted experiences in love. Of these, among the best are the fourteen sonnets which form the sequence *Monna Innominata* (i.e. Lady Nameless). Her most recurrent theme is her contemplation of death and everlasting rest, a subject she dwelt upon with tranquil melancholy shorn of any terror. None of the Pre-Raphaelites achieved in her measure that simplicity which they declared to be cardinal in their productions.

Christina Rossetti's prestige has advanced with the years, and there are some critics who would rate her, above Mrs. Browning, as the greatest of English women poets. Certainly her level of accomplishment is uniformly higher than that of Mrs. Browning, though she wrote nothing so universally appealing as the *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. The powerful asceticism of her character is stamped upon everything she composed, and is revealed in the perfection of her versification.

The authoritative edition of her poems was edited with a memoir by her brother W. M. Rossetti (new edition, 1914). Biographies of Christina Rossetti have been written by M. Bell (1898), R. Garnett (1908-09), M. F. Sandars (1930), and D. M. Stuart (1930). F. Winwar's *Poor Splendid Wings: The Rossettis and Their Circle* (1933) contains a fine portrait and a full account of her relations with the Pre-Raphaelites.

Song

When I am dead, my dearest,
  Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
  Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
  With showers and dewdrops wet:
And if thou wilt, remember,
  And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
  I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
  Sing on as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
  That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
  And haply may forget.

(Dec. 12, 1848)

Dream Land

Where sunless rivers weep
Their waves into the deep,
She sleeps a charmèd sleep:
  Awake her not.
Led by a single star,
She came from very far
To seek where shadows are
  Her pleasant lot.

She left the rosy morn,
She left the fields of corn,
For twilight cold and lorn
  And water springs.
Through sleep, as through a veil,
She sees the sky look pale,
And hears the nightingale
  That sadly sings.

Rest, rest, a perfect rest
Shed over brow and breast:
Her face is toward the west,
  The purple land.
She cannot see the grain
Ripening on hill and plain:
She cannot feel the rain
  Upon her hand.

Rest, rest, for evermore
Upon a mossy shore;
Rest, rest at the heart's core
  Till time shall cease;
Sleep that no pain shall wake,
Night that no morn shall break
Till joy shall overtake
  Her perfect peace.

(April 1849)

After Death

The curtains were half drawn, the floor was swept
  And strewn with rushes, rosemary and may
Lay thick upon the bed on which I lay,
  Where through the lattice ivy-shadows crept.
He leaned above me, thinking that I slept
  And could not hear him; but I heard him say:
"Poor child, poor child"; and as he turned away
  Came a deep silence, and I knew he wept.
He did not touch the shroud, or raise the fold
  That hid my face, or take my hand in his,
Or ruffle the smooth pillows for my head:
  He did not love me living; but once dead
He pitied me; and very sweet it is
  To know he still is warm though I am cold.

(April 28, 1849)

Rest

O Earth, lie heavily upon her eyes;
  Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth;
  Lie close around her; leave no room for mirth
With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs.
She hath no questions, she hath no replies,
  Hushed in and curtained with a blessed dearth
  Of all that irked her from the hour of birth;
With stillness that is almost Paradise.
Darkness more clear than noonday holdeth her,
  Silence more musical than any song;
Even her very heart has ceased to stir:
Until the morning of Eternity
Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be;
  And when she wakes she will not think it long.

(May 15, 1849)

Remember

Remember me when I am gone away,
  Gone far away into the silent land;
  When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day,
  You tell me of our future that you planned:
  Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
  And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
  For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
  Than that you should remember and be sad.

(July 25, 1849)

A Birthday

My heart is like a singing bird
  Whose nest is in a watered shoot:
My heart is like an apple-tree
  Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
  That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
  Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
  Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
  And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
  In leaves and silver fleur-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
  Is come, my love is come to me.

(Nov. 18, 1857)

Mirage

The hope I dreamed of was a dream,
  Was but a dream; and now I wake
Exceeding comfortless, and worn, and old,
  For a dream's sake.

I hang my harp upon a tree,
  A weeping willow in a lake;
I hang my silenced harp there, wrung and snapt
  For a dream's sake.

Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart;
  My silent heart, lie still and break:
Life, and the world, and mine own self, are changed
  For a dream's sake.

(June 12, 1860)

Up-hill

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
  Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
  From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?
  A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
  You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
  Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
  They will not keep you standing at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
  Of labor you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
  Yea, beds for all who come.

(1861)

The Lowest Place

Give me the lowest place: not that I dare
  Ask for that lowest place, but Thou hast died
That I might live and share
  Thy glory by Thy side.

Give me the lowest place: or if for me
  That lowest place too high, make one more low
Where I may sit and see
  My God and love Thee so.

(July 25, 1863)

The First Day

I wish I could remember that first day,
  First hour, first moment of your meeting me,
  If bright or dim the season, it might be
Summer or Winter for aught I can say;
So unrecorded did it slip away,
  So blind was I to see and to foresee,
  So dull to mark the budding of my tree
That would not blossom yet for many a May.
If only I could recollect it, such
  A day of days! I let it come and go
  As traceless as a thaw of bygone snow;
It seemed to mean so little, meant so much;
If only now I could recall that touch,
First touch of hand in hand—Did one but know!

(1882)

In an Artist's Studio[1]

One face looks out from all his canvases,
  One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:
  We found her hidden just behind those screens,
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
  A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,
  A saint, an angel—every canvas means
The same one meaning, neither more nor less.
He feeds upon her face by day and night,
  And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
  Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
  Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

(pub. 1895)

[1] The studio of her brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

William Morris

(1834-1896)

William Morris was the most variously talented of all the members of the Pre-Raphaelite circle. He was a man of enormous energy, and his productivity is amazing to consider.

He was born the son of a wealthy broker, and studied at Exeter College, Cambridge. Gifted with all things—money, robust health, love of work, and a keen sensitivity to beauty—he seemed to have been destined for a rich life. At Oxford he met Edward Burne-Jones, and with him became absorbed in the artistic productions of the Middle Ages. Both youths decided to study painting under Rossetti. Morris, six years Rossetti's junior, soon changed from the role of disciple to that of intimate friend. Accepting the creed of the Pre-Raphaelites, the new enthusiast determined to widen their sphere of influence over Victorian life, and established for this purpose, together with Rossetti, a firm that dealt in furniture, tapestries, metalwork, stained glass, and woodcarving. Morris thus succeeded in penetrating into the English home, and before long his services in interior decoration were much sought after. Impressed with the teachings of Ruskin, he instituted a revival of handicrafts, and his influence in this field is still felt in our day. The soulless machine, turning out countless identical rugs and pieces of furniture, was robbing the workman of joy in his creation, he felt, and gradually extinguishing beauty in private surroundings. Anyone familiar with early and mid-Victorian furnishings is well aware of the justice of Morris's protest. From designing chairs, tapestries, rugs, and stained glass, Morris carried his revolt further. Filled with distaste at the ugly-looking books issued by Victorian publishers, he established his own printing press, and published, from his now famous Kelmscott Press, exquisite volumes printed on fine paper, handsomely bound, and designed by Morris and other artists.

So much accomplishment might well have filled the lives of several other men. But, in addition, Morris was the author of a long series of poems, romances, and translations—none of them, perhaps, great, but all of them of a uniformly excellent level. Most of what he wrote emanated from his full-hearted acceptance of the worship for the Middle Ages of his fellow Pre-Raphaelites. His first volume, *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858), is his best poetically, and contains his most realistic recreations of medieval times. His best-known work is *The Earthly Paradise* (cf. *below*), a collection of poetic tales (1868-70). Other volumes of poetry include *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867), *Love Is Enough* (1872), and *Sigurd the Volsung* (1876). He wrote a number of tales and romances in prose, and translated Homer, *Beowulf*, and the Icelandic sagas (cf. Vol. I, p. 8).

Although in his poetry Morris seems, in common with the other Pre-Raphaelites, to have turned his back upon the problems of contemporary society, his interest in handicrafts proves that actually, alone of his group, he was vitally concerned with such issues. As he grew older he became a confirmed Socialist, studied the writings of Karl Marx, and in 1883 joined the Social Democratic Federation. His compositions, after this date, often expound his faith in the necessity of a socialistic society (cf. *The Day Is Coming, below*) and his *Dream of John Ball* (1888) and *News from Nowhere* (1896) are testimony to his optimism for a better order of life.

Morris's collected works have been issued in twenty-four volumes by his daughter M. Morris (1911-15). J. W. Mackail's is the standard biography. A. Clutton-Brock's *William Morris, His Work and Influence* (1914) is an important study.

The Haystack in the Floods

Had she come all the way for this,
To part at last without a kiss?
Yea, had she borne the dirt and rain
That her own eyes might see him slain
Beside the haystack in the floods?

Along the dripping leafless woods,
The stirrup touching either shoe,
She rode astride as troopers do;
With kirtle kilted to her knee,
To which the mud splash'd wretchedly;
And the wet dripp'd from every tree
Upon her head and heavy hair,
And on her eyelids broad and fair;
The tears and rain ran down her face.

By fits and starts they rode apace,
And very often was his place
Far off from her; he had to ride
Ahead, to see what might betide
When the roads cross'd; and sometimes, when
There rose a murmuring from his men,
Had to turn back with promises.
Ah me! she had but little ease;

And often for pure doubt and dread
She sobb'd, made giddy in the head
By the swift riding; while, for cold,
Her slender fingers scarce could hold
The wet reins; yea, and scarcely, too,
She felt the foot within her shoe
Against the stirrup: all for this,
To part at last without a kiss
Beside the haystack in the floods.

For when they near'd that old soak'd hay,
They saw across the only way
That Judas, Godmar, and the three
Red running lions dismally
Grinn'd from his pennon, under which
In one straight line along the ditch,
They counted thirty heads.
So then
While Robert turn'd round to his men,
She saw at once the wretched end,
And, stooping down, tried hard to rend
Her coif the wrong way from her head,
And hid her eyes; while Robert said:
"Nay, love, 'tis scarcely two to one;
At Poictiers[1] where we made them run

[1] a battle fought in 1356 between French and English.

So fast—why, sweet my love, good cheer,
The Gascon[2] frontier is so near,
Nought after us."
But: "O!" she said,
"My God! my God! I have to tread
The long way back without you; then
The court at Paris; those six men;
The gratings of the Chatelet;[3]
The swift Seine on some rainy day
Like this, and people standing by,
And laughing, while my weak hands try
To recollect how strong men swim.
All this, or else a life with him,
For which I should be damned at last,
Would God that this next hour were past!"

He answer'd not, but cried his cry,
"St. George for Marny!" cheerily;
And laid his hand upon her rein.
Alas! no man of all his train
Gave back that cheery cry again;
And, while for rage his thumb beat fast
Upon his sword-hilt, someone cast
About his neck a kerchief long,
And bound him.
Then they went along
To Godmar; who said: "Now, Jehane,
Your lover's life is on the wane
So fast, that, if this very hour
You yield not as my paramour,
He will not see the rain leave off:
Nay, keep your tongue from gibe and scoff
Sir Robert, or I slay you now."
She laid her hand upon her brow,

Then gazed upon the palm, as though
She thought her forehead bled, and: "No!"
She said, and turn'd her head away,
As there was nothing else to say,
And everything was settled: red
Grew Godmar's face from chin to head:
"Jehane, on yonder hill there stands
My castle, guarding well my lands;
What hinders me from taking you,
And doing that I list to do
To your fair willful body, while
Your knight lies dead?"
A wicked smile
Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,
A long way out she thrust her chin:

[2] of Gascogny, a former province in southwest France.
[3] a prison in Paris.

"You know that I should strangle you
While you were sleeping; or bite through
Your throat, by God's help: ah!" she said,
"Lord Jesus, pity your poor maid!
For in such wise they hem me in,
I cannot choose but sin and sin,
Whatever happens: yet I think
They could not make me eat or drink,
And so should I just reach my rest."
"Nay, if you do not my behest,
O Jehane! though I love you well,"
Said Godmar, "would I fail to tell
All that I know?" "Foul lies," she said.
"Eh? lies, my Jehane? by God's head,
At Paris folks would deem them true!
Do you know, Jehane, they cry for you:
'Jehane the brown! Jehane the brown!
Give us Jehane to burn or drown!'
Eh!—gag me Robert!—sweet my friend,
This were indeed a piteous end
For those long fingers, and long feet,
And long neck, and smooth shoulders sweet;
And end that few men would forget
That saw it. So, an hour yet:
Consider, Jehane, which to take
Of life or death!"
So, scarce awake,
Dismounting, did she leave that place,
And totter some yards: with her face
Turn'd upward to the sky she lay,
Her head on a wet heap of hay,
And fell asleep: and while she slept,
And did not dream, the minutes crept
Round to the twelve again; but she,
Being waked at last, sigh'd quietly,
And strangely childlike came, and said:
"I will not." Straightway Godmar's head,
As though it hung on strong wires, turn'd
Most sharply round, and his face burn'd.

For Robert, both his eyes were dry,
He could not weep, but gloomily
He seem'd to watch the rain; yea, too,
His lips were firm; he tried once more
To touch her lips; she reach'd out, sore
And vain desire so tortured them,
The poor gray lips, and now the hem
Of his sleeve brush'd them.
With a start
Up Godmar rose, thrust them apart;
From Robert's throat he loosed the bands
Of silk and mail; with empty hands
Held out, she stood and gazed, and saw,
The long bright blade without a flaw
Glide out from Godmar's sheath, his hand
In Robert's hair; she saw him bend
Back Robert's head; she saw him send
The thin steel down; the blow told well,
Right backward the knight Robert fell,
And moaned as dogs do, being half dead,
Unwitting, as I deem: so then
Godmar turn'd grinning to his men,
Who ran, some five or six, and beat
His head to pieces at their feet.
Then Godmar turn'd again and said:
"So, Jehane, the first fitte[4] is read!
Take note, my lady, that your way
Lies backward to the Chatelet!"
She shook her head and gazed awhile
At her cold hands with a rueful smile,
As though this thing had made her mad.

This was the parting that they had
Beside the haystack in the floods.

(pub. 1858)

The Eve of Crecy[1]

Gold on her head, and gold on her feet,
And gold where the hems of her kirtle meet,
And a golden girdle round my sweet;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.[2]

Margaret's maids are fair to see,
Freshly dressed and pleasantly;
Margaret's hair falls down to her knee;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

If I were rich I would kiss her feet,
I would kiss the place where the gold hems meet.
And the golden girdle round my sweet—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Ah me! I have never touched her hand;
When the arriere-ban[3] goes through the land,
Six basnets[4] under my pennon[5] stand;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

[4] division in a poem, part of a story.
[1] The Battle of Crecy took place in northwestern France, August 26, 1346.
[2] Ah, how beautiful is Marguerite!
[3] edict of the king summoning his vassals to war.
[4] a kind of helmet.
[5] banner.

And many an one grins under his hood:
"Sir Lambert de Bois, with all his men good,
Has neither food nor firewood;"
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

If I were rich I would kiss her feet,
And the golden girdle of my sweet,
And thereabouts where the gold hems meet;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Yet even now it is good to think,
While my few poor varlets grumble and drink
In my desolate hall, where the fires sink,—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Of Margaret sitting glorious there,
In glory of gold and glory of hair,
And glory of glorious face most fair;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

Likewise to-night I make good cheer,
Because this battle draweth near:
For what have I to lose or fear?—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

For, look you, my horse is good to prance
A right fair measure in this war-dance,
Before the eyes of Philip of France;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

And sometime it may hap, perdie,
While my new towers stand up three and three,
And my hall gets painted fair to see—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite—

That folks may say: "Times change, by the rood,
For Lambert, banneret of the wood,
Has heaps of food and firewood;—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

"And wonderful eyes, too, under the hood
Of a damsel of right noble blood:"
St. Ives, for Lambert of the wood!—
Ah! qu'elle est belle La Marguerite.

(pub. 1858)

The Defence of Guenevere

But, knowing now that they would have her speak,
She threw her wet hair backward from her brow,
Her hand close to her mouth touching her cheek,
As though she had had there a shameful blow,
And feeling it shameful to feel aught but shame
All through her heart, yet felt her cheek burned so,

She must a little touch it; like one lame
She walked away from Gauwaine, with her head
Still lifted up; and on her cheek of flame

The tears dried quick; she stopped at last and said:
"O knights and lords, it seems but little skill
To talk of well-known things past now and dead.

"God wot I ought to say, I have done ill,
And pray you all forgiveness heartily!
Because you must be right such great lords—still

"Listen, suppose your time were come to die,
And you were quite alone and very weak;
Yea, laid a dying while very mightily

"The wind was ruffling up the narrow streak
Of river through your broad lands running well:
Suppose a hush should come, then some one speak:

" 'One of these cloths is heaven, and one is hell,
Now choose one cloth for ever, which they be,
I will not tell you, you must somehow tell

" 'Of your own strength and mightiness; here, see!'
Yea, yea, my lord, and you to ope your eyes,
At foot of your familiar bed to see

"A great God's angel standing, with such dyes,
Not known on earth, on his great wings, and hands,
Held out two ways, light from the inner skies

"Showing him well, and making his commands
Seem to be God's commands, moreover, too,
Holding within his hands the cloths on wands;

"And one of these strange choosing cloths was blue,
Wavy and long and one cut short and red;
No man could tell the better of the two.

"After a shivering half-hour you said,
'God help! heaven's color, the blue;' and he said,
'hell.'
Perhaps you then would roll upon your bed,

"And cry to all good men that loved you well,
'Ah Christ! if only I had known, known, known;'
Launcelot went away, then I could tell,

"Like wisest man how all things would be, moan,
And roll and hurt myself, and long to die,
And yet fear much to die for what was sown.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened through these years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie."

Her voice was low at first, being full of tears,
But as it cleared, it grew full loud and shrill,
Growing a windy shriek in all men's ears,

A ringing in their startled brains, until
She said that Gauwaine lied, then her voice sunk,
And her great eyes began again to fill,

Though still she stood right up, and never shrunk,
But spoke on bravely, glorious lady fair!
Whatever tears her full lips may have drunk,

She stood, and seemed to think, and wrung her hair,
Spoke out at last with no more trace of shame,
With passionate twisting of her body there:

"It chanced upon a day that Launcelot came
To dwell at Arthur's court: at Christmas-time
This happened; when the heralds sung his name,

" 'Son of King Ban of Benwick,' seemed to chime
Along with all the bells that rang that day,
O'er the white roofs, with little change of rhyme.

"Christmas and whitened winter passed away,
And over me the April sunshine came,
Made very awful with black hail-clouds, yea

"And in the Summer I grew white with flame,
And bowed my head down—Autumn, and the sick
Sure knowledge things would never be the same,

"However often Spring might be most thick
Of blossoms and buds, smote on me, and I grew
Careless of most things, let the clock tick, tick,

"To my unhappy pulse, that beat right through
My eager body; while I laughed out loud,
And let my lips curl up at false or true,

"Seemed cold and shallow without any cloud.
Behold my judges, then the cloths were brought:
While I was dizzied thus, old thoughts would crowd,

"Belonging to the time ere I was bought
By Arthur's great name and his little love,
Must I give up for ever then, I thought,

"That which I deemed would ever round me move
Glorifying all things; for a little word,
Scarce ever meant at all, must I now prove

"Stone-cold for ever? Pray you, does the Lord
Will that all folks should be quite happy and good?
I love God now a little, if this cord

"Were broken, once for all what striving could
Make me love anything in earth or heaven.
So day by day it grew, as if one should

"Slip slowly down some path worn smooth and even,
Down to a cool sea on a summer day;
Yet still in slipping was there some small leaven

"Of stretched hands catching small stones by the way,
Until one surely reached the sea at last,
And felt strange new joy as the worn head lay

"Back, with the hair like sea-weed; yea all past
Sweat of the forehead, dryness of the lips,
Washed utterly out by the dear waves o'ercast

"In the lone sea, far off from any ships!
Do I not know now of a day in Spring?
No minute of that wild day ever slips

"From out my memory; I hear thrushes sing,
And wheresoever I may be, straightway
Thoughts of it all come up with most fresh sting;

"I was half mad with beauty on that day,
And went without my ladies all alone,
In a quiet garden walled round every way;

"I was right joyful of that wall of stone,
That shut the flowers and trees up with the sky,
And trebled all the beauty: to the bone,

"Yea right through to my heart, grown very shy
With weary thoughts, it pierced, and made me glad;
Exceedingly glad, and I knew verily,

"A little thing just then had made me mad;
I dared not think, as I was wont to do,
Sometimes, upon my beauty; if I had

"Held out my long hand up against the blue,
And, looking on the tenderly darkened fingers,
Thought that by rights one ought to see quite through,

"There, see you, where the soft still light yet lingers,
Round by the edges; what should I have done,
If this had joined with yellow spotted singers,

"And startling green drawn upward by the sun?
But shouting, loosed out, see now! all my hair,
And trancedly stood watching the west wind run

"With faintest half-heard breathing sound—why there
I lose my head e'en now in doing this;
But shortly listen—In that garden fair

"Came Launcelot walking; this is true, the kiss
Wherewith we kissed in meeting that spring day,
I scarce dare talk of the remembered bliss,

"When both our mouths went wandering in one way,
And aching sorely, met among the leaves;
Our hands being left behind strained far away.

"Never within a yard of my bright sleeves
Had Launcelot come before—and now, so nigh!
After that day why is it Guenevere grieves?

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever happened on through all those years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie.

"Being such a lady could I weep these tears
If this were true? A great queen such as I
Having sinned this way, straight her conscience sears;

"And afterwards she liveth hatefully,
Slaying and poisoning, certes never weeps,—
Gauwaine be friends now, speak me lovingly.

"Do I not see how God's dear pity creeps
All through your frame, and trembles in your mouth?
Remember in what grave your mother sleeps,[1]

"Buried in some place far down in the south,
Men are forgetting as I speak to you;
By her head severed in that awful drouth

"Of pity that drew Agravaine's fell blow,
I pray your pity! let me not scream out
For ever after, when the shrill winds blow

"Through half your castle-locks! let me not shout
For ever after in the winter night
When you ride out alone! in battle rout

"Let not my rusting tears make your sword light!
Ah! God of mercy how he turns away!
So, ever must I dress me to the fight,

"So—let God's justice work! Gauwaine, I say,
See me hew down your proofs: yea all men know
Even as you said how Mellyagraunce one day,

"One bitter day in *la Fausse Garde*,[2] for so
All good knights held it after, saw—
Yea, sirs, by cursed unknightly outrage; though

"You, Gauwaine, held his word without a flaw,
This Mellyagraunce saw blood upon my bed—
Whose blood then pray you? is there any law

"To make a queen say why some spots of red
Lie on her coverlet? or will you say,
'Your hands are white, lady, as when you wed,

" 'Where did you bleed?' and must I stammer out—'Nay,
I blush indeed, fair lord, only to rend
My sleeve up to my shoulder, where there lay

" 'A knife-point last night:' so must I defend
The honor of the lady Guenevere?
Not so, fair lords, even if the world should end

"This very day, and you were judges here
Instead of God. Did you see Mellyagraunce
When Launcelot stood by him? what white fear

"Curdled his blood, and how his teeth did dance,
His side sink in? as my knight cried and said,
'Slayer of unarmed men, here is a chance!

" 'Setter of traps, I pray you guard your head,
By God I am so glad to fight with you,
Stripper of ladies, that my hand feels lead

[1] Gawain's mother was a half-sister of King Arthur. Gawain's brother killed his mother as punishment for her adultery.

[2] The real name of the castle was "Joyous Garde"; now it was renamed "Dolorous Garde" or "False Garde."

" 'For driving weight; hurrah now! draw and do,
For all my wounds are moving in my breast,
And I am getting mad with waiting so.'

"He struck his hands together o'er the beast,
Who fell down flat, and grovelled at his feet,
And groaned at being slain so young—'at least.'

"My knight said, 'Rise you, sir, who are so fleet
At catching ladies, half-armed will I fight,
My left side all uncovered!' then I weet,

"Up sprang Sir Mellyagraunce with great delight
Upon his knave's face; not until just then
Did I quite hate him, as I saw my knight

"Along the lists look to my stake and pen
With such a joyous smile, it made me sigh
From agony beneath my waist-chain, when

"The fight began, and to me they drew nigh;
Ever Sir Launcelot kept him on the right,
And traversed warily, and ever high

"And fast leapt caitiff's sword, until my knight
Sudden threw up his sword to his left hand,
Caught it, and swung it; that was all the fight.

"Except a spout of blood on the hot land;
For it was hottest summer; and I know
I wondered how the fire, while I should stand,

"And burn, against the heat, would quiver so,
Yards above my head; thus these matters went;
Which things were only warnings of the woe

"That fell on me. Yet Mellyagraunce was shent,
For Mellyagraunce had fought against the Lord;
Therefore, my lords, take heed lest you be blent

"With all this wickedness; say no rash word
Against me, being so beautiful; my eyes,
Wept all away to grey, may bring some sword

"To drown you in your blood; see my breast rise,
Like waves of purple sea, as here I stand;
And how my arms are moved in wonderful wise,

"Yea also at my full heart's strong command,
See through my long throat how the words go up
In ripples to my mouth; how in my hand

"The shadow lies like wine within a cup
Of marvellously colored gold; yea now
This little wind is rising, look you up,

"And wonder how the light is falling so
Within my moving tresses: will you dare,
When you have looked a little on my brow,

"To say this thing is vile? or will you care
For any plausible lies of cunning woof,
When you can see my face with no lie there

"For ever? am I not a gracious proof—
'But in your chamber Launcelot was found'—
Is there a good knight then would stand aloof,

"When a queen says with gentle queenly sound:
'O true as steel come now and talk with me,
I love to see your step upon the ground

" 'Unwavering, also well I love to see
That gracious smile light up your face, and hear
Your wonderful words, that all mean verily

" 'The thing they seem to mean: good friend, so dear
To me in everything, come here to-night,
Or else the hours will pass most dull and drear;

" 'If you come not, I fear this time I might
Get thinking over much of times gone by,
When I was young, and green hope was in sight;

" 'For no man cares now to know why I sigh;
And no man comes to sing me pleasant songs,
Nor any brings me the sweet flowers that lie

" 'So thick in the gardens; therefore one so longs
To see you, Launcelot; that we may be
Like children once again, free from all wrongs

" 'Just for one night.' Did he not come to me?
What thing could keep true Launcelot away
If I said 'come'? there was one less than three

"In my quiet room that night, and we were gay;
Till sudden I rose up, weak, pale, and sick,
Because a bawling broke our dream up, yea

"I looked at Launcelot's face and could not speak,
For he looked helpless too, for a little while;
Then I remember how I tried to shriek,

"And could not, but fell down; from tile to tile
The stones they threw up rattled o'er my head,
And made me dizzier; till within a while

"My maids were all about me, and my head
On Launcelot's breast was being soothed away
From its white chattering, until Launcelot said—

"By God! I will not tell you more to-day,
Judge any way you will—what matters it?
You know quite well the story of that fray,

"How Launcelot stilled their bawling, the mad fit
That caught up Gauwaine—all, all, verily,
But just that which would save me; these things flit.

"Nevertheless you, O Sir Gauwaine, lie,
Whatever may have happened these long years,
God knows I speak truth, saying that you lie!

"All I have said is truth, by Christ's dear tears."
She would not speak another word, but stood
Turned sideways; listening, like a man who hears

His brother's trumpet sounding through the wood
Of his foes' lances. She leaned eagerly,
And gave a slight spring sometimes, as she could

At last hear something really; joyfully
Her cheek grew crimson, as the headlong speed
Of the roan charger drew all men to see,
The knight who came was Launcelot at good need.

(pub. 1858)

The Earthly Paradise

The framework employed so successfully by Boccaccio in the *Decameron* and by Chaucer in the *Canterbury Tales* is adapted by Morris in his celebrated long poem, *The Earthly Paradise*. At bimonthly gatherings a group of men from the North and a group of descendants of the ancient Greeks meet to exchange tales of their peoples. The *Apology* opens and the *Envoi* closes the series.

An Apology

Of Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing,[1]
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
Or make quick-coming death a little thing,
Or bring again the pleasure of past years,
Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,
Or hope again for aught that I can say,
The idle singer of an empty day.

But rather, when, aweary of your mirth,
From full hearts still unsatisfied ye sigh,
And, feeling kindly unto all the earth,
Grudge every minute as it passes by,
Made the more mindful that the sweet days die—
Remember me a little then, I pray,
The idle singer of an empty day.

The heavy trouble, the bewildering care
That weighs us down who live and earn our bread,
These idle verses have no power to bear;
So let me sing of names rememberèd,
Because they, living not, can ne'er be dead,
Or long time take their memory quite away
From us poor singers of an empty day.

Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time,
Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?
Let it suffice me that my murmuring rhyme
Beats with light wing against the ivory gate,[2]
Telling a tale not too importunate
To those who in the sleepy region stay,
Lulled by the singer of an empty day.

Folk say, a wizard to a northern king
At Christmas-tide such wondrous things did show,
That through one window men beheld the spring,
And through another saw the summer glow,
And through a third the fruited vines a-row,
While still, unheard, but in its wonted way,
Piped the drear wind of that December day.

So with this Earthly Paradise it is,
If ye will read aright, and pardon me,

[1] allusion to Book I of *Paradise Lost*. See Vol. I, pp. 442 ff.

[2] through which false dreams come from the House of Morpheus, the God of Sleep.

Who strive to build a shadowy isle of bliss
Midmost the beating of the steely sea,
Where tossed about all hearts of men must be;
Whose ravening monsters mighty men shall slay,
Not the poor singer of an empty day.

(pub. 1868)

L'Envoi

Here are we for the last time face to face,
Thou and I, Book, before I bid thee speed
Upon thy perilous journey to that place
For which I have done on thee pilgrim's weed,
Striving to get thee all things for thy need—
I love thee, whatso time or men may say
Of the poor singer of an empty day.

Good reason why I love thee, e'en if thou
Be mocked or clean forgot as time wears on;
For ever as thy fashioning did grow,
Kind word and praise because of thee I won
From those without whom were my world all gone,
My hope fallen dead, my singing cast away,
And I set soothly in an empty day.

I love thee; yet this last time must it be
That thou must hold thy peace and I must speak,
Lest if thou babble I begin to see
Thy gear too thin, thy limbs and heart too weak,
To find the land thou goest forth to seek—
Though what harm if thou die upon the way,
Thou idle singer of an empty day?

But though this land desired thou never reach,
Yet folk who know it mayst thou meet, or death;
Therefore a word unto thee would I teach
To answer these, who, noting thy weak breath,
Thy wandering eyes, thy heart of little faith,
May make thy fond desire a sport and play
Mocking the singer of an empty day.

That land's name, say'st thou? and the road thereto?
Nay, Book, thou mockest, saying thou know'st it not;
Surely no book of verse I ever knew
But ever was the heart within him hot
To gain the Land of Matters Unforgot—
There, now we both laugh—as the whole world may,
At us poor singers of an empty day.

Nay, let it pass, and harken! Hast thou heard
That therein I believe I have a friend,
Of whom for love I may not be afeared?
It is to him indeed I bid thee wend;
Yea, he perchance may meet thee ere thou end,
Dying so far off from the hedge of bay,
Thou idle singer of an empty day!

Well, think of him, I bid thee, on the road,
And if it hap that midst of thy defeat,
Fainting beneath thy follies' heavy load,
My Master, Geoffrey Chaucer, thou do meet,
Then shalt thou win a space of rest full sweet;
Then be thou bold, and speak the words I say,
The idle singer of an empty day!

"O Master, O thou great of heart and tongue,
Thou well mayst ask me why I wander here,
In raiment rent of stories oft besung!
But of thy gentleness draw thou anear,
And then the heart of one who held thee dear
Mayst thou behold! So near as that I lay
Unto the singer of an empty day.

"For this he ever said, who sent me forth
To seek a place amid thy company:
That howsoever little was my worth,
Yet was he worth e'en just so much as I;
He said that rhyme hath little skill to lie;
Nor feigned to cast his worser part away;
In idle singing for an empty day.

"I have beheld him tremble oft enough
At things he could not choose but trust to me,
Although he knew the world was wise and rough;
And never did he fail to let me see
His love,—his folly and faithlessness, maybe;
And still in turn I gave him voice to pray
Such prayers as cling about an empty day.

"Thou, keen-eyed, reading me, mayst read him through,
For surely little is there left behind;
No power great deeds unnameable to do;
No knowledge for which words he may not find,
No love of things as vague as autumn wind—
Earth of the earth lies hidden by my clay,
The idle singer of an empty day!

"Children we twain are, saith he, late made wise
In love, but in all else most childish still,
And seeking still the pleasure of our eyes,
And what our ears with sweetest sounds may fill;

Not fearing Love, lest these things he should kill;
Howe'er his pain by pleasure doth he lay,
Making a strange tale of an empty day.

"Death have we hated, knowing not what it meant;
Life have we loved, through green leaf and through sere,
Though still the less we knew of its intent;
The Earth and Heaven through countless year on year,
Slow changing, were to us but curtains fair,
Hung around about a little room, where play
Weeping and laughter of man's empty day.

"O Master, if thine heart could love us yet,
Spite of things left undone, and wrongly done,
Some place in loving hearts then should we get,
For thou, sweet-souled, didst never stand alone,
But knew'st the joy and woe of many an one—
By lovers dead, who live through thee, we pray,
Help thou us singers of an empty day!"

Fearest thou, Book, what answer thou mayst gain
Lest he should scorn thee, and thereof thou die?
Nay, it shall not be.—Thou mayst toil in vain,
And never draw the House of Fame anigh;
Yet he and his shall know whereof we cry,
Shall call it not ill done to strive to lay
The ghosts that crowd about life's empty day.

Then let the others go! and if indeed
In some old garden thou and I have wrought,
And made fresh flowers spring up from hoarded seed,
And fragrance of old days and deeds have brought
Back to folk weary; all was not for nought.
—No little part it was for me to play—
The idle singer of an empty day. (pub. 1870)

The Day Is Coming

From *Chants for Socialists*

Come hither, lads, and harken, for a tale there is to tell.
Of the wonderful days a-coming, when all shall be better than well.

And the tale shall be told of a country, a land in the midst of the sea,
And folk shall call it England in the days that are going to be.

There more than one in a thousand in the days that are yet to come,
Shall have some hope of the morrow, some joy of the ancient home.

For then—laugh not, but listen to this strange tale of mine—
All folk that are in England shall be better lodged than swine.

Then a man shall work and bethink him, and rejoice in the deeds of his hand,
Nor yet come home in the even too faint and weary to stand.

Men in that time a-coming shall work and have no fear
For tomorrow's lack of earning and the hunger-wolf anear.

I tell you this for a wonder, that no man then shall be glad
Of his fellow's fall and mishap to snatch at the work he had,

For that which the worker winneth shall then be his indeed,
Nor shall half be reaped for nothing by him that sowed no seed.

O strange new wonderful justice! But for whom shall we gather the gain?
For ourselves and for each of our fellows, and no hand shall labor in vain.

Then all Mine and all Thine, shall be Ours, and no more shall any man crave
For riches that serve for nothing but to fetter a friend for a slave.

And what wealth then shall be left us when none shall gather gold
To buy his friend in the market, and pinch and pine the sold?

Nay, what save the lovely city, and the little house on the hill,
And the wastes and the woodland beauty, and the happy fields we till;

And the homes of ancient stories, the tombs of the mighty dead;
And the wise men seeking out marvels, and the poet's teeming head;

And the painter's hand of wonder; and the marvelous fiddle-bow,
And the banded choirs of music—all those that do and know.

For all these shall be ours and all men's; nor shall any lack a share
Of the toil and the gain of living in the days when the world grows fair.

Ah! such are the days that shall be! But what are the deeds of today,
In the days of the years we dwell in, that wear our lives away?

Why, then, and for what are we waiting?
There are three words to speak—
WE WILL IT—and what is the freeman but the dream-strong wakened and weak?

O why and for what are we waiting? while our brothers droop and die,
And on every wind of the heavens a wasted life goes by.

How long shall they reproach us where crowd on crowd they dwell,
Poor ghosts of the wicked city, the gold-crushed, hungry hell?

Through squalid life they labored, in sordid grief they died,
Those sons of a mighty mother, those props of England's pride.

They are gone; there is none can undo it, nor save our souls from the curse;
But many a million cometh, and shall they be better or worse?

It is we must answer and hasten, and open wide the door
For the rich man's hurrying terror, and the slow-foot hope of the poor.

Yea, the voiceless wrath of the wretched, and their unlearned discontent,
We must give it voice and wisdom till the waiting-tide be spent.

Come, then, since all things call us, the living and the dead,
And o'er the weltering tangle a glimmering light is shed.

Come, then, let us cast off fooling, and put by ease and rest,
For the Cause alone is worthy till the good days bring the best.

Come, join in the only battle wherein no man can fail,
Where whoso fadeth and dieth, yet his deed shall still prevail.

Ah! come, cast off all fooling, for this, at least, we know:
That the Dawn and the Day is coming, and forth the Banners go.

(1884)

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE (1821-1867)

Into one comparatively brief life Baudelaire crowded several lifetimes of excess. Nature had endowed him with superb gifts, but his perverseness constantly abused them. An intense rebel by temperament, he set himself against respectability and the accepted. At twenty he enjoyed for a while the role of dandy in the Latin Quarter of Paris—until he had spent his small fortune. Soon in debt, he busied himself with journalism and art criticism. Discovering Edgar Allan Poe's tales, which powerfully impressed him with their excursions into the extremes of sensation, he introduced them to Europe through his wonderful translation of them (1856-65). From time to time original poems of Baudelaire's composition appeared in the journals.

These, a record of the soul-states of their author, were collected with many previously unpublished poems in 1857—the year of another epochal French book, Flaubert's (cf. *below*) *Madame Bovary*—under the "shocking" title of *Les Fleurs du mal* (The

Flowers of Evil). It is by virtue of this one volume that Baudelaire has achieved immortality. To provide material for its contents, he lived in studious research of newer physical sensations, the characteristic concern of his poetry. He went from one violent dissipation to another, and as his constitution became enervated from frequent abuse he turned to stimulants to reawaken his deadened senses. Yet, all through his experiences he seems to have stood mentally aloof, a spectator of his own depravity, noting, with objective clarity for the purposes of his art, his own reactions to his rather insane life.

Flowers of Evil, which is a kind of psychological autobiography, presents the conscious duality of Baudelaire's character. On the one hand, we find a strong strain of Catholic mysticism: poems of atonement and repentance; appeals to God; adoration of the Virgin; a love of churchly ritual and vocabulary. On the other hand, we find tributes to Satan (cf. the *Litany, below*) and Cain; calm description of debauchery and horror; poems on corpses, ennui and spleen, cats, evil sunsets, and every kind of artificial imagining. Though Baudelaire, in his willful cultivation of the emotions thus represents romanticism in the extreme, his form is severely classic. He resented the effusiveness of the romantic poets, and is a master of restraint and condensation. It is this union of voluptuous content and impeccable form which gives distinctive quality to Baudelaire's poetry. Translating him has, therefore, always been an almost impossible feat. We are particularly indebted to Frances Winwar, in consequence, for the sensitive and accurate renditions which she has made expressly for this study.

The glorification of the flesh and its sensations to which Baudelaire was devoted created a deep impression on Swinburne (cf. *below*) and the poets of the "Yellow Nineties" like Oscar Wilde (cf. *below*). None of them, however ably they could join in the search for what Hugo called the "new shudder," reproduced Baudelaire's classic finish.

Henry James's *French Poets and Novelists* (1884) and George Saintsbury's *Miscellaneous Essays* (1892) contain important studies of Baudelaire.

THE ALBATROSS

(*Translated by Frances Winwar*)

Ofttimes for sport the mariners will take
Some albatross—vast ocean-birds that keep
Like lazy fellow-voyagers the wake
Of ships that glide upon the treacherous deep.

Scarce are they freed upon the vessel's planks
When graceless, shamed, these monarchs of the air
Hang piteously their wings along their flanks,
Their great white wings, like paddles trailing there.

The wingèd traveller, how gauche[1] and weak!
How comic now, the bird that graced the sky!
With burning pipe one man will tease his beak,
Or, limping, mock the halt that once could fly.

The Poet to this prince of cloud is kin;
He courts the storm and scorns the archer's bow;
An exile in the midst of worldly din,
His giant wings impede his walk below.

TO BEAUTY

(*Translated by Frances Winwar*)

Great is my beauty, like a dream of stone,
O mortals! And my breast where each in turn
Lay bruised, inspires the poet heart to burn
With love as matter mute, eternal, lone.

Unriddled sphinx, I throne the azure deep;
To snow of swan I wed a heart of snow;
I hate all motion that disturbs the flow
Of line. I never laugh, I never weep.

Poets before my vasty attitudes,
Borrowed, 't would seem, from proudest monument,
Shall use their days in stern beatitudes;

For, to beguile these meek ones I present
Mirrors that make all things with beauty bright:
My eyes, my wide eyes of eternal light!

THE LITANIES OF SATAN

(*Translated by Frances Winwar*)

O thou of angels the most wise and fair,
A god betrayed of fate and robbed of prayer,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

O Prince of exile, victim of great wrong,
Who, vanquished, risest seven times more strong,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Omniscient one, sovereign o'er all below,
Familiar healer of our human woe,

[1] awkward.

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou who to shunned, aye, sick whom all despise
Teachest, through love, the taste for Paradise,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou who on thine old puissant mistress, Death,
Engenderedst foolish hope, that charming wraith,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Who giv'st the outcast that calm, lofty eye
That damns a people round the scaffold high,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou who dost know where in the envious earth
God, jealous, hid fair stones of precious worth,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou whose clear eyes search out the deepest core
Where sleep unseen the denizens of ore,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou whose vast hand conceals the precipice
To sleeping strays on ledge of edifice,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou who by magic makest young the bones
Of tardy drunkard, trampled on the stones,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou who to solace those weak souls who pine
Taught'st us to mingle comfort anodyne,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou who with subtle arts dost still impress
The brow of Croesus,[1] vile and pitiless,

O Satan, pity my long suffering

Thou who in maiden eyes and hearts dost sow
The love of tatters and the cult of woe,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Staff of the exile, the inventor's light,
Confessor of the hanged and foes of might,

O Satan, pity my long suffering.

Thou foster father of those children banned
From earthly heaven by God's stern command,

O Satan, pity my long suffering!

PRAYER

To thee, O Satan, praise and glory be,
From thy lost realm, to the profundity
Of Hell where, conquered, thou dost silent dream.
Beneath the Tree of Science may'st thou deem
Worthy my soul to rest with thine that hour
When o'er thy brow another Fane will tower.

Algernon Charles Swinburne

(1837-1909)

It is nearly impossible to appraise the accomplishment of Swinburne. His voluminous output amply demonstrates his amazing poetic gifts. He easily exceeded all English poets in wizardry of word-music. There were no limits to his command over the orchestration of our language, and his melodies and metres were not less wonderful than fresh and new. Technically considered, his work will yield hardly an unrealized line, and the bulk of his perfectly executed poetry would make a book of considerable size. Nor is it true, as has often been said, that there is an absence of intellectual significance in what he wrote, for his fertile mind was ever reaching out to all sorts of fields of interest. He was not, it

[1] King of ancient Lydia, taken as a symbol of wealth.

must be admitted, a profound thinker, but he never made any pretensions to being one. His imagination was, on the other hand, lively, expansive, restless, and generous, even if he was never tempted to speak in the role of prophet. With all this, no one can read Swinburne and come away with the conviction that he has been in the company of a poet of the first rank. One cannot fail to observe that Swinburne is at his very best when he is saying least—in his love or descriptive poetry—when he is frankly making only dazzling music rather than enunciating important ideas. In the last analysis, his missing greatness may be due to his sheer waste of power, his indifference to outline (despite his love of the Greeks), and his tendency to become intoxicated by the sound of his own music.

He was born in London on April 5, 1837, of an ancient family. His father, an admiral in the navy, was the son of a baronet, and his mother was the daughter of an earl. Though he inherited none of those traits which might have inclined him to follow in his father's footsteps, he was so far his father's son that his love of the sea remained all his life a fervent passion. Educated from boyhood to master French and Italian, he was already an avid scholar when he entered Eton. From there he went to Balliol College, Oxford, where he was a brilliant student in Latin and Greek. But Swinburne's erratic, high-strung temperament made all routine hateful to him, and he was anything but a model collegian. Near the very end of his career at Oxford, he left without taking his degree.

Though he later described these four years as profitless, he was actually training himself for his profession by imitation of numerous literary masters: the Elizabethan dramatists, Sappho (cf. Vol. I, p. 373), Boccaccio (cf. Vol. I, pp. 111, 145), and the anonymous creators of the ballads. In 1857 he met Rossetti, Morris, and Burne-Jones, and became for a while a disciple of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. He retained permanently their devotion to art as an end in itself, their revolt against the ugliness of Victorian daily life, and their ideal of ecstasy in poetry, and also shared their enthusiasm for medieval culture. His interests were too eclectic, however, to permit his remaining allied to their movement. For Swinburne drank of many founts of inspiration, and the critic tracing his influences will have to reckon with such varied sources as the Bible, the Elizabethan dramatists, Aeschylus (cf. p. 287, *above*), the Greek lyrists (cf. Vol. I, p. 373 ff.), Villon (cf. *above*), Baudelaire (cf. *above*), Victor Hugo, Landor, and William Morris. As someone has remarked, Swinburne's work is full of "isms"; medievalism, nihilism, republicanism, and anticlericalism permeate various periods of his creation, and paganism, which was natural to him, is nearly omnipresent. That radicalism (in politics, religion, and morality) which he was to maintain for the rest of his days, first became confirmed in him at about the time of his friendship with the Pre-Raphaelites.

After leaving Oxford, he was given an allowance to live in London, where he was soon loved as the darling "imp" of the Rossetti circle. In 1860 he published two poetic dramas, *The Queen Mother* and *Rosamond*, without attracting any notice. During the next few years he wrote reviews, a defense of George Meredith, and an essay on Baudelaire. Himself a hymner of the flesh—he never tired of acknowledging himself a celebrant of the Venus cult—he felt a peculiar kinship with Baudelaire, who had been almost devout in his pursuit of physical experience. In 1864 Swinburne toured the Continent, and in Florence met the man whom he hailed as his master, Walter Savage Landor (cf. *above*, p. 367). On his return to London the next year, he took lodgings in a house in Chelsea with Rossetti and Meredith. Soon after this appeared his *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865), a poetic tragedy (cf. *below*) on the Greek model, which won him great acclaim. At once he followed up this success with another play, *Chastelard* (1865), the first in a trilogy that eventually included *Bothwell* (1874) and *Mary Stuart* (1881). In 1866 another volume of verse was ready, *Poems and Ballads,* in the general excitement over which were mixed many voices of denunciation. The eroticism and hinted perversity of these poems augmented the chorus of puritanical indignation which *Chastelard* had already provoked. Swinburne, who took pleasure in shocking respectability, set to work at once on a novel "to scare Mrs. Grundy out of her remaining wits," but though completed years later, it

was never published—luckily for him, if the description of its contents may be credited.

He now made the acquaintance of the Italian patriot Mazzini, then living in exile in England, and with that strange childlike reverence for heroes which was part of Swinburne's character, he worshiped at the feet of the great Italian. Already a venerator of the republican Victor Hugo, he became inflamed with the cause of republicanism, and his *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) were in a new strain, free from the eroticism of his earlier volumes. In this mood were written *Hertha* (cf. *below*)—which he rated highest among his nondramatic poems—and *To Walt Whitman in America* (cf. *below*). *Songs of Two Nations* (1875) contains more hymns to political freedom. His astonishing productivity continued unabated. At white heat he wrote the austere classic tragedy *Erectheus* (1875). In 1878 he issued a second series of *Poems and Ballads*, containing such pieces as the noble elegy on Baudelaire (occasioned by a false report of the French poet's death), *Ave Atque Vale* (cf. *below*). In the meantime he had published prose studies of Blake (1867), Chapman (1875), and now he issued a volume on Shakespeare (1879).

In 1879 Swinburne underwent the greatest crisis of his life. His affinity with Baudelaire was based upon more than poetic grounds, for he too had cultivated sensuous and sensual experience often to the breaking point. When he was about forty he went into a collapse that brought him close to death. When he began to convalesce, his mother arranged that he live with his friend, the pedantic Theodore Watts-Dunton, in a villa at Putney, a short distance from London. From that time on, Swinburne was virtually Watts-Dunton's prisoner, submitting with characteristic docility to having a regular routine arranged for him, to leaving Putney only in the company of his guardian, and to receiving visits only from those persons of whom the other man approved. He made no protest against the uneventful existence which was his for the last thirty years of his life, and contented himself with withdrawing more intensely to the world of books.

But Swinburne the poet could not flourish in the sane, regulated atmosphere of Putney, although on occasion he still could write a beautiful poem. He was under no illusion as to the diminution of his powers, and he admitted writing to escape boredom. But his pen poured out a steady stream of works: *Songs of the Springtides* (1880), *Studies in Song* (1880), *Heptalogia*—a book of parodies (1880), *Tristram of Lyonesse* (1882), *A Century of Roundels* (1883), *A Midsummer Holiday* (1884), *Astrophel* (1894), *The Tale of Balen* (1896), *A Channel Passage* (1904), *Collected Poems* (1904); and the poetic dramas *Marino Faliero* (1885), *Locrine* (1887), *The Sisters* (1892), and *Rosamund, Queen of the Lombards* (1899). Hardly a volume of these but contains passages full of the old splendor.

In addition he published further critical studies: on Shakespeare (1880), Victor Hugo (1886), Ben Jonson (1889), and *The Age of Shakespeare* (1909), among others. As a critic, Swinburne is admirable for his generous enthusiasms, and he did much to carry on Lamb's good work in restoring interest in the Elizabethans. His criticism, however, suffers from his typical immoderateness of temper; he tended to rhapsodize over his affections, which were inevitably passionate devotions, and to heap so much praise on many authors that one wonders at the absence of any scale of values in his judgments, albeit his taste was rarely in error.

Swinburne edited a definitive edition of his *Poems* (6 vols., 1904) and his *Tragedies* (5 vols., 1905-6). E. Gosse and T. J. Wise edited a volume of *Posthumous Poems* (1917). The standard biography is E. Gosse's (1917), and the best study is G. Lafourcade's (1932).

Choruses from *Atalanta in Calydon*

1

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months[1] in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
And the brown bright nightingale[2] amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
The tongueless vigil and all the pain.

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,
Maiden most perfect, lady of light,
With a noise of winds and many rivers,
With a clamor of waters, and with might;
Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,
Over the splendor and speed of thy feet;
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,
Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,
Fold our hands round her knees, and cling?
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,
Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring!
For the stars and the winds are unto her
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player;
For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,
And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over,
And all the season of snows and sins;
The days dividing lover and lover,
The light that loses, the night that wins;
And time remembered is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten.
And in green underwood and cover
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
Ripe grasses trammel a traveling foot,
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes
From leaf to flower and flower to fruit;
And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,
And the oat is heard above the lyre,
And the hoofed heel of a satyr crushes
The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

And Pan by noon and Bacchus by night,[3]
Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,
Follows with dancing and fills with delight
The Mænad and the Bassarid;[4]
And soft as lips that laugh and hide,
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
And screen from seeing and leave in sight
The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair
Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes;
The wild vine slipping down leaves bare
Her bright breast shortening into sighs;
The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,
But the berried ivy catches and cleaves
To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare
The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.

2

Before the beginning of years
There came to the making of man
Time, with a gift of tears;
Grief, with a glass that ran;
Pleasure, with pain for leaven;
Summer, with flowers that fell;
Remembrance fallen from heaven,
And madness risen from hell;
Strength without hands to smite;
Love that endures for a breath:
Night, the shadow of light,
And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand
Fire, and the falling of tears,
And a measure of sliding sand
From under the feet of the years;
And froth and drift of the sea;
And dust of the laboring earth;

[1] Artemis, as goddess of the moon.
[2] See note 1 to Swinburne's *Itylus*, p. 704.
[3] Pan, the goat-footed god of flocks and pastures; Bacchus, the god of wine.
[4] Various female worshippers of Bacchus.

And bodies of things to be
In the houses of death and of birth;
And wrought with weeping and laughter,
And fashioned with loathing and love,
With life before and after
And death beneath and above,
For a day and a night and a morrow,
That his strength might endure for a span
With travail and heavy sorrow,
The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south
They gathered as unto strife;
They breathed upon his mouth,
They filled his body with life;
Eyesight and speech they wrought
For the veils of the soul therein,
A time for labor and thought,
A time to serve and to sin:
They gave him light in his ways,
And love, and a space for delight,
And beauty and length of days,
And night, and sleep in the night.
His speech is a burning fire;
With his lips he travaileth;
In his heart is a blind desire,
In his eyes foreknowledge of death;
He weaves, and is clothed with derision;
Sows, and he shall not reap;
His life is a watch or a vision
Between a sleep and a sleep.

3

We have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair; thou art goodly, O Love;
Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a dove.
Thy feet are as winds that divide the stream of the sea;
Earth is thy covering to hide thee, the garment of thee.
Thou art swift and subtle and blind as a flame of fire;
Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of desire;
And twain go forth beside thee, a man with a maid;
Her eyes are the eyes of a bride whom delight makes afraid;
As the breath in the buds that stir is her bridal breath;
But Fate is the name of her; and his name is Death.

For an evil blossom was born
Of sea-foam[1] and the frothing of blood,
Blood-red and bitter of fruit,
And the seed of it laughter and tears,
And the leaves of it madness and scorn;
A bitter flower from the bud,
Sprung of the sea without root,
Sprung without graft from the years.

The weft of the world was untorn
That is woven of the day on the night,
The hair of the hours was not white
Nor the raiment of time overworn,
When a wonder of world's delight,
A perilous goddess was born;
And the waves of the sea as she came
Clove, and the foam at her feet,
Fawning, rejoiced to bring forth
A fleshly blossom, a flame
Filling the heavens with heat
To the cold white ends of the north.

And in air the clamorous birds,
And men upon earth that hear
Sweet articulate words
Sweetly divided apart,
And in shallow and channel and mere
The rapid and footless herds,
Rejoiced, being foolish of heart.

For all they said upon earth,
She is fair, she is white like a dove,
And the life of the world in her breath
Breathes, and is born at her birth;
For they knew thee for mother of love,
And knew thee not mother of death.

What hadst thou to do being born,
Mother, when winds were at ease,
As a flower of the springtime of corn,
A flower of the foam of the seas?
For bitter thou wast from thy birth,
Aphrodite, a mother of strife;
For before thee some rest was on earth,
A little respite from tears,
A little pleasure of life;

[1] Aphrodite was represented in Greek mythology as having been born of the sea-foam.

For life was not then as thou art,
But as one that waxeth in years
Sweet-spoken, a fruitful wife;
Earth had no thorn, and desire
No sting, neither death any dart;
What hadst thou to do amongst these,
Thou, clothed with a burning fire,
Thou, girt with sorrow of heart,
Thou, sprung of the seed of the seas
As an ear from a seed of corn,
As a brand plucked forth of a pyre,
As a ray shed forth of the morn,
For division of soul and disease,
For a dart and a sting and a thorn?
What ailed thee then to be born?

Was there not evil enough,
Mother, and anguish on earth
Born with a man at his birth,
Wastes underfoot, and above
Storm out of heaven, and dearth
Shaken down from the shining thereof,
Wrecks from afar overseas
And peril of shallow and firth,
And tears that spring and increase
In the barren places of mirth,
That thou, having wings as a dove,
Being girt with desire for a girth,
That thou must come after these,
That thou must lay on him love?

Thou shouldst not so have been born:
But death should have risen with thee,
Mother, and visible fear.
Grief, and the wringing of hands,
And noise of many that mourn;
The smitten bosom, the knee
Bowed, and in each man's ear
A cry as of perishing lands,
A moan as of people in prison,
A tumult of infinite griefs;
And thunder of storm on the sands,
And wailing of wives on the shore;
And under thee newly arisen
Loud shoals, and shipwrecking reefs,
Fierce air and violent light;
Sail rent and sundering oar,
Darkness, and noises of night;
Clashing of streams in the sea,
Wave against wave as a sword,
Clamor of currents, and foam;
Rains making ruin on earth,
Winds that wax ravenous and roam
As wolves in a wolfish horde;
Fruits growing faint in the tree,
And blind things dead in their birth;
Famine, and blighting of corn,
When thy time was come to be born.

All these we know of; but thee
Who shall discern or declare?
In the uttermost ends of the sea
The light of thine eyelids and hair,
The light of thy bosom as fire
Between the wheel of the sun
And the flying flames of the air?
Wilt thou turn thee not yet nor have pity.
But abide with despair and desire
And the crying of armies undone,
Lamentation of one with another
And breaking of city by city;
The dividing of friend against friend,
The severing of brother and brother;
Wilt thou utterly bring to an end?
Have mercy, mother!

For against all men from of old
Thou hast set thine hand as a curse,
And cast out gods from their places.
These things are spoken of thee.
Strong kings and goodly with gold
Thou hast found out arrows to pierce,
And made their kingdoms and races
As dust and surf of the sea.
All these, overburdened with woes
And with length of their days waxen weak,
Thou slewest; and sentest moreover
Upon Tyro[2] an evil thing,
Rent hair and a fetter and blows
Making bloody the flower of the cheek,
Though she lay by a god as a lover,
Though fair, and the seed of a king.
For of old, being full of thy fire,
She endured not longer to wear
On her bosom a saffron vest,
On her shoulder an ashwood quiver;
Being mixed and made one through desire,
With Enipeus, and all her hair
Made moist with his mouth, and her breast
Filled full of the foam of the river.

(1864)

[2] Tyro, wife of Cretheus of Thessaly, was beloved by the river-god Enipeus.

Itylus[1]

Swallow, my sister, O sister swallow,
How can thine heart be full of the spring?
A thousand summers are over and dead.
What hast thou found in the spring to follow?
What hast thou found in thy heart to sing?
What wilt thou do when the summer is shed?

O swallow, sister, O fair swift swallow,
Why wilt thou fly after spring to the south,
The soft south whither thine heart is set?
Shall not the grief of the old time follow?
Shall not the song thereof cleave to thy mouth?
Hast thou forgotten ere I forget?

Sister, my sister, O fleet sweet swallow,
Thy way is long to the sun and the south;
But I, fulfill'd of my heart's desire,
Shedding my song upon height, upon hollow,
From tawny body and sweet small mouth
Feed the heart of the night with fire.

I the nightingale all spring through,
O swallow, sister, O changing swallow,
All spring through till the spring is done,
Clothed with the light of the night on the dew,
Sing, while the hours and the wild birds follow,
Take flight and follow and find the sun.

Sister, my sister, O soft light swallow,
Though all things feast in the spring's guest-chamber,
How hast thou heart to be glad thereof yet?
For where thou fliest I shall not follow,
Till life forget and death remember,
Till thou remember and I forget.

Swallow, my sister, O singing swallow,
I know not how thou hast heart to sing.
Hast thou the heart? is it all past over?
Thy lord the summer is good to follow,
And fair the feet of thy lover the spring:
But what wilt thou say to the spring thy lover?

O swallow, sister, O fleeting swallow,
My heart in me is a molten ember
And over my head the waves have met.
But thou wouldst tarry or I would follow
Could I forget or thou remember,
Couldst thou remember and I forget.

O sweet stray sister, O shifting swallow,
The heart's division divideth us.
Thy heart is light as a leaf of a tree;
But mine goes forth among sea-gulfs hollow
To the place of the slaying of Itylus,
The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea.

O swallow, sister, O rapid swallow,
I pray thee sing not a little space.
Are not the roofs and the lintels wet?
The woven web that was plain to follow,
The small slain body, the flower-like face,
Can I remember if thou forget?

O sister, sister, thy first-begotten!
The hands that cling and the feet that follow,
The voice of the child's blood crying yet,
Who hath remember'd me? who hath forgotten?
Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow,
But the world shall end when I forget.

(pub. 1866)

[1] Tereus, king of Thrace, dishonored his wife's sister Philomela and cut out her tongue to prevent her from revealing his crime. In revenge his wife Procne killed her son Itylus, served him as food to his father, and fled with Philomela. In order to permit their escape from Tereus the gods turned them into birds—Philomela into a nightingale and Procne into a swallow.

A Match

Though not a rondeau, this poem bears a certain resemblance to that form by reason of the repetition of the opening two lines of each stanza as the seventh and eighth lines.

If love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf,
Our lives would grow together
In sad or singing weather,
Blown fields or flowerful closes,
Green pleasure or gray grief;
If love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf.

If I were what the words are,
And love were like the tune,
With double sound and single
Delight our lips would mingle,
With kisses glad as birds are
That get sweet rain at noon;
If I were what the words are
And love were like the tune.

If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death,
We'd shine and snow together
Ere March made sweet the weather
With daffodil and starling
And hours of fruitful breath;
If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death.

If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy,
We'd play for lives and seasons
With loving looks and treasons
And tears of night and morrow
And laughs of maid and boy;
If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy.

If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May,
We'd throw with leaves for hours
And draw for days with flowers,
Till day like night were shady
And night were bright like day;
If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May.

If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain,
We'd hunt down love together,
Pluck out his flying-feather,
And teach his feet a measure,
And find his mouth a rein;
If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain.

(pub. 1866)

Hymn to Proserpine[1]

After the Proclamation in Rome of the Christian Faith

Vicisti, Galilæe[2]

I have lived long enough, having seen one thing, that love hath an end;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.

Thou art more than the day or the morrow, the seasons that laugh or that weep;
For these give joy and sorrow; but thou, Proserpina, sleep.
Sweet is the treading of wine, and sweet the feet of the dove;
But a goodlier gift is thine than foam of the grapes or love.
Yea, is not even Apollo, with hair and harp-string of gold,
A bitter God to follow, a beautiful God to behold?
I am sick of singing: the bays burn deep and chafe: I am fain
To rest a little from praise and grievous pleasure and pain.
For the Gods we know not of, who give us our daily breath,
We know they are cruel as love or life, and lovely as death.
O Gods dethroned and deceased, cast forth, wiped out in a day!
From your wrath is the world released, redeemed from your chains, men say.
New Gods are crowned in the city; their flowers have broken your rods;
They are merciful, clothed with pity, the young compassionate Gods.
But for me their new device is barren, the days are bare;
Things long past over suffice, and men forgotten that were.
Time and the Gods are at strife; ye dwell in the midst thereof,
Draining a little life from the barren breasts of love.
I say to you, cease, take rest; yea, I say to you all be at peace,
Till the bitter milk of her breast and the barren bosom shall cease.
Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean? but these thou shalt not take,
The laurel, the palms and the pæan, the breast of the nymphs in the brake;
Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with tenderer breath;
And all the wings of the Loves, and all the joy before death;
All the feet of the hours that sound as a single lyre,
Dropped and deep in the flowers, with strings that flicker like fire,

[1] Proserpine, wife of Pluto and goddess of the nether world. See Swinburne's *The Garden of Proserpine*, p. 708.
[2] Thou hast conquered, Galilean.

More than these wilt thou give, things fairer than all these things?
Nay, for a little we live, and life hath mutable wings.
A little while and we die; shall life not thrive as it may?
For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.
And grief is a grievous thing, and a man hath enough of his tears:
Why should he labor, and bring fresh grief to blacken his years?
Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown gray from thy breath;
We have drunken of things Lethean,[3] and fed on the fulness of death.
Laurel is green for a season, and love is sweet for a day;
But love grows bitter with treason, and laurel outlives not May.
Sleep, shall we sleep after all? for the world is not sweet in the end;
For the old faiths loosen and fall, the new years ruin and rend.
Fate is a sea without shore, and the soul is a rock that abides;
But her ears are vexed with the roar and her face with the foam of the tides.
O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of rack and rods!
O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods![4]
Though all men abase them before you in spirits, and all knees bend,
I kneel not neither adore you, but standing, look to the end.
All delicate days and pleasant, all spirits and sorrows are cast
Far out with the foam of the present that sweeps to the surf of the past:
Where beyond the extreme sea-wall, and between the remote sea-gates,
Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and deep death waits:
Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about with the seas as with wings,
And impelled of invisible tides, fulfilled of unspeakable things,
White-eyed and poisonous-finned, shark-toothed and serpentine-curled,
Rolls, under the whitening wind of the future, the wave of the world.
The depths stand naked in sunder behind it, the storms flee away;
In the hollow before it the thunder is taken and snared as a prey;
In its sides is the north-wind bound; and its salt is of all men's tears;
With light of ruin, and sound of changes, and pulse of years:
With travail of day after day, and with trouble of hour upon hour;
And bitter as blood is the spray; and the crests are as fangs that devour:
And its vapor and storm of its steam as the sighing of spirits to be;
And its noise as the noise in a dream; and its depth as the roots of the sea:
And the height of its head as the height of the utmost stars of the air;
And the ends of the earth at the might thereof tremble, and time is made bare.
Will ye bridle the deep sea with reins, will ye chasten the high sea with rods?
Will ye take her to chain her with chains, who is older than all ye Gods?
All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire shall ye pass and be past;
Ye are Gods, and behold, ye shall die, and the waves be upon you at last.
In the darkness of time, in the deeps of the years, in the changes of things,
Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and the world shall forget you for kings.
Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy lords and our forefathers trod,
Though these that were Gods are dead, and thou being dead art a God,
Though before thee the throned Cytherean[5] be fallen, and hidden her head,
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down to the dead.
Of the maiden thy mother men sing as a goddess with grace clad around;
Thou art throned where another was king; where another was queen she is crowned.
Yea, once we had sight of another: but now she is queen, say these.
Not as thine, not as thine was our mother, a blossom of flowering seas,

[3] causing forgetfulness.
[4] This refers to the worship of saints' relics.
[5] Aphrodite, who was born of the sea-foam.

Clothed round with the world's desire as with raiment, and fair as the foam,
And fleeter than kindled fire, and a goddess, and mother of Rome.
For thine came pale and a maiden, and sister to sorrow; but ours,
Her deep hair heavily laden with odor, and color of flowers,
White rose of the rose-white water, a silver splendor, a flame,
Bent down into us that besought her, and earth grew sweet with her name.
For thine came weeping a slave among slaves, and rejected; but she
Came flushed from the full-flushed wave, and imperial, her foot on the sea.
And the wonderful waters knew her, the winds and the viewless ways,
And the roses grew rosier, and bluer the sea-blue stream of the bays.
Ye are fallen, our lords, by what token? we wist that ye should not fall.
Ye were all so fair that are broken; and one more fair than ye all.
But I turn to her still, having seen she shall surely abide in the end;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
O daughter of earth, of my mother, her crown and blossom of birth,
I am also, I also thy brother; I go as I came unto earth.
In the night where thine eyes are as moons are in heaven, the night where thou art,
Where the silence is more than all tunes, where sleep overflows from the heart,
Where the poppies are sweet as the rose in our world, and the red rose is white,
And the wind falls faint as it blows with the fume of the flowers of the night,
And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the shadow of Gods from afar
Grows dim in thine ears and deep as the deep dim soul of a star,
In the sweet low light of thy face, under heavens untrod by the sun,
Let my soul with their souls find place, and forget what is done and undone.
Thou art more than the Gods who number the days of our temporal breath;
For these give labor and slumber; but thou, Proserpina, death.
Therefore now at thy feet I abide for a season in silence. I know
I shall die as my fathers died, and sleep as they sleep; even so.
For the glass of the years is brittle wherein we gaze for a span;
A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man.[6]
So long I endure, no longer; and laugh not again, neither weep.
For there is no God found stronger than death; and death is a sleep.

(pub. 1866)

A Ballad of Burdens

The French *ballade*, of which this is a variation, is characterized by the refrain which forms the last line of each stanza. The most common rhyme-scheme is *ababbcbc*, though the ten-line stanza is also to be found. The *envoy*, which contains half as many lines as the stanza, is both dedication and climax of the poem.

The burden of fair women. Vain delight,
  And love self-slain in some sweet shameful way,
And sorrowful old age that comes by night
  As a thief comes that has no heart by day,
  And change that finds fair cheeks and leaves them gray,
And weariness that keeps awake for hire,
  And grief that says what pleasure used to say:
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bought kisses. This is sore,
  A burden without fruit in childbearing;
Between the nightfall and the dawn threescore,
  Threescore between the dawn and evening.
  The shuddering in thy lips, the shuddering
In thy sad eyelids tremulous like fire,
  Makes love seem shameful and a wretched thing:
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sweet speeches. Nay, kneel down
  Cover thy head, and weep; for verily
These market-men that buy thy white and brown
  In the last days shall take no thought for thee;
  In the last days like earth thy face shall be,

[6] Swinburne refers to a line from Epictetus, a Greek philosopher of the first century A.D.: "Thou art a little soul bearing up a corpse."

Yea, like sea-marsh made thick with brine and mire,
Sad with sick leavings of the sterile sea:
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of long living. Thou shalt fear
Waking, and sleeping mourn upon thy bed;
And say at night, "Would God the day were here!"
And say at dawn, "Would God the day were dead!"
With weary days thou shalt be clothed and fed,
And wear remorse of heart for thine attire,
Pain for thy girdle, and sorrow upon thine head:
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bright colors. Thou shalt see
Gold tarnished, and the gray above the green;
And as the thing thou seest thy face shall be,
And no more as the thing beforetime seen.
And thou shalt say of mercy, "It hath been;"
And living, watch the old lips and loves expire,
And talking, tears shall take thy breath between:
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sad sayings. In that day
Thou shalt tell all thy days and hours, and tell
Thy times and ways and words of love, and say
How one was dear, and one desirable,
And sweet was life to hear and sweet to smell;
But now with lights reverse the old hours retire,
And the last hour is shod with fire from hell:
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of four seasons. Rain in spring,
White rain and wind among the tender trees;
A summer of green sorrows gathering;
Rank autumn in a mist of miseries,
With sad face set towards the year, that sees
The charred ash drop out of the dropping pyre,
And winter wan with many maladies;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of dead faces. Out of sight
And out of love, beyond the reach of hands,
Changed in the changing of the dark and light,
They walk and weep about the barren lands
Where no seed is, nor any garner stands,
Where in short breaths the doubtful days respire,
And time's turned glass lets through the sighing sands:
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of much gladness. Life and lust
Forsake thee, and the face of thy delight;
And underfoot the heavy hour strews dust,
And overhead strange weathers burn and bite;
And where the red was, lo the bloodless white;
And where truth was, the likeness of a liar;
And where day was, the likeness of the night:
This is the end of every man's desire.

L'ENVOY

Princes,[1] and ye whom pleasure quickeneth,
Heed well this rhyme before your pleasure tire;
For life is sweet, but after life is death.
This is the end of every man's desire.

(pub. 1866)

The Garden of Proserpine[1]

Here, where the world is quiet,
Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
In doubtful dreams of dreams,
I watch the green field growing
For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest-time and mowing,
A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,
And men that laugh and weep;
Of what may come hereafter
For men that sow to reap.
I am weary of days and hours,
Blown buds of barren flowers,
Desires and dreams and powers
And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbor,
And far from eye or ear
Wan waves and wet winds labor,
Weak ships and spirits steer;
They drive adrift, and whither
They wot not who make thither;
But no such winds blow hither,
And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,
No heather-flower or vine,
But bloomless buds of poppies,

[1] The envoy (or message) of a ballade is regularly addressed to a prince or other lordly person.

[1] Proserpine was wife of Pluto and goddess of the nether world

Green grapes of Proserpine,
Pale beds of blowing rushes,
Where no leaf blooms or blushes
Save this whereout she crushes
For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,
In fruitless fields of corn,
They bow themselves and slumber
All night till light is born;
And like a soul belated,
In hell and heaven unmated,
By cloud and mist abated
Comes out of darkness morn.

Though one were strong as seven,
He too with death shall dwell,
Nor wake with wings in heaven,
Nor weep for pains in hell;
Though one were fair as roses,
His beauty clouds and closes;
And well though love reposes,
In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal,
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands
Who gathers all things mortal
With cold, immortal hands;
Her languid lips are sweeter
Than love's who fears to greet her,
To men that mix and meet her
From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,
She waits for all men born;
Forgets the earth her mother,[2]
The life of fruits and corn;
And spring and seed and swallow
Take wing for her and follow
Where summer song rings hollow
And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,
The old loves with wearier wings;
And all dead years draw thither,
And all disastrous things;
Dead dreams of days forsaken,
Blind buds that snows have shaken,
Wild leaves that winds have taken,
Red strays of ruined springs.

We are not sure of sorrow;
And joy was never sure;
Today will die tomorrow;
Time stoops to no man's lure;
And love, grown faint and fretful,
With lips but half regretful
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful
Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives forever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
Nor any change of light;
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight;
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal—
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night.

(pub. 1866)

[2] Demeter, mother of Proserpine, was the goddess of fertility.

Ave Atque Vale[1]

In Memory of Charles Baudelaire

Nous devrions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs;
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres,
Son vent mélancolique à l'entour de leur marbres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.
—Les Fleurs du mal.[2]

I

Shall I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,
Brother, on this that was the veil of thee?
Or quiet sea-flower molded by the sea,
Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel,
Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads[3] weave,
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve?
Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
And full of bitter summer, but more sweet

[1] Hail and farewell.
[2] Cf. Vol. II, p. 696.
[3] tree nymphs.

To thee than gleanings of a northern shore
Trod by no tropic feet?

II

For always thee the fervid languid glories
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;
Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs
Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,
The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave
Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.[4]
Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear
Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,
Blind gods that cannot spare.

III

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime;
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;
And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;
And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,
Seeing as men sow men reap.

IV

O sleepless heart and somber soul unsleeping,
That were athirst for sleep and no more life
And no more love, for peace and no more strife!
Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping
Spirit and body and all the springs of song,
Is it well now where love can do no wrong,
Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang
Behind the unopening closure of her lips?
Is it not well where soul from body slips
And flesh from bone divides without a pang
As dew from flower-bell drips?

[4] Sappho, the poet of Lesbos, who was said to have cast herself into the sea from the Leucadian promontory. For some of her poems, see Vol. I, pp. 373-4.

V

It is enough; the end and the beginning
Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.
O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend,
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,
No triumph and no labor and no lust,
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.
O quiet eyes wherein the light saith nought,
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night
With obscure finger silences your sight,
Nor in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,
Sleep, and have sleep for light.

VI

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,
Dreams and desires and somber songs and sweet,
Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet
Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,
The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savor and shade of old-world pine-forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep?

VII

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision?
O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what bloom,
Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the gloom?
What of despair, of rapture, of derision,
What of life is there, what of ill or good?
Are the fruits gray like dust or bright like blood?
Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,
The faint fields quicken any terrene root,
In low lands where the sun and moon are mute
And all the stars keep silence? Are there flowers
At all, or any fruit?

VIII

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,
O, sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet

Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's[5] veiled head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,
And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs—
These only, these the harkening spirit hears,
Sees only such things rise.

IX

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
What ails us with thee, who art wind and air?
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?
Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,
Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.
Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,
The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind
Are still the eluded eyes.

X

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's changes,
Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,
The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll
I lay my hand on, and not death estranges
My spirit from communion of thy song—
These memories and these melodies that throng
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal—
These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold
As though a hand were in my hand to hold,
Or through mine ears a mourning musical
Of many mourners rolled.

XI

I among these, I also, in such station
As when the pyre was charred, and piled the sods,
And offering to the dead made, and their gods,
The old mourners had, standing to make libation,
I stand, and to the gods and to the dead
Do reverence without prayer or praise, and shed
Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,
And what of honey and spice my seedlands bear,
And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,
And lay, Orestes-like,[6] across the tomb
A curl of severed hair.

XII

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,
Not like the low-lying head of Him, the King,[7]
The flame that made of Troy a ruinous thing,
Thou liest, and on this dust no tears could quicken
There fall no tears like theirs that all men hear
Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear
Down the opening leaves of holy poets' pages.
Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns;
But bending us-ward with memorial urns
The most high Muses that fulfill all ages
Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

XIII

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often
Among us darkling here the lord of light
Makes manifest his music and his might
In hearts that open and in lips that soften
With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.
Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,
And nourished them indeed with bitter bread;
Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came,
The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame
Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed
Who feeds our hearts with fame.

XIV

Therefore he too now at thy soul's sun-setting,
God of all suns and songs, he too bends down
To mix his laurel with thy cypress crown,
And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting.
Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,
Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,
Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,
And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs
Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,

[5] queen of the nether world.

[6] See the opening scene in Æschylus's *Choëphoroe*.

[7] Agamemnon.

And over thine irrevocable head
Sheds light from the under skies.

XV

And one weeps with him in the ways Lethean,[8]
And stains with tears her changing bosom chill:
That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,[9]
That thing transformed which was the Cytherean,
With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine
Long since, and face no more called Erycine;[10]
A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.
Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell
Did she, a sad and second prey, compel
Into the footless places once more trod,
And shadows hot from hell.

XVI

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,[11]
No choral salutation lure to light
A spirit sick with perfume and sweet night
And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom.
There is no help for these things; none to mend
And none to mar; not all our songs, O friend,
Will make death clear or make life durable.
Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine
And with wild notes about this dust of thine
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell
And wreathe an unseen shrine.

XVII

Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more to live;
And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.
Out of the mystic and the mournful garden
Where all day through thine hands in barren braid
Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,
Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants gray,
Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,
Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that started,
Shall death not bring us all as thee one day
Among the days departed?

XVIII

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.
Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
With sadder than the Niobean[12] womb,
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.
Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done;
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.

(1868)

Hertha[1]

I am that which began;
Out of me the years roll;
Out of me God and man;
I am equal and whole;
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily; I am the soul.

Before ever land was,
Before ever the sea,
Or soft hair of the grass,
Or fair limbs of the tree,
Or the flesh-colored fruit of my branches, I was, and thy soul was in me.

First life on my sources
First drifted and swam;
Out of me are the forces
That save it or damn;
Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast and bird; before God was, I am.[2]

[8] referring to the river of forgetfulness in the otherworld.

[9] According to medieval legend, Venus held her court within the Venusberg, a mountain in central Germany.

[10] referring to Eryx, in Sicily, where Aphrodite had a temple.

[11] Tannhäuser, after spending a year with Venus in the Venusberg, asked absolution of the pope, who told him that he could hope for God's mercy no more than he could hope for the dry staff in the pope's hand to grow green again. After Tannhäuser's departure the staff began to bud.

[12] Niobe, the queen of Thebes, boasted of her children. She was punished by seeing them all killed by the gods. She herself was turned into stone.

[1] The ancient Germanic goddess of the earth. She is the speaker of the poem.

[2] Cf. *John*, 8:58: "Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."

Beside or above me
Nought is there to go;
Love or unlove me,
Unknow me or know,
I am that which unloves me and loves; I am stricken, and I am the blow.[3]

I the mark that is missed
And the arrows that miss,
I the mouth that is kissed
And the breath in the kiss,
The search, and the sought, and the seeker, the soul and the body that is.

I am that thing which blesses
My spirit elate;
That which caresses
With hands uncreate
My limbs unbegotten that measure the length of the measure of fate.

But what thing dost thou now,
Looking Godward, to cry
"I am I, thou art thou,
I am low, thou art high"?
I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him; find thou but thyself, thou art I.

I the grain and the furrow,
The plough-cloven clod
And the ploughshare drawn thorough,
The germ and the sod,
The deed and the doer, the seed and the sower, the dust which is God.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,[4]
Child, underground?
Fire that impassioned thee,
Iron that bound,
Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast thou known of or found?

Canst thou say in thine heart
Thou hast seen with thine eyes
With what cunning of art
Thou wast wrought in what wise,
By what force of what stuff thou wast shapen, and shown on my breast to the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,
Knowledge of me?
Has the wilderness told it thee?
Hast thou learnt of the sea?
Hast thou communed in spirit with night? have the winds taken counsel with thee?

Have I set such a star
To show light on thy brow
That thou sawest from afar
What I show to thee now?
Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the mountains and thou?

What is here, dost thou know it?
What was, hast thou known?
Prophet nor poet
Nor tripod nor throne[5]
Nor spirit nor flesh can make answer, but only thy mother alone.

Mother, not maker,
Born, and not made;
Though her children forsake her,
Allured or afraid,
Praying prayers to the God of their fashion, she stirs not for all that have prayed.

A creed is a rod,
And a crown is of night;
But this thing is God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out thy life as the light.

I am in thee to save thee,
As my soul in thee saith;
Give thou, as I gave thee,
Thy life-blood and breath,
Green leaves of thy labor, white flowers of thy thought, and red fruit of thy death.

Be the ways of thy giving
As mine were to thee;
The free life of thy living,
Be the gift of it free;
Not as servant to lord, nor as master to slave, shalt thou give thee to me.

[3] Cf. Emerson's *Brahma*, in which he says,
"Far and forgot to me is near;
Shadow and sunlight are the same
. . . . . .
When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt . . ."

[4] These questions are directly suggested by Job, chapters 38 and 39.

[5] Neither priest nor king. A tripod was a three-legged altar used by the priestess of Apollo.

O children of banishment,
Souls overcast,
Were the lights[6] ye see vanish meant
Always to last,
Ye would know not the sun overshining the shadows and stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod
The dim paths of the night
Set the shadow called God
In your skies to give light;
But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadowless soul is in sight.

The tree many-rooted[7]
That swells to the sky
With frondage red-fruited,
The life-tree am I;
In the buds of your lives is the sap of my leaves: ye shall live and not die.

But the gods of your fashion
That take and that give,
In their pity and passion
That scourge and forgive,
They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls off; they shall die and not live.

My own blood is what stanches
The wounds in my bark;
Stars caught in my branches
Make day of the dark,
And are worshipped as suns till the sunrise shall tread out their fires as a spark.

Where dead ages hide under
The live roots of the tree,
In my darkness the thunder
Makes utterance of me;
In the clash of my boughs with each other ye hear the waves sound of the sea.

That noise is of Time,
As his feathers are spread
And his feet set to climb
Through the boughs overhead,
And my foliage rings round him and rustles, and branches are bent with his tread.

[6] religious creeds.

[7] The tree Yggdrasill which, according to Norse mythology, supported the universe. Its roots were in hell, its trunk in earth, and its branches in heaven.

The storm-winds of ages
Blow through me and cease,
The war-wind that rages,
The spring-wind of peace,
Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses, ere one of my blossoms increase.

All sounds of all changes,
All shadows and lights
On the world's mountain-ranges
And stream-riven heights,
Whose tongue is the wind's tongue and language of storm-clouds on earth-shaking nights;

All forms of all faces,
All works of all hands
In unsearchable places
Of time-stricken lands,
All death and all life, and all reigns and all ruins, drop through me as sands.

Though sore be my burden
And more than ye know,
And my growth have no guerdon
But only to grow,
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings above me or deathworms below.

These too have their part in me,
As I too in these;
Such fire is at heart in me,
Such sap is this tree's,
Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets of infinite lands and of seas.

In the spring-colored hours
When my mind was as May's
There brake forth of me flowers
By centuries of days,
Strong blossoms with perfume of manhood shot out from my spirit as rays.

And the sound of them springing
And smell of their shoots
Were as warmth and sweet singing
And strength to my roots;
And the lives of my children made perfect with freedom of soul were my fruits.

I bid you but be;
I have need not of prayer;
I have need of you free
As your mouths of mine air;

That my heart may be greater within me, beholding the fruits of me fair.

More fair than strange fruit is
Of faiths ye espouse;
In me only the root is
That blooms in your boughs;
Behold now your God that ye made you, to feed him with faith of your vows.

In the darkening and whitening
Abysses adored,
With dayspring and lightning
For lamp and for sword,
God thunders in heaven, and his angels are red with the wrath of the Lord.

O my sons, O too dutiful
Toward gods not of me,
Was not I enough beautiful?
Was it hard to be free?
For behold, I am with you, am in you and of you; look forth now and see.

Lo, winged with world's wonders,
With miracles shod,
With the fires of his thunders
For raiment and rod,
God trembles in heaven, and his angels are white with the terror of God.

For his twilight[8] is come on him,
His anguish is here;
And his spirits gaze dumb on him,
Grown gray from his fear;
And his hour taketh hold on him stricken, the last of his infinite year.

Thought made him and breaks him,
Truth slays and forgives;
But to you, as time takes him,
This new thing it gives,
Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds upon freedom and lives.

For truth only is living,
Truth only is whole,
And the love of his giving
Man's polestar and pole;
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and seed of my soul.

[8] This refers to the Norse belief in a twilight of the gods, when the whole universe shall perish but be followed by a new one.

One birth of my bosom;
One beam of mine eye;
One topmost blossom
That scales the sky;
Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me, man that is I

(pub. 1871)

To Walt Whitman[1] *in America*

Send but a song oversea for us,
Heart of their hearts who are free.
Heart of their singer, to be for us
More than our singing can be;
Ours, in the tempest at error,
With no light but the twilight of terror;
Send us a song overseal

Sweet-smelling of pine-leaves and grasses,
And blown as a tree through and through
With the winds of the keen mountain-passes,
And tender as sun-smitten dew;
Sharp-tongued as the winter that shakes
The wastes of your limitless lakes,
Wide-eyed as the sea-line's blue.

O strong-winged soul with prophetic
Lips hot with the bloodbeats of song,
With tremor of heartstrings magnetic,
With thoughts as thunders in throng,
With consonant ardors of chords
That pierce men's souls as with swords
And hale them hearing along,

Make us too music, to be with us
As a word from a world's heart warm,
To sail the dark as a sea with us,
Full-sailed, outsinging the storm,
A song to put fire in our ears
Whose burning shall burn up tears,
Whose sign bid battle reform;

A note in the ranks of a clarion,
A word in the wind of cheer,
To consume as with lightning the carrion
That makes time foul for us here;
In the air that our dead things infest
A blast of the breath of the west,
Till east way as west way is clear.

[1] American poet (1819-1892).

Out of the sun beyond sunset,
From the evening whence morning shall be,
With the rollers in measureless onset,
With the van of the storming sea,
With the world-wide wind, with the breath
That breaks ships driven upon death,
With the passion of all things free,

With the sea-steeds footless and frantic,
White myriads for death to bestride
In the charge of the ruining Atlantic
Where deaths by regiments ride,
With clouds and clamors of waters,
With a long note shriller than slaughter's
On the furrowless fields world-wide,

With terror, with ardor and wonder,
With the soul of the season that wakes
When the weight of a whole year's thunder
In the tidestream of autumn breaks,
Let the flight of the wide-winged word
Come over, come in and be heard,
Take form and fire for our sakes.

For a continent bloodless with travail
Here toils and brawls as it can,
And the web of it who shall unravel
Of all that peer on the plan;
Would fain grow men, but they grow not,
And fain be free, but they know not
One name for freedom and man?

One name, not twain for division;
One thing, not twain, from the birth;
Spirit and substance and vision,
Worth more than worship is worth;
Unbeheld, unadored, undivined,
The cause, the center, the mind,
The secret and sense of the earth.

Here as a weakling in irons,
Here as a weanling in bands,
As a prey that the stake-net environs,
Our life that we looked for stands;
And the man-child naked and dear,
Democracy, turns on us here
Eyes trembling with tremulous hands.

It sees not what season shall bring to it
Sweet fruit of its bitter desire;
Few voices it hears yet sing to it,
Few pulses of hearts reaspire;
Foresees not time, nor forehears
The noises of imminent years,
Earthquake, and thunder, and fire:

When crowned and weaponed and curbless
It shall walk without helm or shield
The bare burnt furrows and herbless
Of war's last flame-stricken field,
Till godlike, equal with time,
It stand in the sun sublime,
In the godhead of man revealed.

Round your people and over them
Light like raiment is drawn,
Close as a garment to cover them
Wrought not of mail nor of lawn;
Here, with hope hardly to wear,
Naked nations and bare
Swim, sink, strike out for the dawn.

Chains are here, and a prison,
Kings, and subjects, and shame.
If the God upon you be arisen,
How should our songs be the same?
How, in confusion of change,
How shall we sing, in a strange
Land, songs praising his name?

God is buried and dead to us,
Even the spirit of earth,
Freedom; so have they said to us,
Some with mocking and mirth,
Some with heartbreak and tears;
And a God without eyes, without ears,
Who shall sing of him, dead in the birth?

The earth-god Freedom, the lonely
Face lightening, the footprint unshod,
Not as one man crucified only
Nor scourged with but one life's rod;
The soul that is substance of nations,
Reincarnate with fresh generations;
The great god Man, which is God.

But in weariest of years and obscurest
Doth it live not at heart of all things,
The one God and one spirit, a purest
Life, fed from unstanchable springs?
Within love, within hatred it is,
And its seed in the stripe as the kiss,
And in slaves is the germ, and in kings.

Freedom we call it, for holier
Name of the soul's there is none;

Surelier its labors, if slowlier,
Than the meters of star or of sun;
Slowlier than life into breath,
Surelier than time into death,
It moves till its labor be done.

Till the motion be done and the measure
Circling through season and clime,
Slumber and sorrow and pleasure,
Vision of virtue and crime;
Till consummate with conquering eyes,
A soul disembodied, it rise
From the body transfigured of time.

Till it rise and remain and take station
With the stars of the worlds that rejoice;
Till the voice of its heart's exultation
Be as theirs an invariable voice;
By no discord of evil estranged,
By no pause, by no breach in it changed,
By no clash in the chord of its choice.

It is one with the world's generations,
With the spirit, the star, and the sod;
With the kingless and king-stricken nations,
With the cross, and the chain, and the rod;
The most high, the most secret, most lonely,
The earth-soul Freedom, that only
Lives, and that only is God.

(pub. 1871)

A Ballad of François Villon[1]

PRINCE OF ALL BALLAD-MAKERS

Bird of the bitter bright gray golden morn,
Scarce risen upon the dusk of dolorous years,
First of us all and sweetest singer born,
Whose far shrill note the world of new men hears
Cleave the cold shuddering shade as twilight clears;
When song new-born put off the old world's attire
And felt its tune on her changed lips expire,
Writ foremost on the roll of them that came
Fresh girt for service of the latter lyre,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Alas, the joy, the sorrow, and the scorn,
That clothed thy life with hopes and sins and fears,
And gave thee stones for bread and tares for corn
And plume-plucked gaol-birds for thy starveling peers,
Till death clipt close their flight with shameful shears;
Till shifts came short and loves were hard to hire,
When lilt of song nor twitch of twangling wire
Could buy thee bread or kisses; when light fame
Spurned like a ball and haled through brake and briar,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn!
Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick tears!
Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,
That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers,
Like joy-bells crossed with death-bells in our ears!
What far delight has cooled the fierce desire
That, like some ravenous bird, was strong to tire
On that frail flesh and soul consumed with flame,
But left more sweet than roses to respire,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name?

ENVOI

Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire,
A harlot was thy nurse, a God thy sire;
Shame soiled thy song, and song assoiled thy shame.
But from thy feet now death has washed the mire,
Love reads out first at head of all our quire,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name.

(September 1877)

[1] French poet-vagabond (1431-146-?). See Rossetti's translation of his *Ballad of Dead Ladies*, Vol. II, p. 681.

The Epitaph in Form of a Ballad

WHICH VILLON MADE FOR HIMSELF AND HIS COMRADES, EXPECTING TO BE HANGED ALONG WITH THEM

Men, brother men, that after us yet live,
Let not your hearts too hard against us be;
For if some pity of us poor men ye give,
The sooner God shall take of you pity.
Here are we five or six strung up, you see,
And here the flesh that all too well we fed
Bit by bit eaten and rotten, rent and shred,
And we the bones grow dust and ash withal;
Let no man laugh at us discomforted,
But pray to God that he forgive us all.

If we call on you, brothers, to forgive,
  Ye should not hold our prayer in scorn, though we
Were slain by law; ye know that all alive
  Have not wit alway to walk righteously;
  Make therefore intercession heartily
With him that of a virgin's womb was bred,
That his grace be not as a dry well-head
  For us, nor let hell's thunder on us fall;
We are dead, let no man harry or vex us dead,
  But pray to God that he forgive us all.

The rain has washed and laundered us all five,
  And the sun dried and blackened; yea, perdie,
Ravens and pies with beaks that rend and rive
  Have dug our eyes out, and plucked off for fee
  Our beards and eyebrows; never we are free,
Not once, to rest; but here and there still sped,
Drive at its wild will by the wind's change led,
  More pecked of birds than fruits on garden-wall;
Men, for God's love, let no gibe here be said,
  But pray to God that he forgive us all.

Prince Jesus, that of all art lord and head,
Keep us, that hell be not our bitter bed;
  We have nought to do in such a master's hall.
Be not ye therefore of our fellowhead,
  But pray to God that he forgive us all.

A Child's Future

What will it please you, my darling, hereafter to be?
Fame upon land will you look for, or glory by sea?
Gallant your life will be always, and all of it free.

Free as the wind when the heart of the twilight is stirred
Eastward, and sounds from the springs of the sunrise are heard:
Free—and we know not another as infinite word.

Darkness or twilight or sunlight may compass us round,
Hate may arise up against us, or hope may confound;
Love may forsake us; yet may not the spirit be bound.

Free in oppression of grief as in ardor of joy
Still may the soul be, and each to her strength as a toy:
Free in the glance of the man as the smile of the boy.

Freedom alone is the salt and the spirit that gives
Life, and without her is nothing that verily lives:
Death cannot slay her: she laughs upon death and forgives.

Brightest and hardiest of roses anear and afar
Glitters the blithe little face of you, round as a star:
Liberty bless you and keep you to be as you are.

England and liberty bless you and keep you to be
Worthy the name of their child and the sight of their sea;
Fear not at all; for a slave, if he fears not, is free.

(pub. 1882)

Charles Darwin

(1809-1882)

On the same day, February 12, 1809, when, in a cabin in the backwoods of America, there was born a child destined to affect most profoundly the history of his continent, there also first saw the light the future scientist whose work has been hailed as the most significant of the nineteenth century. Charles Darwin was born at Shrewsbury, the son of Dr. Robert Waring Darwin and grandson of Erasmus Darwin, the distinguished eighteenth-century scientist and poet. Not only in his father's family, but also in his mother's was Darwin fortunate. His maternal grandfather was Josiah Wedgwood, the founder of the famous pottery firm.

His first efforts at a career were not promising. He started preparation for medicine at Edinburgh, but soon abandoned this project. He then entered Christ's College, Cambridge, reading to be a clergyman, but made a mediocre record. During his Cambridge years, however, he spent much time in sport and in the independent study of entomology and in collecting beetles. Even so early he gained the friendship of the scientists of his day, and was encouraged to work on geology.

The most important event in Darwin's life was the voyage which he made as naturalist on the *Beagle*, from December 27, 1831, to October 2, 1836. It is interesting that, after this extensive trip which took him around the world, Darwin never again left Great Britain. The voyage carried him to the Cape Verde Islands, to both the east and west coasts of South America, to the islands of the Pacific, to Australia, to various points in the Indian Ocean, around Africa to Brazil and the Azores, and thence home. During the years of this long voyage Darwin studied the geology, flora, and fauna of the strange lands he was visiting. He especially interested himself in the structure of the coral islands and in a comparison of animals living in islands with those whose habitat was the neighboring continents. He was impressed by the gradual changes of species as his expedition moved toward the south. He also began to make comparisons between living species and species recently extinct which he found in fossil remains.

On his return from the voyage, he issued his *Journal of a Naturalist*, which gave the principal results of the expedition. Darwin was already struck, as early as 1837, by the probability of the transmutation of species. During the years 1838-41 he was secretary to the Geological Society and saw much of Sir Charles Lyell, the geologist. This association during these formative years was of first importance in Darwin's development.

In 1839 he married his cousin, Emma Wedgwood. His happy marriage was invaluable for a scientist pursued most of his life by ill health, and needing, for the proper success of his scientific labors, the tenderest care. In 1842 he moved from London to Down and lived there the rest of his life.

From 1837 he collected facts on the selection of breeds of domestic plants and animals. He realized that conscious selection as exercised by propagators of new types was carried on with complete success. Did such selection also take place in a state of nature? And, if so, how? In 1838 he read Malthus's treatise *On Population* and was impressed with the theory of the struggle for existence as a principle of selection. He first sketched out his theory in 1842, but let it lie for many years while he was engaged in the writing of scientific monographs. In 1857 he made a much fuller statement of his theory in a letter to Professor Asa Gray, the American botanist.

In June 1858, as Darwin was getting ready to make a more definite announcement of his theories, he received from A. R. Wallace, then on an expedition in the Moluccas, a letter containing an essay which he wished Darwin to have published. The essay stated exactly the same position as Darwin himself had reached. Consultation with other scientists who were familiar with Darwin's ideas suggested the proper solution of the delicate problem in priority thus presented. Wallace's essay was published along with a letter of explanation concerning Darwin's independent arrival at the same conclusions. In order to substantiate Darwin's independence, the letter to Professor Asa Gray was also printed.

Darwin now saw that he must waste no time in placing his theory before the world. As a result of hard labor, he was able to issue the *Origin of Species* in November 1859. So keen was the interest in the book that the complete edition of 1250 copies was exhausted the first day.

Almost immediately a great controversy commenced. The belief in the immutability of species was almost universal among the scientists of the day. And Darwin had not only to convert his colleagues, but to overcome the objections and prejudices of the clergy and of the common man. For his new theories challenged many ideas made dear to them by religious association. In order to accept Darwin's beliefs—especially his implications

that the human animal is derived from a lower species—the literal belief in the story of Genesis and many another dogma based upon this belief had to be abandoned. It was natural that the conquest of such formidable adversaries as conservative scientists, an entrenched clergy, and a pious laity should be slow and difficult, if it were to be accomplished at all.

In gaining adherents to his new ideas Darwin received the invaluable help of Thomas Henry Huxley (cf. *below*, p. 724), one of the most skillful speakers of the century. As it first appeared, Darwin's treatment of evolution paid little attention to the question of man's place in the development of species. Huxley was immediately impressed by this aspect of Darwin's contribution, and it was probably because of this emphasis of Huxley's that Darwin issued, in 1871, a volume entitled *The Descent of Man* (cf. *below*). It may fairly be said that primarily through the help of Huxley the battle for acceptance among scientific thinkers of Darwin's main theory was completely won by 1880.

The influence of the scientific movement of which Darwin's *Origin of Species* is merely the most dramatic manifestation had already unsettled the religious beliefs of many writers of the mid-nineteenth century. The implications of geology seem to have almost tragically disturbed the religious certainty which Tennyson so vainly strives after in his *In Memoriam* (cf. *above*, p. 532). Likewise Clough (cf. *below*, p. 746) and Matthew Arnold (cf. *above*, p. 618) saw with a nostalgic regret the ebbing of the sea of faith (cf. *Dover Beach*, p. 635, *above*). For men of letters of their stamp, Darwin's pronouncements were only confirmations of a doubt that with them had already become almost a conviction. Except for a small group of conservative writers, one is nearly always safe in assuming that men and women who produced English literature after 1860 were either mildly or completely skeptical about anti-Darwinian dogma.

Matthew Arnold represents one characteristic response to the new intellectual atmosphere. With a wholehearted acceptance of the new science, he applied scientific methods to a reinterpretation of Christian theology and thus tried to bring the Christian faith into line with what he conceived to be the truth. Another group of writers, characterized by such persons as George Eliot and (with some differences) Swinburne (cf. *above*, p. 698), made a complete break with the Church and proclaimed the philosophy of Positivism, which came from France in the middle of the century. This philosophy was entirely devoid of any supernaturalism and for nearly a half century attracted a considerable following among the writers and other intellectuals of England.

To certain other writers who had abandoned the older persuasions, the loss of a religious sanction as a basis for conduct seemed very serious. Hence there was a revival in the last quarter of the century of two of the pagan systems of ethics—epicureanism and stoicism. If the conduct of life is not to be carried out primarily for the glory of God, how shall one determine the nature of the Good Life? Perhaps the epicurean philosophy has never been more attractively presented than by Walter Pater in his *Marius the Epicurean* and in his conclusion to *Studies in the Renaissance* (cf. *below*, p. 788). This philosophy was light-heartedly embraced by a considerable group of esthetes, including Oscar Wilde (cf. *below*, p. 810). The stoic point of view also received expression during these years, most characteristically by Henley, and with modifications by Housman (cf. *below*, pp. 757 and 866).

The profound strain of pessimism found in many writers after Darwin's time is probably not due to his work. But it is frequently intermingled with a religious skepticism which does come from the impact of the scientific revolution in which Darwin played so large a part.

Of course, not all writers lost their religion because of the new scientific atmosphere. Indeed, the uncertainties created by the new skepticism of the age brought about a considerable reaction toward extreme orthodoxy, whether seen in the Roman Catholicism of Newman (cf. *above*, p. 487), Manning, Francis Thompson (cf. *below*, p. 759), and, in

later years, Gilbert Chesterton, or in the nun-like devotion to Anglican pietism of Christina Rossetti (cf. *above*, p. 682).

It would be a serious mistake to consider that Darwin's theories were the sole cause of any of the manifestations of religious unrest which we have indicated. Their function was rather the crystallizing in dramatic fashion of doubts which had been darkening, like an impending cloud, the intellectual horizon of a whole generation.

Darwin's last years were full of honors. He continued his patient and painstaking work in spite of almost incessant ill health. Otherwise his life in his last years was completely uneventful. His death occurred April 19, 1882, and he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Darwin's general conclusions and answer to his conservative critics are admirably summed in the following passage, which shows his prose at its best.

Francis Darwin edited *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* in three volumes (1887) and with two additional volumes (1902). Good commentaries are by E. B. Poulton (1896), G. J. Romanes (1895), A. C. Seward (1909), G. Bradford (1926), C. H. Ward (1927), G. A. Dorsey (1927), L. Huxley (1927), and G. H. Wells (1938).

The Descent of Man

General Summary and Conclusion

A brief summary will be sufficient to recall to the reader's mind the more salient points in this work. Many of the views which have been advanced are highly speculative, and some no doubt will prove erroneous; but I have in every case given the reasons which have led me to one view rather than to another. It seemed worth while to try how far the principle of evolution would throw light on some of the more complex problems in the natural history of man. False facts are highly injurious to the progress of science, for they often endure long; but false views, if supported by some evidence, do little harm, for every one takes a salutary pleasure in proving their falseness: and when this is done, one path towards error is closed and the road to truth is often at the same time opened.

The main conclusion here arrived at, and now held by many naturalists who are well competent to form a sound judgment, is that man is descended from some less highly organised form. The grounds upon which this conclusion rests will never be shaken, for the close similarity between man and the lower animals in embryonic development, as well as in innumerable points of structure and constitution, both of high and of the most trifling importance,—the rudiments which he retains, and the abnormal reversions of which he is occasionally liable,—are facts which cannot be disputed. They have long been known, but until recently they told us nothing with respect to the origin of man. Now when viewed by the light of our knowledge of the whole organic world, their meaning is unmistakable. The great principle of evolution stands up clear and firm, when these groups or facts are considered in connection with others, such as the mutual affinities of the members of the same group, their geographical distribution in past and present times, and their geological succession. It is incredible that all these facts should speak falsely. He who is not content to look, like a savage, at the phenomena of nature as disconnected, cannot any longer believe that man is the work of a separate act of creation. He will be forced to admit that the close resemblance of the embryo of man to that, for instance, of a dog—the construction of his skull, limbs and whole frame on the same plan with that of other mammals, independently of the uses to which the parts may be put—the occasional re-appearance of various structures, for instance of several muscles, which man does not normally possess, but which are common to the Quadrumana—and a crowd of analogous facts—all point in the plainest manner to the conclusion that man is the co-descendant with other mammals of a common progenitor. . . .

The high standard of our intellectual powers and moral disposition is the greatest difficulty which presents itself, after we have been driven to this conclusion on the origin of man. But everyone who admits the principle of evolution, must see

that the mental powers of the higher animals, which are the same in kind with those of man, though so different in degree, are capable of advancement. Thus the interval between the mental powers of one of the higher apes and of a fish, or between those of an ant and scale-insect, is immense; yet their development does not offer any special difficulty; for with our domesticated animals, the mental faculties are certainly variable, and the variations are inherited. No one doubts that they are of the utmost importance to animals in a state of nature. Therefore the conditions are favorable for their development through natural selection. The same conclusion may be extended to man; the intellect must have been all-important to him, even at a very remote period, as enabling him to invent and use language, to make weapons, tools, traps, etc., whereby with the aid of his social habits, he long ago became the most dominant of all living creatures.

A great stride in the development of the intellect will have followed, as soon as the half-art and half-instinct of language came into use; for the continued use of language will have reacted on the brain and produced an inherited effect; and this again will have reacted on the improvement of language. As Mr. Chauncey Wright has well remarked, the largeness of the brain in man relatively to his body, compared with the lower animals, may be attributed in chief part to the early use of some simple form of language,—that wonderful engine which affixes signs to all sorts of objects and qualities, and excites trains of thought which would never arise from the mere impression of the senses, or if they did arise could not be followed out. The higher intellectual powers of man, such as those of ratiocination, abstraction, self-consciousness, etc., probably follow from the continued improvement and exercise of the other mental faculties.

The development of the moral qualities is a more interesting problem. The foundation lies in the social instincts, including under this term the family ties. These instincts are highly complex, and in the case of the lower animals give special tendencies towards certain definite actions; but the more important elements are love, and the distinct emotion of sympathy. Animals endowed with the social instincts take pleasure in one another's company, warn one another of danger, defend and aid one another in many ways. These instincts do not extend to all the individuals of the species, but only to those of the same community. As they are highly beneficial to the species, they have in all probability been acquired through natural selection.

A moral being is one who is capable of reflecting on his past actions and their motives—of approving of some and disapproving of others; and the fact that man is the one being who certainly deserves this designation, is the greatest of all distinctions between him and the lower animals. But in the fourth chapter I have endeavored to show that the moral sense follows, firstly, from the enduring and everpresent nature of the social instincts; secondly, from man's appreciation of the approbation and disapprobation of his fellows; and thirdly, from the high activity of his mental faculties, with past impressions extremely vivid; and in these latter respects he differs from the lower animals. Owing to this condition of mind, man cannot avoid looking both backwards and forwards, and comparing past impressions. Hence after some temporary desire or passion has mastered his social instincts, he reflects and compares the now weakened impression of such past impulses with the ever-present social instincts; and he then feels that sense of dissatisfaction which all unsatisfied instincts leave behind them, he therefore resolves to act differently for the future,—and this is conscience. Any instinct, permanently stronger or more enduring than another, gives rise to a feeling which we express by saying that it ought to be obeyed. A pointer dog, if able to reflect on his past conduct, would say to himself, I ought (as indeed we say of him) to have pointed at that hare and not have yielded to the passing temptation of hunting it. . . .

The belief in God has often been advanced as not only the greatest, but the most complete of all the distinctions between man and the lower animals. It is however impossible, as we have seen, to maintain that this belief is innate or instinctive in man. On the other hand a belief in all-pervading spiritual agencies seems to be universal; and apparently follows from a considerable advance in man's reason, and from a still greater advance in his faculties of imagination, curiosity and wonder. I am aware that the assumed instinctive belief in God has been used by many persons as an argument for His existence. But this is a rash argument, as we should thus be compelled to believe in the existence of many cruel and malignant spirits, only a little more powerful than man; for the belief in them is far more general than in a beneficent Deity. The idea of a universal and beneficent Creator does not seem to arise in the mind of man, until he has been elevated by long-continued culture.

He who believes in the advancement of man

from some low organized form, will naturally ask how does this bear on the belief in the immortality of the soul. The barbarous races of man, as Sir J. Lubbock has shown, possess no clear belief of this kind; but arguments derived from the primeval beliefs of savages are, as we have just seen, of little or no avail. Few persons feel any anxiety from the impossibility of determining at what precise period in the development of the individual, from the first trace of a minute germinal vesicle, man becomes an immortal being; and there is no greater cause for anxiety because the period cannot possibly be determined in the gradually ascending organic scale.

I am aware that the conclusions arrived at in this work will be denounced by some as highly irreligious; but he who denounces them is bound to show why it is more irreligious to explain the origin of man as a distinct species by descent from some lower form, through the laws of variation and natural selection, than to explain the birth of the individual through the laws of ordinary reproduction. The birth both of the species and of the individual are equally parts of that grand sequence of events, which our minds refuse to accept as the result of blind chance. The understanding revolts at such a conclusion, whether or not we are able to believe that every slight variation of structure,—the union of each pair in marriage,—the dissemination of each seed,—and other such events, have all been ordained for some special purpose. . . .

Man scans with scrupulous care the character and pedigrees of his horses, cattle, and dogs before he matches them; but when he comes to his own marriage he rarely, or never, takes any such care. He is impelled by nearly the same motives as the lower animals, when they are left to their own free choice, though he is in so far superior to them that he highly values mental charms and virtues. On the other hand he is strongly attracted by mere wealth or rank. Yet he might by selection do something not only for the bodily constitution and frame of his offspring, but for their intellectual and moral qualities. Both sexes ought to refrain from marriage if they are in any marked degree inferior in body or mind; but such hopes are Utopian and will never be even partially realised until the laws of inheritance are thoroughly known. Every one does good service, who aids towards this end. When the principles of breeding and inheritance are better understood, we shall not hear ignorant members of our legislature rejecting with scorn a plan for ascertaining whether or not consanguineous marriages are injurious to man.

The advancement of the welfare of mankind is a most intricate problem: all ought to refrain from marriage who cannot avoid abject poverty for their children; for poverty is not only a great evil, but tends to its own increase by leading to recklessness in marriage. On the other hand, as Mr. Galton[1] has remarked, if the prudent avoid marriage, whilst the reckless marry, the inferior members tend to supplant the better members of society. Man, like every other animal, has no doubt advanced to his present high condition through a struggle for existence consequent on his rapid multiplication; and if he is to advance still higher, it is to be feared that he must remain subject to a severe struggle. Otherwise he would sink into indolence, and the more gifted men would not be more successful in the battle of life than the less gifted. Hence our natural rate of increase, though leading to many and obvious evils, must not be greatly diminished by any means. There should be open competition for all men; and the most able should not be prevented by laws or customs from succeeding best and rearing the largest number of offspring. Important as the struggle for existence has been and even still is, yet as far as the highest part of man's nature is concerned there are other agencies more important. For the moral qualities are advanced, either directly or indirectly, much more through the effects of habit, the reasoning powers, instruction, religion, etc., than through natural selection; though to this latter agency may be safely attributed the social instincts, which afforded the basis for the development of the moral sense.

The main conclusion arrived at in this work, namely that man is descended from some lowly organized form, will, I regret to think, be highly distasteful to many. But there can hardly be a doubt that we are descended from barbarians. The astonishment which I felt on first seeing a party of Fuegians on a wild and broken shore will never be forgotten by me, for the reflection at once rushed into my mind—such were our ancestors. These men were absolutely naked and bedaubed with paint, their long hair was tangled, their mouths frothed with excitement, and their expression was wild, startled, and distrustful. They possessed hardly any arts, and like wild animals lived on what they could catch; they had no government, and were merciless to every one not of their own small tribe. He who has seen a savage in his

[1] Francis Galton (1822-1911), English writer on heredity.

native land will not feel much shame, if forced to acknowledge that the blood of some more humble creature flows in his veins. For my own part I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey, who braved his dreaded enemy in order to save the life of his keeper, or from that old baboon, who descending from the mountains, carried away in triumph his young comrade from a crowd of astonished dogs—as from a savage who delights to torture his enemies, offers up bloody sacrifices, practices infanticide without remorse, treats his wives like slaves, knows no decency, and is haunted by the grossest superstitions.

Man may be excused for feeling some pride at having risen, though not through his own exertions, to the very summit of the organic scale; and the fact of his having thus risen, instead of having been aboriginally placed there, may give him hope for a still higher destiny in the distant future. But we are not here concerned with hopes or fears, only with the truth as far as our reason permits us to discover it; and I have given the evidence to the best of my ability. We must, however, acknowledge, as it seems to me, that man with all his noble qualities, with sympathy which feels for the most debased, with benevolence which extends not only to other men but to the humblest living creature, with his god-like intellect which has penetrated into the movements and constitution of the solar system—with all these exalted powers—Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin. (1871)

Thomas Henry Huxley

(1825-1895)

Thomas Henry Huxley, the great apostle of Evolution, was born May 4, 1825, at Ealing, a suburb of London. His father was a schoolmaster at this place but not long afterward moved to Coventry, where he obtained a position at a bank. After the age of ten, Thomas had no formal elementary schooling, but he was encouraged by his father in a very ambitious course of private reading. Before he was fifteen he had come under the influence of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, which aroused in him an interest in German literature. His knowledge of German, of which he made the beginnings at this early age, was to be of great value to him in his scientific career. During these years of general reading he also became acquainted with the philosophical speculation of his day and was permanently affected in his thinking by Sir William Hamilton's *The Philosophy of the Unconditioned*. For a youth of fifteen this was not facile reading, but he seems to have understood the implications of the philosopher and to have applied them in his own speculations for the rest of his life.

In 1841 Huxley was apprenticed to a physician and learned much of the routine of medical practice. He continued extensive private reading and won a prize in botany. The next year he entered Charing Cross Hospital on a scholarship. Here he was given three years of the best medical training available at that time, especially an excellent knowledge of anatomy. He passed his M.B. examination at the University of London in 1845. That he had done well is attested by his having been awarded the gold medal and second honors.

Being too young to enter the College of Surgeons, Huxley applied for a post in the navy. After some delay he was made assistant surgeon on the *Rattlesnake*, an assignment much to his taste since the ship was planning a long voyage in the South Seas for the purpose of charting ocean routes. Such an expedition had been of greatest importance to three of his scientific predecessors within the past ten years: Darwin, Hooker, and Wallace. Huxley likewise used this four-year voyage as a course of training in natural history. He made huge collections of all kinds and sent several scientific papers home to be published in his absence.

Quite as important to his own life was his meeting in Sydney with the lady who later became his wife. Though their marriage was postponed for seven years, her beneficent influence on him was constant from their first meeting to the end of his life. An unusually happy domestic background made possible and encouraged his great services to science.

During the ten years after his return in 1851 Huxley was extremely busy and very successful. He was a Fellow of the Royal Society, and Lecturer at the Royal Institution. In 1853 he received the Royal Medal for important contributions to science. During the decade he undertook various teaching positions, the principal one of which was the Lectureship in Natural History at the School of Mines. Very significant for his future were the lectures he delivered to workingmen. For these he was obliged to state his scientific principles with extreme simplicity and clarity, without oversimplifying the facts. All during these years he was developing three or four sciences at once and had some misgivings as to whether he might not be scattering his efforts too much.

He need not have worried, because all his wide range of knowledge was to be challenged by the publication in 1859 of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Huxley had slowly come to much the same position that Darwin enunciated in his book, and he found the reading of this epoch-making work the most important event in his whole life. The next twenty years were to be devoted to championing the new theory of evolution. The conflict between it and the widely accepted Biblical account caused the debate which followed to be filled with bitterness. Huxley proved himself one of the best propagandists of the century. Though he gave full credit to Darwin for the ideas he was defending, he was himself much more interested than was Darwin in the application of evolutionary theory to man. As the result of much lecturing and much thinking, he wrote, in 1863, his first full-size book, *Evidences as to Man's Place in Nature*. Here he expressed in unequivocal fashion the doctrine of man's kinship with the lower orders of animals. The book laid the foundation for our present science of anthropology.

The 1860's were busy years for him. The amount of research and lecturing which he did seems almost incredible. During this decade he delivered the three lectures by which he is best known to the literary world. They are: *Liberal Education and Where to Find It; On a Piece of Chalk* (cf. *below*); and *On the Physical Basis of Life* (cf. *below*).

By this time Huxley had become a public figure so that he was able to devote less and less time to original work. He gave lectures, helped establish the modern English school system, and gave courses for teachers in science with laboratory demonstration—a new departure.

During the last twenty years of his life, besides serving on many public boards and receiving all the honors within the gift of his country, he engaged in a series of controversies in which he upheld the scientific point of view against those who either opposed it or tried to diminish its importance. He lived to see his position granted, not only by all English scientists, but also by nearly all scholars and men of letters.

Huxley loved a fight, and he was no respecter of persons. His first victim was the greatest scientist of his youth, Sir Richard Owen. His most dramatic conflict was his famous reply to the Bishop of Oxford when the latter asked him, "Is it on his grandfather's or on his grandmother's side that the ape ancestry comes in?" Huxley completely vanquished the Bishop, as he did many smaller opponents. In his later years he was to carry on successful controversy with three of England's Prime Ministers. He was in the midst of one of these polemical essays when he died June 29, 1895.

The student of literature values Huxley for the clarity and charm with which he is able to present scientific ideas to the person of little technical training. These qualities are perhaps shown to greatest advantage in the two essays we present. In both instances the concept is not really simple, but the author has proceeded so skillfully from the known facts of everyday life to the more complicated phenomena of science that his reader is carried almost without knowing it into the midst of profound speculation. In this respect Huxley served as an excellent influence on the scientific prose of the succeeding generations.

As is true of all pioneers, much of his research has been modified by those who came after him. But even so, he fundamentally conditioned the course of all the biologic sciences for the past half century. He is responsible for the predominant position the natural sciences now have in our educational system. Perhaps even more important, he has changed the whole philosophical attitude of the modern world.

The authorized edition of Huxley is the *Collected Essays*, in nine volumes (1893-94). Important is also *The Scientific Memoirs of Thomas Henry Huxley*, edited by M. Foster and E. R. Lankester, in five volumes (1898). There have been frequent biographies, notably those of Leonard Huxley (1900), P. C. Mitchell (1900), E. Clodd (1902), J. R. Ainsworth-Davis (1907), G. R. Leighton (1912), C. Ayres (1932), and H. Peterson (1932).

On the Physical Basis of Life

In order to make the title of this discourse generally intelligible, I have translated the term "Protoplasm," which is the scientific name of the substance of which I am about to speak, by the words "the physical basis of life." I suppose that, to many, the idea that there is such a thing as a physical basis, or matter, of life may be novel—so widely spread is the conception of life as a something which works through matter, but is independent of it; and even those who are aware that matter and life are inseparably connected, may not be prepared for the conclusion plainly suggested by the phrase, "*the* physical basis or matter of life" that there is some one kind of matter which is common to all living beings, and that their endless diversities are bound together by a physical, as well as an ideal, unity. In fact, when first apprehended, such a doctrine as this appears almost shocking to common sense.

What, truly, can seem to be more obviously different from one another, in faculty, in form, and in substance, than the various kinds of living beings? What community of faculty can there be between the bright-colored lichen, which so nearly resembles a mere mineral incrustation of the bare rock on which it grows, and the painter, to whom it is instinct with beauty, or the botanist, whom it feeds with knowledge?

Again, think of the microscopic fungus—a mere infinitesimal ovoid particle, which finds space and duration enough to multiply into countless millions in the body of a living fly; and then of the wealth of foliage, the luxuriance of flower and fruit, which lies between this bald sketch of a plant and the giant pine of California, towering to the dimensions of a cathedral spire, or the Indian fig, which covers acres with its profound shadow, and endures while nations and empires come and go around its vast circumference. Or, turning to the other half of the world of life, picture to yourselves the great Finner whale, hugest of beasts that live, or have lived, disporting his eighty or ninety feet of bone, muscle and blubber, with easy roll, among waves in which the stoutest ship that ever left dockyard would flounder hopelessly; and contrast him with the invisible animalcules—mere gelatinous specks, multitudes of which could, in fact, dance upon the point of a needle with the same ease as the angels of the Schoolmen[1] could, in imagination. With these images before your minds, you may well ask, what community of form, or structure, is there between the animalcule and the whale; or between the fungus and the fig-tree? And, *a fortiori*,[2] between all four?

Finally, if we regard substance, or material composition, what hidden bond can connect the flower which a girl wears in her hair and the blood which courses through her youthful veins; or, what is there in common between the dense and resisting mass of the oak, or the strong fabric of the tortoise, and those broad disks of glassy jelly which may be seen pulsating through the waters of a calm sea, but which drain away to mere films in the hand which raises them out of their element?

Such objections as these must, I think, arise in the mind of every one who ponders, for the first time, upon the conception of a single physical basis of life underlying all the diversities of vital existence; but I propose to demonstrate to you that, notwithstanding these apparent difficulties, a threefold unity—namely, a unity of power or faculty, a unity of form, and a unity of substantial composition—does pervade the whole living world.

[1] It is traditionally said that the Schoolmen, or Scholastic Philosophers, of the Middle Ages argued as to how many angels could dance on the point of a needle.

[2] even more certainly.

No very abstruse argumentation is needed, in the first place, to prove that the powers, or faculties, of all kinds of living matter, diverse as they may be in degree, are substantially similar in kind.

Goethe has condensed a survey of all powers of mankind into the well-known epigram:

"Warum treibt sich das Volk so und schreit? Es will sich ernähren,
Kinder zeugen, und die nähren so gut es vermag.
. . . . .
Weiter bringt es kein Mensch, stell' er sich wie er auch will."[3]

In physiological language this means, that all the multifarious and complicated activities of man are comprehensible under three categories. Either they are immediately directed towards the maintenance and development of the body, or they effect transitory changes in the relative positions of parts of the body, or they tend towards the continuance of the species. Even those manifestations of intellect, of feeling, and of will, which we rightly name the higher faculties, are not excluded from this classification, inasmuch as to every one but the subject of them, they are known only as transitory changes in the relative positions of parts of the body. Speech, gesture, and every other form of human action are, in the long run, resolvable into muscular contraction, and muscular contraction is but a transitory change in the relative positions of the parts of a muscle. But the scheme which is large enough to embrace the activities of the highest form of life, covers all those of the lower creatures. The lowest plant, or animalcule, feeds, grows, and reproduces its kind. In addition, all animals manifest those transitory changes of form which we class under irritability and contractility; and it is more than probable that when the vegetable world is thoroughly explored, we shall find all plants in possession of the same powers, at one time or other of their existence.

I am not now alluding to such phenomena, at once rare and conspicuous, as those exhibited by the leaflets of the sensitive plants, or the stamens of the barberry, but to much more widely spread, and at the same time, more subtle and hidden, manifestations of vegetable contractility. You are doubtless aware that the common nettle owes its stinging property to the innumerable stiff and needle-like, though exquisitely delicate, hairs which cover its surface. Each stinging-needle tapers from a broad base to a slender summit, which, though rounded at the end, is of such microscopic fineness that it readily penetrates, and breaks off in, the skin. The whole hair consists of a very delicate outer case of wood, closely applied to the inner surface of which is a layer of semifluid matter, full of innumerable granules of extreme minuteness. This semifluid lining is protoplasm, which thus constitutes a kind of bag, full of a limpid liquid, and roughly corresponding in form with the interior of the hair which it fills. When viewed with a sufficiently high magnifying power, the protoplasmic layer of the nettle hair is seen to be in a condition of unceasing activity. Local contractions of the whole thickness of its substance pass slowly and gradually from point to point, and give rise to the appearance of progressive waves, just as the bending of successive stalks of corn by a breeze produces the apparent billows of a cornfield.

But, in addition to these movements, and independently of them, the granules are driven, in relatively rapid streams, through channels in the protoplasm which seem to have a considerable amount of persistence. Most commonly, the currents in adjacent parts of the protoplasm take similar directions; and thus there is a general stream up one side of the hair and down the other. But this does not prevent the existence of partial currents which take different routes; and sometimes trains of granules may be seen coursing swiftly in opposite directions within a twenty-thousandth of an inch of one another; while, occasionally, opposite streams come into direct collision, and, after a long or shorter struggle, one predominates. The cause of these currents seems to lie in contractions of the protoplasm which bounds the channels in which they flow, but which are so minute that the best microscopes show only their effects, and not themselves.

The spectacle afforded by the wonderful energies prisoned within the compass of the microscopic hair of a plant, which we commonly regard as a merely passive organism, is not easily forgotten by one who has watched its display, continued hour after hour, without pause or sign of weakening. The possible complexity of many other organic forms, seemingly as simple as the protoplasm of the nettle, dawns upon one; and the comparison of such a protoplasm to a body with an internal circulation, which has been put forward by an eminent physiologist, loses much of its startling character. Currents similar to those of the hairs of the nettle have

[3] Why do people make such strife and outcry? They would nourish themselves, beget children, and nourish them as well as they may. . . . Further can no man proceed, strive how he may.

been observed in a great multitude of very different plants, and weighty authorities have suggested that they probably occur, in more or less perfection, in all young vegetable cells. If such be the case, the wonderful noonday silence of a tropical forest is, after all, due only to the dulness of our hearing; and could our ears catch the murmur of these tiny Maelstroms, as they whirl in the innumerable myriads of living cells which constitute each tree, we should be stunned, as with the roar of a great city.

Among the lower plants, it is the rule rather than the exception, that contractility should be still more openly manifested at some periods of their existence. The protoplasm of *Algæ* and *Fungi* becomes, under many circumstances, partially, or completely, freed from its woody case, and exhibits movements of its whole mass, or is propelled by the contractility of one or more hair-like prolongations of its body, which are called vibratile cilia. And, so far as the conditions of the manifestation of the phenomena of contractility have yet been studied, they are the same for the plant as for the animal. Heat and electric shocks influence both, and in the same way, though it may be in different degrees. It is by no means my intention to suggest that there is no difference in faculty between the lowest plant and the highest, or between plants and animals. But the difference between the powers of the lowest plant, or animal, and those of the highest, is one of degree, not of kind, and depends, as Milne-Edwards[4] long ago so well pointed out, upon the extent to which the principle of the division of labor is carried out in the living economy. In the lowest organism all parts are competent to perform all functions, and one and the same portion of protoplasm may successfully take on the function of feeding, moving, or reproducing apparatus. In the highest, on the contrary, a great number of parts combine to perform each function, each part doing its allotted share of the work with great accuracy and efficiency, but being useless for any other purpose.

On the other hand, notwithstanding all the fundamental resemblances which exist between the powers of the protoplasm in plants and in animals, they present a striking difference (to which I shall advert more at length presently), in the fact that plants can manufacture fresh protoplasm out of mineral compounds, whereas animals are obliged to procure it ready made, and hence, in the long run, depend upon plants. Upon what condition this difference in the powers of the two great divisions of the world of life depends, nothing is at present known.

With such qualifications as arise out of the last-mentioned fact, it may be truly said that the acts of all living things are fundamentally one. Is any such unity predicable of their forms? Let us seek in easily verified facts for a reply to this question. If a drop of blood be drawn by pricking one's finger, and viewed with proper precautions, and under a sufficiently high microscopic power, there will be seen, among the innumerable multitude of little, circular, discoidal bodies, or corpuscles, which float in it and give it its color, a comparatively small number of colorless corpuscles, of somewhat larger size and very irregular shape. If the drop of blood be kept at the temperature of the body, these colorless corpuscles will be seen to exhibit a marvellous activity, changing their forms with great rapidity, drawing in and thrusting out prolongations of their substance, and creeping about as if they were independent organisms.

The substance which is thus active is a mass of protoplasm, and its activity differs in detail, rather than in principle, from that of the protoplasm of the nettle. Under sundry circumstances the corpuscle dies and becomes distended into a round mass, in the midst of which is seen a smaller spherical body, which existed, but was more or less hidden, in the living corpuscle, and is called its *nucleus*. Corpuscles of essentially similar structure are to be found in the skin, in the lining of the mouth, and scattered through the whole framework of the body. Nay, more; in the earliest condition of the human organism, in that state in which it has but just become distinguishable from the egg in which it arises, it is nothing but an aggregation of such corpuscles, and every organ of the body was, once, no more than such an aggregation.

Thus a nucleated mass of protoplasm turns out to be what may be termed the structural unit of the human body. As a matter of fact, the body, in its earliest state, is a mere multiple of such units; and in its perfect condition, it is a multiple of such units, variously modified.

But does the formula which expresses the essential structural character of the highest animal cover all the rest, as the statement of its powers and faculties covered that of all others? Very nearly. Beast and fowl, reptile and fish, mollusk, worm, and polyp, are all composed of structural units of the same character, namely, masses of protoplasm with a nucleus. There are sundry very low animals, each of which, structurally, is a mere colorless blood-

[4] Henri Milne-Edwards (1800-1885), French naturalist.

corpuscle, leading an independent life. But, at the very bottom of the animal scale, even this simplicity becomes simplified, and all the phenomena of life are manifested by a particle of protoplasm without a nucleus. Nor are such organisms insignificant by reason of their want of complexity. It is a fair question whether the protoplasm of those simplest forms of life which people an immense extent of the bottom of the sea, would not outweigh that of all the higher living beings which inhabit the land put together. And in ancient times, no less than at the present day, such living beings as these have been the greatest of rock builders.

What has been said of the animal world is no less true of plants. Imbedded in the protoplasm at the broad, or attached, end of the nettle hair, there lies a spheroidal nucleus. Careful examination further proves that the whole substance of the nettle is made up of a repetition of such masses of nucleated protoplasm, each contained in a wooden case, which is modified in form, sometimes into a woody fibre, sometimes into a duct or spiral vessel, sometimes into a pollen grain, or an ovule. Traced back to its earliest state, the nettle arises as the man does, in a particle of nucleated protoplasm. And in the lowest plants, as in the lowest animals, a single mass of such protoplasm may constitute the whole plant, or the protoplasm may exist without a nucleus.

Under these circumstances, it may well be asked, how is one mass of non-nucleated protoplasm to be distinguished from another? why call one "plant" and the other "animal"?

The only reply is that, so far as form is concerned, plants and animals are not separable, and that, in many cases, it is a mere matter of convention whether we call a given organism an animal or a plant. There is a living body called *Æthalium septicum*, which appears upon decaying vegetable substances, and, in one of its forms, is common upon the surfaces of tan-pits. In this condition it is, to all intents and purposes, a fungus, and formerly was always regarded as such; but the remarkable investigations of De Bary have shown that, in another condition, the *Æthalium* is an actively locomotive creature, and takes in solid matters, upon which, apparently, it feeds, thus exhibiting the most characteristic feature of animality. Is this a plant; or is it an animal? Is it both; or is it neither? Some decide in favor of the last supposition, and establish an intermediate kingdom, a sort of biological No Man's Land for all these questionable forms. But, as it is admittedly impossible to draw any distinct boundary line between this no man's land and the vegetable world on the one hand, or the animal, on the other, it appears to me that this proceeding merely doubles the difficulty which before was single.

Protoplasm, simple or nucleated is the formal basis of all life. It is the clay of the potter: which, bake it and paint it as he will, remains clay, separated by artifice, and not by nature, from the commonest brick or sun-dried clod.

Thus it becomes clear that all living powers are cognate, and that all living forms are fundamentally of one character. The researches of the chemist have revealed a no less striking uniformity of material composition in living matter.

In perfect strictness, it is true that chemical investigation can tell us little or nothing, directly, of the composition of living matter, inasmuch as such matter must needs die in the act of analysis—and upon this very obvious ground, objections, which I confess seem to me to be somewhat frivolous, have been raised to the drawing of any conclusions whatever respecting the composition of actually living matter, from that of the dead matter of life, which alone is accessible to us. But objectors of this class do not seem to reflect that it is also, in strictness, true that we know nothing about the composition of any body whatever, as it is. The statement that a crystal of calc-spar consists of carbonate of lime, is quite true, if we only mean that, by appropriate processes, it may be resolved into carbonic acid and quicklime. If you pass the same carbonic acid over the very quicklime thus obtained, you will obtain carbonate of lime again; but it will not be calc-spar, nor anything like it. Can it, therefore, be said that chemical analysis teaches nothing about the chemical composition of calc-spar? Such a statement would be absurd; but it is hardly more so than the talk one occasionally hears about the uselessness of applying the results of chemical analysis to the living bodies which have yielded them.

One fact, at any rate, is out of reach of such refinements, and that is, that all the forms of protoplasm which have yet been examined contain the four elements, carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen, in very complex union, and that they behave similarly towards several reagents. To this complex combination, the nature of which has never been determined with exactness, the name of Protein has been applied. And if we use this term with such caution as may properly arise out of our comparative ignorance of the things for which it stands, it may be truly said that all protoplasm

is proteinaceous; or, as the white, or albumen, of an egg is one of the commonest examples of a nearly pure protein matter, we may say that all living matter is more or less albuminoid.

Perhaps it would not yet be safe to say that all forms of protoplasm are affected by the direct action of electric shocks; and yet the number of cases in which the contraction of protoplasm is shown to be affected by this agency increases every day.

Nor can it be affirmed with perfect confidence, that all forms of protoplasm are liable to undergo that peculiar coagulation at a temperature of 40°-50° centigrade, which has been called "heat-stiffening," though Kühne's beautiful researches have proved this occurrence to take place in so many and such diverse living beings, that it is hardly rash to expect that the law holds good for all.

Enough has, perhaps, been said to prove the existence of a general uniformity in the character of the protoplasm, or physical basis, of life, in whatever group of living beings it may be studied. But it will be understood that this general uniformity by no means excludes any amount of special modifications of the fundamental substance. The mineral, carbonate of lime, assumes an immense diversity of characters, though no one doubts that, under all these Protean changes, it is one and the same thing.

And now, what is the ultimate fate, and what the origin, of the matter of life?

Is it, as some of the older naturalists supposed, diffused throughout the universe in molecules, which are indestructible and unchangeable in themselves, but, in endless transmigration, unite in innumerable permutations, into the diversified forms of life we know? Or, is the matter of life composed of ordinary matter, differing from it only in the manner in which its atoms are aggregated? Is it built up of ordinary matter, and again resolved into ordinary matter when its work is done?

Modern science does not hesitate a moment between these alternatives. Physiology writes over the portals of life—

"Debemur morti nos nostraque,"[5]

with a profounder meaning than the Roman poet attached to that melancholy line. Under whatever disguise it takes refuge, whether fungus or oak, worm or man, the living protoplasm not only ultimately dies and is resolved into its mineral and lifeless constituents, but is always dying, and, strange as the paradox may sound, could not live unless it died.

In the wonderful story of the *Peau de Chagrin*,[6] the hero becomes possessed of a magical wild ass's skin, which yields him the means of gratifying all his wishes. But its surface represents the duration of the proprietor's life; and for every satisfied desire the skin shrinks in proportion to the intensity of fruition, until at length life, and the last handbreadth of the *peau de chagrin*, disappear with the gratification of a last wish.

Balzac's studies had led him over a wide range of thought and speculation, and his shadowing forth of physiological truth in this strange story may have been intentional. At any rate, the matter of life is a veritable *peau de chagrin*, and for every vital act it is somewhat the smaller. All work implies waste, and the work of life results, directly or indirectly, in the waste of protoplasm.

Every word uttered by a speaker costs him some physical loss; and, in the strictest sense, he burns that others may have light—so much eloquence, so much of his body resolved into carbonic acid, water, and urea. It is clear that this process of expenditure cannot go on for ever. But, happily, the protoplasmic *peau de chagrin* differs from Balzac's in its capacity of being repaired, and brought back to its full size, after every exertion.

For example, this present lecture, whatever its intellectual worth to you, has a certain physical value to me, which is, conceivably, expressible by the number of grains of protoplasm and other bodily substance wasted in maintaining my vital processes during its delivery. My *peau de chagrin* will be distinctly smaller at the end of the discourse than it was at the beginning. By and by, I shall probably have recourse to the substance commonly called mutton, for the purpose of stretching it back to its original size. Now this mutton was once the living protoplasm, more or less modified, of another animal—a sheep. As I shall eat it, it is the same matter altered, not only by death, but by exposure to sundry artificial operations in the process of cooking.

But these changes, whatever be their extent, have not rendered it incompetent to resume its old functions as matter of life. A singular inward laboratory, which I possess, will dissolve a certain portion of the modified protoplasm; the solution so formed will pass into my veins; and the subtle influences to which it will then be subjected will convert the dead protoplasm into living protoplasm, and transubstantiate sheep into man.

[5] To death we owe ourselves and everything that is ours.

[6] a story by Balzac.

Nor is this all. If digestion were a thing to be trifled with, I might sup upon lobster, and the matter of life of the crustacean would undergo the same wonderful metamorphosis into humanity. And were I to return to my own place by sea, and undergo shipwreck, the crustacean might, and probably would, return the compliment, and demonstrate our common nature by turning my protoplasm into living lobster. Or, if nothing better were to be had, I might supply my wants with mere bread, and I should find the protoplasm of the wheat-plant to be convertible into man, and with no more trouble than that of the sheep, and with far less, I fancy, than that of the lobster.

Hence it appears to be a matter of no great moment what animal, or what plant, I lay under contribution for protoplasm, and the fact speaks volumes for the general identity of that substance in all living beings. I share this catholicity of assimilation with other animals, all of which, so far as we know, could thrive equally well on the protoplasm of any of their fellows, or of any plant; but here the assimilative powers of the animal world cease. A solution of smelling-salts in water, with an infinitesimal proportion of some other saline matters, contains all the elementary bodies which enter into the composition of protoplasm; but, as I need hardly say, a hogshead of that fluid would not keep a hungry man from starving, nor would it save any animal whatever from a like fate. An animal cannot make protoplasm, but must take it ready-made from some other animal, or some plant—the animal's highest feat of constructive chemistry being to convert dead protoplasm into that living matter of life which is appropriate to itself.

Therefore, in seeking for the origin of protoplasm, we must eventually turn to the vegetable world. A fluid containing carbonic acid, water, and nitrogeneous salts, which offers such a Barmecide feast[7] to the animal, is a table richly spread to multitudes of plants; and with a due supply of only such materials, many a plant will not only maintain itself in vigor, but grow and multiply until it has increased a million-fold, or a million million-fold, the quantity of protoplasm which it originally possessed; in this way building up the matter of life, to an indefinite extent, from the common matter of the universe.

Thus, the animal can only raise the complex substance of dead protoplasm to the higher power, as one may say, of living protoplasm; while the plant can raise the less complex substances—the carbonic acid, water, and nitrogenous salts—to the same stage of living protoplasm, if not to the same level. But the plant also has its limitations. Some of the fungi, for example, appear to need higher compounds to start with; and no known plant can live upon the uncompounded elements of protoplasm. A plant supplied with pure carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen, phosphorus, sulphur, and the like, would as infallibly die as the animal in his bath of smelling-salts, though it would be surrounded by all the constituents of protoplasm. Nor, indeed, need the process of simplification of vegetable food be carried so far as this, in order to arrive at the limit of the plant's thaumaturgy.[8] Let water, carbonic acid, and all the other needful constituents be supplied except nitrogenous salts, and an ordinary plant will still be unable to manufacture protoplasm.

Thus the matter of life, so far as we know it (and we have no right to speculate on any other), breaks up, in consequence of that continual death which is the condition of its manifesting vitality, into carbonic acid, water, and nitrogenous compounds, which certainly possess no properties but those of ordinary matter. And out of these same forms of ordinary matter, and from none which are simpler, the vegetable world builds up all the protoplasm which keeps the animal world a-going. Plants are the accumulators of the power which animals distribute and disperse.

But it will be observed that the existence of the matter of life depends on the pre-existence of certain compounds; namely, carbonic acid, water, and certain nitrogenous bodies. Withdraw any one of these three from the world, and all vital phenomena come to an end. They are as necessary to the protoplasm of the plant, as the protoplasm of the plant is to that of the animal. Carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen are all lifeless bodies. Of these, carbon and oxygen unite in certain proportions and under certain conditions, to give rise to carbonic acid; hydrogen and oxygen produce water; nitrogen and other elements give rise to nitrogenous salts. These new compounds, like the elementary bodies of which they are composed, are lifeless. But when they are brought together, under certain conditions, they give rise to the still more complex body, protoplasm, and this protoplasm exhibits the phenomena of life.

I see no break in this series of steps in molecular

[7] According to a story told in the *Arabian Nights*, a feast in which only imaginary viands are served.

[8] magical properties.

complication, and I am unable to understand why the language which is applicable to any one term of the series may not be used to any of the others. We think fit to call different kinds of matter carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen, and to speak of the various powers and activities of these substances as the properties of the matter of which they are composed.

When hydrogen and oxygen are mixed in a certain proportion, and an electric spark is passed through them, they disappear, and a quantity of water, equal in weight to the sum of their weights, appears in their place. There is not the slightest parity between the passive and active powers of the water and those of the oxygen and hydrogen which have given rise to it. At 32° Fahrenheit, and far below that temperature, oxygen and hydrogen are elastic gaseous bodies, whose particles tend to rush away from one another with great force. Water, at the same temperature, is a strong though brittle solid whose particles tend to cohere into definite geometrical shapes, and sometimes build up frosty imitations of the most complex forms of vegetable foliage.

Nevertheless we call these, and many other strange phenomena, the properties of the water, and we do not hesitate to believe that, in some way or another, they result from the properties of the component elements of the water. We do not assume that a something called "aquosity" entered into and took possession of the oxidated hydrogen as soon as it was formed, and then guided the aqueous particles to their places in the facets of the crystal, or amongst the leaflets of the hoar-frost. On the contrary, we live in the hope and in the faith that, by the advance of molecular physics, we shall by and by be able to see our way as clearly from the constituents of water to the properties of water, as we are now able to deduce the operations of a watch from the form of its parts and the manner in which they are put together.

Is the case in any way changed when carbonic acid, water, and nitrogeneous salts disappear, and in their place, under the influence of pre-existing living protoplasm, an equivalent weight of the matter of life makes its appearance?

It is true that there is no sort of parity between the properties of the components and the properties of the resultant, but neither was there in the case of the water. It is also true that what I have spoken of as the influence of pre-existing living matter is something quite unintelligible; but does anybody quite comprehend the *modus operandi*[9] of an electric spark, which traverses a mixture of oxygen and hydrogen?

What justification is there, then, for the assumption of the existence in the living matter of a something which has no representative, or correlative, in the not living matter which gave rise to it? What better philosophical status has "vitality" than "aquosity"? And why should "vitality" hope for a better fate than the other "itys" which have disappeared since Martinus Scriblerus[10] accounted for the operation of the meat-jack by its inherent "meat-roasting quality," and scorned the "materialism" of those who explained the turning of the spit by a certain mechanism worked by the draught of the chimney?

If scientific language is to possess a definite and constant signification whenever it is employed, it seems to me that we are logically bound to apply to the protoplasm, or physical basis of life, the same conceptions as those which are held to be legitimate elsewhere. If the phenomena exhibited by water are its properties, so are those presented by protoplasm, living or dead, its properties.

If the properties of water may be properly said to result from the nature and disposition of its component molecules, I can find no intelligible ground for refusing to say that the properties of protoplasm result from the nature and disposition of its molecules.

But I bid you beware that, in accepting these conclusions, you are placing your feet on the first rung of a ladder which, in most people's estimation, is the reverse of Jacob's, and leads to the antipodes of heaven. It may seem a small thing to admit that the dull vital actions of a fungus, or a foraminifer, are the properties of their protoplasm, and are the direct results of the nature of the matter of which they are composed. But if, as I have endeavored to prove to you, their protoplasm is essentially identical with, and most readily converted into, that of any animal, I can discover no logical halting-place between the admission that such is the case, and the further concession that all vital action may, with equal propriety, be said to be the result of the molecular forces of the protoplasm which displays it. And if so, it must be true, in the same sense and to the same extent, that the thoughts to which I am now giving utterance, and your thoughts regarding them, are the expression of molecular changes in that matter of life which is the source of our other vital phenomena.

Past experience leads me to be tolerably certain

[9] method of working.

[10] a satire written principally by John Arbuthnot, published in 1741.

that, when the propositions I have just placed before you are accessible to public comment and criticism, they will be condemned by many zealous persons, and perhaps by some few of the wise and thoughtful. I should not wonder if "gross and brute materialism" were the mildest phrase applied to them in certain quarters. And, most undoubtedly, the terms of the propositions are distinctly materialistic. Nevertheless two things are certain: the one, that I hold the statements to be substantially true; the other, that I, individually, am no materialist, but, on the contrary, believe materialism to involve grave philosophical error. . . .

What is the difference between the conception of life as the product of a certain disposition of material molecules, and the old notion of an Archæus[11] governing and directing blind matter within each living body, except this—that here, as elsewhere, matter and law have devoured spirit and spontaneity? And as surely as every future grows out of past and present, so will the physiology of the future gradually extend the realm of matter and law until it is coextensive with knowledge, with feeling, and with action. The consciousness of this great truth weighs like a nightmare, I believe, upon many of the best minds of these days. They watch what they conceive to be the progress of materialism, in such fear and powerless anger as a savage feels, when, during an eclipse, the great shadow creeps over the face of the sun. The advancing tide of matter threatens to drown their souls; the tightening grasp of law impedes their freedom; they are alarmed lest man's moral nature be debased by the increase of his wisdom.

If the "New Philosophy" be worthy of the reprobation with which it is visited, I confess their fears seem to me to be well founded. While, on the contrary, could David Hume[12] be consulted, I think he would smile at their perplexities, and chide them for doing even as the heathen, and falling down in terror before the hideous idols their own hands have raised.

For, after all, what do we know of this terrible "matter," except as a name for the unknown and hypothetical cause of states of our own consciousness? And what do we know of that "spirit" over whose threatened extinction by matter a great lamentation is arising, like that which was heard at the death of Pan, except that it is also a name for an unknown and hypothetical cause, or condition, of states of consciousness? In other words, matter and spirit are but names for the imaginary substrata of groups of natural phenomena.

And what is the dire necessity and "iron" law under which men groan? Truly, most gratuitously invented bugbears. I suppose if there be an "iron" law, it is that of gravitation; and if there be a physical necessity, it is that a stone, unsupported, must fall to the ground. But what is all we really know, and can know, about the latter phenomenon? Simply, that in all human experience stones have fallen to the ground under these conditions; that we have not the smallest reason for believing that any stone so circumstanced will not fall to the ground; and that we have, on the contrary, every reason to believe that it will so fall. It is very convenient to indicate that all the conditions of belief have been fulfilled in this case, by calling the statement that unsupported stones will fall to the ground, "a law of nature." But when, as commonly happens, we change *will* into *must*, we introduce an idea of necessity which most assuredly does not lie in the observed facts, and has no warranty that I can discover elsewhere. For my part, I utterly repudiate and anathematize the intruder. Fact I know; and Law I know; but what is this Necessity, save an empty shadow of my own mind's throwing?

But, if it is certain that we can have no knowledge of the nature of either matter or spirit, and that the notion of necessity is something illegitimately thrust into the perfectly legitimate conception of law, the materialistic position that there is nothing in the world but matter, force, and necessity, is as utterly devoid of justification as the most baseless of theological dogmas. The fundamental doctrines of materialism, like those of spiritualism, and most other "isms," lie outside "the units of philosophical inquiry," and David Hume's great service to humanity is his irrefragable demonstration of what these limits are. Hume called himself a "sceptic," and therefore others cannot be blamed if they apply the same title to him; but that does not alter the fact that the name, with its existing implications, does him gross injustice.

If a man asks me what the politics of the inhabitants of the moon are, and I reply that I do not know, that neither I nor any one else, have any means of knowing; and that, under these circumstances, I decline to trouble myself about the subject at all, I do not think he has any right to call me a sceptic. On the contrary, in replying thus, I conceive that I am simply honest and truthful, and show a proper regard for the economy of time. So Hume's strong and subtle intellect takes up a great

[11] The vital principle which directs and maintains the growth of living beings.

[12] Scottish philosopher (1711-1776).

many problems about which we are naturally curious, and shows us that they are essentially questions of lunar politics, in their essence incapable of being answered, and therefore not worth the attention of men who have work to do in the world. And he thus ends one of his essays:

"If we take in hand any volume of Divinity, or school metaphysics, for instance, let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames; for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion."

Permit me to enforce this most wise advice. Why trouble ourselves about matters of which, however important they may be, we do know nothing, and can know nothing? We live in a world which is full of misery and ignorance, and the plain duty of each and all of us is to try to make the little corner he can influence somewhat less miserable and somewhat less ignorant than it was before he entered it. To do this effectually it is necessary to be fully possessed of only two beliefs: the first, that the order of nature is ascertainable by our faculties to an extent which is practically unlimited; the second, that our volition counts for something as a condition of the course of events.

Each of these beliefs can be verified experimentally, as often as we like to try. Each, therefore, stands upon the strongest foundation upon which any belief can rest, and forms one of our highest truths. If we find that the ascertainment of the order of nature is facilitated by using one terminology, or one set of symbols, rather than another, it is our clear duty to use the former; and no harm can accrue, so long as we bear in mind that we are dealing merely with terms and symbols. In itself it is of little moment whether we express the phenomena of matter in terms of spirit, or the phenomena of spirit in terms of matter: matter may be regarded as a form of thought, thought may be regarded as a property of matter—each statement has a certain relative truth. But with a view to the progress of science, the materialistic terminology is in every way to be preferred. For it connects thought with the other phenomena of the universe, and suggests inquiry into the nature of those physical conditions, or concomitants of thought, which are more or less accessible to us, and a knowledge of which may, in future, help us to exercise the same kind of control over the world of thought as we already possess in respect of the material world; whereas the alternative, or spiritualistic, terminology is utterly barren, and leads to nothing but obscurity and confusion of ideas.

Thus there can be little doubt that, the further science advances, the more extensively and consistently will all the phenomena of nature be represented by materialistic formulæ and symbols. But the man of science, who, forgetting the limits of philosophical inquiry, slides from these formulæ and symbols into what is commonly understood by materialism, seems to me to place himself on a level with the mathematician who should mistake the *x*'s and *y*'s with which he works his problems, for real entities—and with this further disadvantage, as compared with the mathematician, that the blunders of the latter are of no practical consequence, while the errors of systematic materialism may paralyze the energies and destroy the beauty of a life.

(1868)

On a Piece of Chalk

If a well were sunk at our feet in the midst of the city of Norwich,[1] the diggers would very soon find themselves at work in that white substance almost too soft to be called rock, with which we are all familiar as "chalk."

Not only here, but over the whole county of Norfolk, the well-sinker might carry his shaft down many hundred feet without coming to the end of the chalk; and, on the seacoast, where the waves have pared away the face of the land which breasts them, the scarped faces of the high cliffs are often wholly formed of the same material. Northward, the chalk may be followed as far as Yorkshire; on the south coast it appears abruptly in the picturesque western bays of Dorset, and breaks into the Needles of the Isle of Wight; while on the shores of Kent it supplies that long line of white cliffs to which England owes her name of Albion.

Were the thin soil which covers it all washed away, a curved band of white chalk, here broader, and there narrower, might be followed diagonally

[1] a city in the eastern part of England, pronounced "Norridge."

across England from Lulworth in Dorset, to Flamborough Head in Yorkshire—a distance of over 280 miles as the crow flies.

From this band to the North Sea, on the East, and the Channel, on the South, the chalk is largely hidden by other deposits; but, except in the Weald of Kent and Sussex, it enters into the very foundation of all the southeastern counties.

Attaining, as it does in some places, a thickness of more than a thousand feet, the English chalk must be admitted to be a mass of considerable magnitude. Nevertheless, it covers but an insignificant portion of the whole area occupied by the chalk formation of the globe, much of which has the same general characters as ours, and is found in detached patches, some less, and others more extensive, than the English. Chalk occurs in northwest Ireland; it stretches over a large part of France,—the chalk which underlies Paris being, in fact, a continuation of that of the London basin; it runs through Denmark and Central Europe, and extends southward to North Africa; while eastward, it appears in the Crimea and in Syria, and may be traced as far as the shores of the Sea of Aral, in Central Asia.

If all the points at which true chalk occurs were circumscribed, they would lie within an irregular oval about three thousand miles in long diameter—the area of which would be as great as that of Europe, and would many times exceed that of the largest existing inland sea—the Mediterranean.

Thus the chalk is no unimportant element in the masonry of the earth's crust, and it impresses a peculiar stamp, varying with the conditions to which it is exposed, on the scenery of the districts in which it occurs. The undulating downs and rounded coombs, covered with sweet-grassed turf, of our inland chalk country, have a peacefully domestic and mutton-suggesting prettiness, but can hardly be called either grand or beautiful. But on our southern coasts, the wall-sided cliffs, many hundred feet high, with vast needles and pinnacles standing out in the sea, sharp and solitary enough to serve as perches for the wary cormorant, confer a wonderful beauty and grandeur upon the chalk headlands. And, in the East, chalk has its share in the formation of some of the most venerable of mountain ranges, such as the Lebanon.

What is this wide-spread component of the surface of the earth? and whence did it come?

You may think this no very hopeful inquiry. You may not unnaturally suppose that the attempt to solve such problems as these can lead to no result, save that of entangling the inquirer in vague speculations, incapable of refutation and of verification. If such were really the case, I should have selected some other subject than a "piece of chalk" for my discourse. But, in truth, after much deliberation, I have been unable to think of any topic which would so well enable me to lead you to see how solid is the foundation upon which some of the most startling conclusions of physical science rest.

A great chapter of the history of the world is written in the chalk. Few passages in the history of man can be supported by such an overwhelming mass of direct and indirect evidence as that which testifies to the truth of the fragment of the history of the globe, which I hope to enable you to read, with your own eyes, to-night. Let me add, that few chapters of human history have a more profound significance for ourselves. I weigh my words well when I assert, that the man who should know the true history of the bit of chalk which every carpenter carries about in his breeches-pocket, though ignorant of all other history, is likely, if he will think his knowledge out to its ultimate results, to have a truer, and therefore a better, conception of this wonderful universe, and of man's relation to it, than the most learned student who is deep-read in the records of humanity and ignorant of those of Nature.

The language of the chalk is not hard to learn, not nearly so hard as Latin, if you only want to get at the broad features of the story it has to tell; and I propose that we now set to work to spell that story out together.

We all know that if we "burn" chalk the result is quicklime. Chalk in fact, is a compound of carbonic acid gas, and lime, and when you make it very hot the carbonic acid flies away and the lime is left. By this method of procedure we see the lime, but we do not see the carbonic acid. If, on the other hand, you were to powder a little chalk and drop it into a good deal of strong vinegar, there would be a great bubbling and fizzing, and, finally, a clear liquid, in which no sign of chalk would appear. Here you see the carbonic acid in the bubbles; the lime, dissolved in the vinegar, vanishes from sight. There are a great many other ways of showing that chalk is essentially nothing but carbonic acid and quicklime. Chemists enunciate the result of all the experiments which prove this, by stating that chalk is almost wholly composed of "carbonate of lime."

It is desirable for us to start from the knowledge of this fact, though it may not seem to help us very far towards what we seek. For carbonate of lime is a widely-spread substance, and is met with under very various conditions. All sorts of limestones are composed of more or less pure carbonate of lime. The crust which is often deposited by waters which have drained through limestone rocks, in the form of what are called stalagmites and stalactites, is carbonate of lime. Or, to take a more familiar example, the fur on the inside of a tea-kettle is carbonate of lime; and, for anything chemistry tells us to the contrary, the chalk might be a kind of gigantic fur upon the bottom of the earth-kettle, which is kept pretty hot below.

Let us try another method of making the chalk tell us its own history. To the unassisted eye chalk looks simply like a very loose and open kind of stone. But it is possible to grind a slice of chalk down so thin that you can see through it—until it is thin enough, in fact, to be examined with any magnifying power that may be thought desirable. A thin slice of the fur of a kettle might be made in the same way. If it were examined microscopically it would show itself to be a more or less distinctly laminated mineral substance, and nothing more.

But the slice of chalk presents a totally different appearance when placed under the microscope. The general mass of it is made up of very minute granules; but, imbedded in this matrix, are innumerable bodies, some smaller and some larger, but, on a rough average, not more than a hundredth of an inch in diameter, having a well-defined shape and structure. A cubic inch of some specimens of chalk may contain hundreds of thousands of these bodies, compacted together with incalculable millions of the granules.

The examination of a transparent slice gives a good notion of the manner in which the components of the chalk are arranged, and of their relative proportions. But, by rubbing up some chalk with a brush in water and then pouring off the milky fluid, so as to obtain sediments of different degrees of fineness, the granules and the minute rounded bodies may be pretty well separated from one another, and submitted to microscopic examination, either as opaque or as transparent objects. By combining the views obtained in these various methods, each of the rounded bodies may be proved to be a beautifully-constructed calcareous fabric, made up of a number of chambers, communicating freely with one another. The chambered bodies are of various forms. One of the commonest is something like a badly-grown raspberry, being formed of a number of nearly globular chambers of different sizes congregated together. It is called *Globigerina*, and some specimens of chalk consist of little else than *Globigerinæ* and granules. Let us fix our attention upon the *Globigerina*. It is the spoor of the game we are tracking. If we can learn what it is and what are the conditions of its existence, we shall see our way to the origin and past history of the chalk.

A suggestion which may naturally enough present itself is, that these curious bodies are the result of some process of aggregation which has taken place in the carbonate of lime; that, just as in winter, the rime on our window simulates the most delicate and elegantly arborescent foliage—proving that the mere mineral water may, under certain conditions, assume the outward form of organic bodies—so this mineral substance, carbonate of lime, hidden away in the bowels of the earth, has taken the shape of these chambered bodies. I am not raising a merely fanciful and unreal objection. Very learned men, in former days, have even entertained the notion that all the formed things found in rocks are of this nature; and if no such conception is at present held to be admissible, it is because long and varied experience has now shown that mineral matter never does assume the form and structure we find in fossils. If any one were to try to persuade you that an oyster-shell (which is also chiefly composed of carbonate of lime) had crystallized out of sea-water, I suppose you would laugh at the absurdity. Your laughter would be justified by the fact that all experience tends to show that oyster-shells are formed by the agency of oysters, and in no other way. And if there were no better reasons, we should be justified, on like grounds, in believing that *Globigerina* is not the product of anything but vital activity.

Happily, however, better evidence in proof of the organic nature of the *Globigerinæ* than that of analogy is forthcoming. It so happens that calcareous skeletons, exactly similar to the *Globigerinæ* of the chalk, are being formed, at the present moment, by minute living creatures, which flourish in multitudes, literally more numerous than the sands of the sea-shore, over a large extent of that part of the earth's surface which is covered by the ocean.

The history of the discovery of these living *Globigerinæ*, and of the part which they play in

rock building, is singular enough. It is a discovery which, like others of no less scientific importance, has arisen, incidentally, out of work devoted to very different and exceedingly practical interests. When men first took to the sea, they speedily learned to look out for shoals and rocks; and the more the burthen of their ships increased, the more imperatively necessary it became for sailors to ascertain with precision the depths of the waters they traversed. Out of this necessity grew the use of the lead and sounding line; and, ultimately, marine-surveying, which is the recording of the form of coasts and of the depth of the sea, as ascertained by the sounding-lead, upon charts.

At the same time, it became desirable to ascertain and to indicate the nature of the sea-bottom, since this circumstance greatly affects its goodness as holding ground for anchors. Some ingenious tar, whose name deserves a better fate than the oblivion into which it has fallen, attained this object by "arming" the bottom of the lead with a lump of grease, to which more or less of the sand or mud, or broken shells, as the case might be, adhered, and was brought to the surface. But, however well adapted such an apparatus might be for rough nautical purposes, scientific accuracy could not be expected from the armed lead, and to remedy its defects (especially when applied to sounding in great depths) Lieut. Brooke, of the American Navy, some years ago invented a most ingenious machine, by which a considerable portion of the superficial layer of the sea-bottom can be scooped out and brought up from any depth to which the lead descends.

In 1853, Lieut. Brooke obtained mud from the bottom of the North Atlantic, between Newfoundland and the Azores, at a depth of more than ten thousand feet, or two miles, by the help of this sounding apparatus. The specimens were sent for examination to Ehrenberg of Berlin, and to Bailey of West Point, and those able microscopists found that this deep-sea mud was almost entirely composed of the skeletons of living organisms—the greater proportion of these being just like the *Globigerinæ* already known to occur in the chalk.

Thus far, the work had been carried on simply in the interests of science, but Lieut. Brooke's method of sounding acquired a high commercial value, when the enterprise of laying down the telegraph-cable between this country and the United States was undertaken. For it became a matter of immense importance to know, not only the depth of the sea over the whole line along which the cable was to be laid, but the exact nature of the bottom, so as to guard against chances of cutting or fraying the strands of that costly rope. The Admiralty consequently ordered Captain Dayman, an old friend and shipmate of mine, to ascertain the depth over the whole line of the cable, and to bring back specimens of the bottom. In former days, such a command as this might have sounded very much like one of the impossible things which the young Prince in the Fairy Tales is ordered to do before he can obtain the hand of the Princess. However, in the months of June and July, 1857, my friend performed the task assigned to him with great expedition and precision, without, so far as I know, having met with any reward of that kind. The specimens of Atlantic mud which he procured were sent to me to be examined and reported upon.[2]

The result of all these operations is, that we know the contours and the nature of the surface-soil covered by the North Atlantic for a distance of 1700 miles from east to west, as well as we know that of any part of the dry land. It is a prodigious plain—one of the widest and most even plains in the world. If the sea were drained off, you might drive a wagon all the way from Valentia, on the west coast of Ireland, to Trinity Bay, in Newfoundland. And, except upon one sharp incline about 200 miles from Valentia, I am not quite sure that it would even be necessary to put the skid on, so gentle are the ascents and descents upon that long route. From Valentia the road would lie down-hill for about 200 miles to the point at which the bottom is now covered by 1700 fathoms of sea-water. Then would come the central plain, more than a thousand miles wide, the inequalities of the surface of which would be hardly perceptible, though the depth of water upon it now varies from 10,000 to 15,000 feet; and there are places in which Mont Blanc might be sunk without showing its peak above water. Beyond this, the ascent on the American side commences, and gradually leads, for about 300 miles, to the Newfoundland shore.

Almost the whole of the bottom of this central plain (which extends for many hundred miles in a north and south direction) is covered by a fine

[2] See Appendix to Captain Dayman's *Deep-sea Soundings in the North Atlantic Ocean between Ireland and Newfoundland, made in* H. M. S. Cyclops. Published by order of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, 1858. They have since formed the subject of an elaborate Memoir by Messrs. Parker and Jones, published in the *Philosophical Transactions* for 1865.—(Huxley)

mud, which, when brought to the surface, dries into a greyish white friable substance. You can write with this on a blackboard, if you are so inclined; and, to the eye, it is quite like very soft, greyish chalk. Examined chemically, it proves to be composed almost wholly of carbonate of lime; and if you make a section of it, in the same way as that of the piece of chalk was made, and view it with the microscope, it presents innumerable *Globigerinæ* embedded in a granular matrix. Thus this deep-sea mud is substantially chalk. I say substantially, because there are a good many minor differences; but as these have no bearing on the question immediately before us,—which is the nature of the *Globigerinæ* of the chalk,—it is unnecessary to speak of them.

Globigerinæ of every size, from the smallest to the largest, are associated together in the Atlantic mud, and the chambers of many are filled by a soft animal matter. This soft substance is, in fact, the remains of the creature to which the *Globigerina* shell, or rather skeleton, owes its existence —and which is an animal of the simplest imaginable description. It is, in fact, a mere particle of living jelly, without defined parts of any kind—without a mouth, nerves, muscles, or distinct organs, and only manifesting its vitality to ordinary observation by thrusting out and retracting from all parts of its surface, long filamentous processes, which serve for arms and legs. Yet this amorphous particle, devoid of everything which, in the higher animals, we call organs, is capable of feeding, growing and multiplying; of separating from the ocean the small proportion of carbonate of lime which is dissolved in sea-water; and of building up that substance into a skeleton for itself, according to a pattern which can be imitated by no other known agency.

The notion that animals can live and flourish in the sea, at the vast depths from which apparently living *Globigerinæ* have been brought up, does not agree very well with our usual conceptions respecting the conditions of animal life; and it is not so absolutely impossible as it might at first sight appear to be, that the *Globigerinæ* of the Atlantic sea-bottom do not live and die where they are found.

As I have mentioned, the soundings from the great Atlantic plain are almost entirely made up of *Globigerinæ*, with the granules which have been mentioned, and some few other calcareous shells; but a small percentage of the chalky mud—perhaps at most some five per cent of it—is of a different nature, and consists of shells and skeletons composed of silex, or pure flint. These silicious bodies belong partly to the lowly vegetable organisms which are called *Diatomaceæ*, and partly to the minute, and extremely simple, animals, termed *Radiolaria*. It is quite certain that these creatures do not live at the bottom of the ocean, but at its surface—where they may be obtained in prodigious numbers by the use of a properly constructed net. Hence it follows that these silicious organisms, though they are not heavier than the lightest dust, must have fallen, in some cases, through fifteen thousand feet of water, before they reached their final resting-place on the ocean floor. And, considering how large a surface these bodies expose in proportion to their weight, it is probable that they occupy a great length of time in making their burial journey from the surface of the Atlantic to the bottom.

But if the *Radiolaria* and Diatoms are thus rained upon the bottom of the sea, from the superficial layer of its waters in which they pass their lives, it is obviously possible that the *Globigerinæ* may be similarly derived; and if they were so, it would be much more easy to understand how they obtain their supply of food than it is at present. Nevertheless, the positive and negative evidence all points the other way. The skeletons of the full-grown, deep-sea *Globigerinæ* are so remarkably solid and heavy in proportion to their surface as to seem little fitted for floating; and, as a matter of fact, they are not to be found along with the Diatoms and *Radiolaria* in the uppermost stratum of the open ocean. It has been observed, again, that the abundance of *Globigerinæ*, in proportion to other organisms, of like kind, increases with the depth of the sea; and that deep-water *Globigerinæ* are larger than those which live in shallower parts of the sea; and such facts negative the supposition that these organisms have been swept by currents from the shallows into the deeps of the Atlantic. It therefore seems to be hardly doubtful that these wonderful creatures live and die at the depths in which they are found.

However, the important points for us are, that the living *Globigerinæ* are exclusively marine animals, the skeletons of which abound at the bottom of deep seas; and that there is not a shadow of reason for believing that the habits of the *Globigerinæ* of the chalk differed from those of the existing species. But if this be true, there is no escaping the conclusion that the chalk itself is the dried mud of an ancient deep sea.

In working over the soundings collected by Captain Dayman, I was surprised to find that many of what I have called the "granules" of that mud were not, as one might have been tempted to think at first, the mere powder and waste of *Globigerinæ*, but that they had a definite form and size. I termed these bodies *"coccoliths,"* and doubted their organic nature. Dr. Wallich verified my observation, and added the interesting discovery, that, not unfrequently, bodies similar to these "coccoliths" were aggregated together into spheroids, which he termed *"coccospheres."* So far as we knew, these bodies, the nature of which is extremely puzzling and problematical, were peculiar to the Atlantic soundings. But, a few years ago, Mr. Sorby, in making a careful examination of the chalk by means of thin sections and otherwise, observed, as Ehrenberg had done before him, that much of its granular basis possesses a definite form. Comparing these formed particles with those in the Atlantic soundings, he found the two to be identical; and thus proved that the chalk, like the soundings, contains these mysterious coccoliths and coccospheres. Here was a further and a most interesting confirmation, from internal evidence, of the essential identity of the chalk with modern deep-sea mud. *Globigerinæ*, coccoliths, and coccospheres are found as the chief constituents of both, and testify to the general similiarity of the conditions under which both have been formed.

The evidence furnished by the hewing, facing, and superposition of the stones of the Pyramids, that these structures were built by men, has no greater weight than the evidence that the chalk was built by *Globigerinæ*; and the belief that those ancient pyramid-builders were terrestrial and air-breathing creatures like ourselves, is not better based than the conviction that the chalk-makers lived in the sea. But as our belief in the building of the Pyramids by men is not only grounded on the internal evidences afforded by these structures, but gathers strength from multitudinous collateral proofs, and is clinched by the total absence of any reason for a contrary belief; so the evidence drawn from the *Globigerinæ* that the chalk is an ancient sea-bottom, is fortified by innumerable independent lines of evidence; and our belief in the truth of the conclusion to which all positive testimony tends, receives the like negative justification from the facts that no other hypothesis has a shadow of foundation.

It may be worth while briefly to consider a few of these collateral proofs that the chalk was deposited at the bottom of the sea. The great mass of the chalk is composed, as we have seen, of the skeletons of *Globigerinæ*, and other simple organisms, imbedded in granular matter. Here and there, however, this hardened mud of the ancient sea reveals the remains of higher animals which have lived and died, and left their hard parts in the mud, just as the oysters die and leave their shells behind them, in the mud of the present seas.

There are, at the present day, certain groups of animals which are never found in fresh waters, being unable to live anywhere but in the sea. Such are the corals; those corallines which are called *Polyzoa*; those creatures which fabricate the lamp-shells, and are called *Brachiopoda*; and the pearly *Nautilus*, and all animals allied to it; and all the forms of sea-urchins and star-fishes. Not only are all these creatures confined to salt water at the present day; but, so far as our records of the past go, the conditions of their existence have been the same: hence, their occurrence in any deposit is as strong evidence as can be obtained, that that deposit was formed in the sea. Now the remains of animals of all kinds which have been enumerated, occur in the chalk, in greater or less abundance; while not one of those forms of shell-fish which are characteristic of fresh water has yet been observed in it.

When we consider that the remains of more than three thousand distinct species of aquatic animals have been discovered among the fossils of the chalk, that the great majority of them are of such forms as are now met with only in the sea, and that there is no reason to believe that any one of them inhabited fresh water—the collateral evidence that the chalk represents an ancient sea-bottom acquires as great force as the proof derived from the nature of the chalk itself. I think you will now allow that I did not overstate my case when I asserted that we have as strong grounds for believing that all the vast area of dry land, at present occupied by the chalk, was once at the bottom of the sea, as we have for any matter of history whatever; while there is no justification for any other belief.

No less certain it is that the time during which the countries we now call south-east England, France, Germany, Poland, Russia, Egypt, Arabia, Syria, were more or less completely covered by a deep sea, was of considerable duration. We have already seen that the chalk is, in places, more than a thousand feet thick. I think you will agree with me, that it must have taken some time for the skeletons of animalcules of a hundredth of an inch

in diameter to heap up such a mass as that. I have said that throughout the thickness of the chalk the remains of other animals are scattered. These remains are often in the most exquisite state of preservation. The valves of the shell-fishes are commonly adherent; the long spines of some of the sea-urchins, which would be detached by the smallest jar, often remain in their places. In a word, it is certain that these animals have lived and died when the place which they now occupy was the surface of as much of the chalk as had then been deposited; and that each has been covered up by the layer of *Globigerina* mud, upon which the creatures imbedded a little higher up have, in like manner, lived and died. But some of these remains prove the existence of reptiles of vast size in the chalk sea. These lived their time, and had their ancestors and descendants, which assuredly implies time, reptiles being of slow growth.

There is more curious evidence, again, that the process of covering up, or, in other words, the deposit of *Globigerina* skeletons, did not go on very fast. It is demonstrable that an animal of the cretaceous sea might die, that its skeleton might lie uncovered upon the sea-bottom long enough to lose all its outward coverings and appendages by putrefaction; and that, after this had happened, another animal might attach itself to the dead and naked skeleton, might grow to maturity, and might itself die before the calcareous mud had buried the whole.

Cases of this kind are admirably described by Sir Charles Lyell. He speaks of the frequency with which geologists find in the chalk a fossilized sea-urchin, to which is attached the lower valve of a *Crania*. This is a kind of shell-fish, with a shell composed of two pieces, of which, as in the oyster, one is fixed and the other free.

"The upper valve is almost invariably wanting, though occasionally found in a perfect state of preservation in the white chalk at some distance. In this case, we see clearly that the sea-urchin first lived from youth to age, then died and lost its spines, which were carried away. Then the young *Crania* adhered to the bared shell, grew and perished in its turn; after which the upper valve was separated from the lower, before the Echinus became enveloped in chalky mud."

A specimen in the Museum of Practical Geology, in London, still further prolongs the period which must have elapsed between the death of the sea-urchin, and its burial by the *Globigerinæ*. For the outward face of the valve of a *Crania*, which is attached to a sea-urchin (*Micraster*,) is itself overrun by an incrusting coralline, which spreads thence over more or less of the surface of the sea-urchin. It follows that, after the upper valve of the *Crania* fell off, the surface of the attached valve must have remained exposed long enough to allow of the growth of the whole coralline, since corallines do not live imbedded in mud.

The progress of knowledge may, one day, enable us to deduce from such facts as these the maximum rate at which the chalk can have accumulated, and thus to arrive at the minimum duration of the chalk period. Suppose that the valve of the *Crania* upon which a coralline has fixed itself in the way just described, is so attached to the sea-urchin that no part of it is more than an inch above the face upon which the sea-urchin rests. Then, as the coralline could not have fixed itself, if the *Crania* had been covered up with chalk mud, and could not have lived had itself been so covered, it follows, that an inch of chalk mud could not have accumulated within the time between the death and decay of the soft parts of the sea-urchin and the growth of the coralline to the full size which it has attained. If the decay of the soft parts of the sea-urchin; the attachment, growth to maturity, and decay of the *Crania*; and the subsequent attachment and growth of the coralline, took a year (which is a low estimate enough), the accumulation of the inch of chalk must have taken more than a year: and the deposit of a thousand feet of chalk must, consequently, have taken more than twelve thousand years.

The foundation of all this calculation is, of course, a knowledge of the length of time the *Crania* and the coralline needed to attain their full size; and, on this head, precise knowledge is at present wanting. But there are circumstances which tend to show, that nothing like an inch of chalk has accumulated during the life of a *Crania*; and, on any probable estimate of the length of that life, the chalk period must have had a much longer duration than that thus roughly assigned to it.

Thus, not only is it certain that the chalk is the mud of an ancient sea-bottom; but it is no less certain, that the chalk sea existed during an extremely long period, though we may not be prepared to give a precise estimate of the length of that period in years. The relative duration is clear, though the absolute duration may not be definable. The attempt to affix any precise date to the period at which the chalk sea began, or ended, its existence,

is baffled by difficulties of the same kind. But the relative age of the cretaceous epoch may be determined with as great ease and certainty as the long duration of that epoch.

You will have heard of the interesting discoveries recently made, in various parts of Western Europe, of flint implements, obviously worked into shape by human hands, under circumstances which show conclusively that man is a very ancient denizen of these regions. It has been proved that the whole populations of Europe, whose existence has been revealed to us in this way, consisted of savages, such as the Esquimaux are now; that, in the country which is now France, they hunted the reindeer, and were familiar with the ways of the mammoth and the bison. The physical geography of France was in those days different from what it is now—the river Somme, for instance, having cut its bed a hundred feet deeper between that time and this; and, it is probable, that the climate was more like that of Canada or Siberia, than that of Western Europe.

The existence of these people is forgotten even in the traditions of the oldest historical nations. The name and fame of them had utterly vanished until a few years back; and the amount of physical change which has been effected since their day renders it more than probable that, venerable as are some of the historical nations, the workers of the chipped flints of Hoxne or of Amiens are to them, as they are to us, in point of antiquity. But, if we assign to these hoar relics of long-vanished generations of men the greatest age that can possibly be claimed for them, they are not older than the drift, or boulder clay, which, in comparison with the chalk, is but a very juvenile deposit. You need go no further than your own sea-board for evidence of this fact. At one of the most charming spots on the coast of Norfolk, Cromer, you will see the boulder clay forming a vast mass, which lies upon the chalk, and must consequently have come into existence after it. Huge boulders of chalk are, in fact, included in the clay, and have evidently been brought to the position they now occupy by the same agency as that which has planted blocks of syenite from Norway side by side with them.

The chalk, then, is certainly older than the boulder clay. If you ask how much, I will again take you no further than the same spot upon your own coasts for evidence. I have spoken of the boulder clay and drift as resting upon the chalk. That is not strictly true. Interposed between the chalk and the drift is a comparatively insignificant layer, containing vegetable matter. But that layer tells a wonderful history. It is full of stumps of trees standing as they grew. Fir-trees are there with their cones, and hazel-bushes with their nuts; there stand the stools of oak and yew trees, beeches and alders. Hence this stratum is appropriately called the "forest-bed."

It is obvious that the chalk must have been upheaved and converted into dry land, before the timber trees could grow upon it. As the boles of some of these trees are from two to three feet in diameter, it is no less clear that the dry land this formed remained in the same condition for long ages. And not only do the remains of stately oaks and well-grown firs testify to the duration of this condition of things, but additional evidence to the same effect is afforded by the abundant remains of elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses, and other great wild beasts, which it has yielded to the zealous search of such men as the Rev. Mr. Gunn. When you look at such a collection as he has formed, and bethink you that these elephantine bones did veritably carry their owners about, and these great grinders crunch, in the dark woods of which the forest-bed is now the only trace, it is impossible not to feel that they are as good evidence of the lapse of time as the annual rings of the tree stumps.

Thus there is a writing upon the walls of cliffs at Cromer, and whoso runs may read it. It tells us, with an authority which cannot be impeached, that the ancient sea-bed of the chalk sea was raised up, and remained dry land, until it was covered with forest, stocked with the great game the spoils of which have rejoiced your geologists. How long it remained in that condition cannot be said; but "the whirligig of time brought its revenges" in those days as in these. That dry land, with the bones and teeth of generations of long-lived elephants, hidden away among the gnarled roots and dry leaves of its ancient trees, sank gradually to the bottom of the icy sea, which covered it with huge masses of drift and boulder clay. Sea-beasts, such as the walrus, now restricted to the extreme north, paddled about where birds had twittered among the topmost twigs of the fir-trees. How long this state of things endured we know not, but at length it came to an end. The upheaved glacial mud hardened into the soil of modern Norfolk. Forests grew once more, the wolf and the beaver replaced the reindeer and the elephant; and at length what we call the history of England dawned.

Thus you have, within the limits of your own

county, proof that the chalk can justly claim a very much greater antiquity than even the oldest physical traces of mankind. But we may go further and demonstrate, by evidence of the same authority as that which testifies to the existence of the father of men, that the chalk is vastly older than Adam himself.

The Book of Genesis informs us that Adam, immediately upon his creation, and before the appearance of Eve, was placed in the Garden of Eden. The problem of the geographical position of Eden has greatly vexed the spirits of the learned in such matters, but there is one point respecting which, so far as I know, no commentator has ever raised a doubt. This is, that of the four rivers which are said to run out of it, Euphrates and Hiddekel are identical with the rivers now known by the names of Euphrates and Tigris. But the whole country in which these mighty rivers take their origin, and through which they run, is composed of rocks which are either of the same age as the chalk, or of later date. So that the chalk must not only have been formed, but, after its formation, the time required for the deposit of these later rocks, and for their upheaval into dry land, must have elapsed, before the smallest brook which feeds the swift stream of "the great river, the river of Babylon," began to flow.

Thus, evidence which cannot be rebutted, and which need not be strengthened, though if time permitted I might indefinitely increase its quantity, compels you to believe that the earth, from the time of the chalk to the present day, has been the theatre of a series of changes as vast in their amount, as they were slow in their progress. The area on which we stand has been first sea and then land, for at least four alternations; and has remained in each of these conditions for a period of great length.

Nor have these wonderful metamorphoses of sea into land, and of land into sea, been confined to one corner of England. During the chalk period, or "cretaceous epoch," not one of the present great physical features of the globe was in existence. Our great mountain ranges, Pyrenees, Alps, Himalayas, Andes, have all been upheaved since the chalk was deposited, and the cretaceous sea flowed over the sites of Sinai and Ararat.[3] All this is certain, because rocks of cretaceous, or still later, date have shared in the elevatory movements which gave rise to these mountain chains; and may be found perched up, in some cases, many thousand feet high upon their flanks. And evidence of equal cogency demonstrates that, though, in Norfolk, the forest-bed rests directly upon the chalk, yet it does so, not because the period at which the forest grew immediately followed that at which the chalk was formed, but because an immense lapse of time, represented elsewhere by thousands of feet of rock, is not indicated at Cromer.

I must ask you to believe that there is no less conclusive proof that a still more prolonged succession of similar changes occurred, before the chalk was deposited. Nor have we any reason to think that the first term in the series of these changes is known. The oldest sea-beds preserved to us are sands, and mud, and pebbles, the wear and tear of rocks which were formed in still older oceans.

But, great as is the magnitude of these physical changes of the world, they have been accompanied by a no less striking series of modifications in its living inhabitants. All the great classes of animals, beasts of the field, fowls of the air, creeping things, and things which dwell in the waters, flourished upon the globe long ages before the chalk was deposited. Very few, however, if any, of these ancient forms of animal life were identical with those which now live. Certainly not one of the higher animals was of the same species as any of those now in existence. The beasts of the field, in the days before the chalk, were not our beasts of the field, nor the fowls of the air such as those which the eye of men has seen flying, unless his antiquity dates infinitely further back than we at present surmise. If we could be carried back into those times, we should be as one suddenly set down in Australia before it was colonized. We should see mammals, birds, reptiles, fishes, insects, snails, and the like, clearly recognisable as such, and yet not one of them would be just the same as those with which we are familiar, and many would be extremely different.

From that time to the present, the population of the world has undergone slow and gradual, but incessant, changes. There has been no grand catastrophe—no destroyer has swept away the forms of life of one period, and replaced them by a totally new creation: but one species has vanished and another has taken its place; creatures of one type of structure have diminished, those of another have increased, as time has passed on. And thus, while

[3] Mountains famous in the Old Testament, the former as the place where the Ten Commandments were delivered and the latter as the resting place of Noah's ark.

the differences between the living creatures of the time before the chalk and those of the present day appear startling, if placed side by side, we are led from one to the other by the most gradual progress, if we follow the course of Nature through the whole series of those relics of her operations which she has left behind. And it is by the population of the chalk sea that the ancient and the modern inhabitants of the world are most completely connected. The groups which are dying out flourish, side by side, with the groups which are now the dominant forms of life.

Thus the chalk contains remains of those strange flying and swimming reptiles, the pterodactyl, the ichthyosaurus, and the plesiosaurus, which are found in no later deposits, but abounded in preceding ages. The chambered shells called ammonites and blemnites, which are so characteristic of the period preceding the cretaceous, in like manner die with it.

But, amongst these fading remainders of a previous state of things, are some very modern forms of life, looking like Yankee pedlars among a tribe of Red Indians. Crocodiles of modern type appear; bony fishes, many of them very similar to existing species, almost supplant the forms of fish which predominate in more ancient seas; and many kinds of living shell-fish first become known to us in the chalk. The vegetation acquires a modern aspect. A few living animals are not even distinguishable as species, from those which existed at that remote epoch. The *Globigerina* of the present day, for example, is not different specifically from that of the chalk; and the same may be said of many other *Foraminifera*. I think it probable that critical and unprejudiced examination will show that more than one species of much higher animals have had a similar longevity; but the only example which I can at present give confidently is the snake's-head lamp-shell (*Terebratulina caput serpentis*), which lives in our English seas and abounded (as *Terebratulina striata* of authors), in the chalk.

The longest line of human ancestry must hide its diminished head before the pedigree of this insignificant shell-fish. We Englishmen are proud to have an ancestor who was present at the Battle of Hastings. The ancestors of *Terebratulina caput serpentis* may have been present at a battle of *Ichthyosauria* in that part of the sea which, when the chalk was forming, flowed over the site of Hastings. While all around has changed, this *Terebratulina* has peacefully propagated its species from generation to generation, and stands to this day, as a living testimony to the continuity of the present with the past history of the globe.

Up to this moment I have stated, so far as I know, nothing but well-authenticated facts, and the immediate conclusions which they force upon the mind. But the mind is so constituted that it does not willingly rest in facts and immediate causes, but seeks always after a knowledge of the remoter links in the chain of causation.

Taking the many changes of any given spot of the earth's surface, from sea to land and from land to sea, as an established fact, we cannot refrain from asking ourselves how these changes have occurred. And when we have explained them—as they must be explained—by the alternate slow movements of elevation and depression which have affected the crust of the earth, we go still further back, and ask, Why these movements?

I am not certain that any one can give you a satisfactory answer to that question. Assuredly I cannot. All that can be said, for certain, is, that such movements are part of the ordinary course of nature, inasmuch as they are going on at the present time. Direct proof may be given, that some parts of the land of the northern hemisphere are at this moment insensibly rising and others insensibly sinking; and there is indirect, but perfectly satisfactory, proof, that an enormous area now covered by the Pacific has been deepened thousands of feet, since the present inhabitants of that sea came into existence. Thus there is not a shadow of a reason for believing that the physical changes of the globe, in past times, have been effected by other than natural causes. Is there any more reason for believing that the concomitant modifications in the forms of the living inhabitants of the globe have been brought about in other ways?

Before attempting to answer this question, let us try to form a distinct mental picture of what has happened in some special case. The crocodiles are animals which, as a group, have a very vast antiquity. They abounded ages before the chalk was deposited; they throng the rivers in warm climates, at the present day. There is a difference in the form of the joints of the back-bone, and in some minor particulars, between the crocodiles of the present epoch and those which lived before the chalk; but, in the cretaceous epoch, as I have already mentioned, the crocodiles had assumed the modern type of structure. Notwithstanding this, the crocodiles of the chalk are not identically the same as those which lived in the times called "older tertiary,"

which succeeded the cretaceous epoch; and the crocodiles of the older tertiaries are not identical with those of the newer tertiaries, nor are these identical with existing forms. I leave open the question whether particular species may have lived on from epoch to epoch. But each epoch has had its peculiar crocodiles; though all, since the chalk, have belonged to the modern type, and differ simply in their proportions, and in such structural particulars as are discernible only to trained eyes.

How is the existence of this long succession of different species of crocodiles to be accounted for? Only two suppositions seem to be open to us—Either each species of crocodile has been specially created, or it has arisen out of some pre-existing form by the operation of natural causes. Choose your hypothesis; I have chosen mine. I can find no warranty for believing in the distinct creation of a score of successive species of crocodiles in the course of countless ages of time. Science gives no countenance to such a wild fancy; nor can even the perverse ingenuity of a commentator pretend to discover this sense, in the simple words in which the writer of Genesis records the proceedings of the fifth and sixth days of the Creation.

On the other hand, I see no good reason for doubting the necessary alternative, that all these varied species have been evolved from pre-existing crocodilian forms, by the operation of causes as completely a part of the common order of nature as those which have effected the changes of the inorganic world. Few will venture to affirm that the reasoning which applies to crocodiles loses its force among other animals, or among plants. If one series of species has come into existence by the operation of natural causes, it seems folly to deny that all may have arisen in the same way.

A small beginning has led us to a great ending. If I were to put the bit of chalk with which we started into the hot but obscure flame of burning hydrogen, it would presently shine like the sun. It seems to me that this physical metamorphosis is no false image of what has been the result of our subjecting it to a jet of fervent, though nowise brilliant, thought to-night. It has become luminous, and its clear rays, penetrating the abyss of the remote past, have brought within our ken some stages of the evolution of the earth. And in the shifting "without haste, but without rest" of the land and sea, as in the endless variation of the forms assumed by living beings, we have observed nothing but the natural product of the forces originally possessed by the substance of the universe.

(1868)

Minor Victorians

Emily Brontë

(1818-1848)

Emily Brontë will always be thought of in connection with her two talented sisters, Charlotte and Anne. They were daughters of a clergyman in a remote part of Yorkshire and lived a lonely life varied only by excursions into the world of the imagination. The three sisters spent a time together in 1842 at Brussels, where Charlotte did some teaching. In 1846 they issued jointly a volume of poems under the pseudonym of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell. The volume was almost literally without a buyer, but it contained those poems of Emily's which were to give her a high place among the women poets of the century. In June, 1848, appeared her well-known novel, *Wuthering Heights*. She died on December 19, 1848.

Of her poems, the most admired have been *The Old Stoic* and *Last Lines*, which demonstrate how passionate was her nature.

Emily Brontë is one of those figures who cause us to wonder what she might have done had her death been not so untimely. As it is, she has a secure place in the history of nineteenth-century fiction and poetry.

Her complete poems were edited by C. K. Shorter (1924), and a group of additional poems by H. Brown and J. Mott (1938). The standard life is by Mary F. Robinson (1883). Important are also C. K. Shorter's *Charlotte Brontë and Her Sisters* (1906) and biographies by May Sinclair (1912), C. K. Shorter (1914), R. Wilson (1928), C. W. Simpson (1929), and V. Moore (1936). A good critical estimate is W. B. White's *The Miracle of Haworth* (1939).

The Old Stoic

Riches I hold in light esteem,
And Love I laugh to scorn;
And lust of fame was but a dream,
That vanished with the morn:

And if I pray, the only prayer
That moves my lips for me
Is, "Leave the heart that now I bear
And give me liberty!"

Yes, as my swift days near their goal,
'Tis all that I implore;
In life and death, a chainless soul,
With courage to endure.

(1846)

Remembrance

Cold in the earth—and the deep snow piled above thee.
Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave!
Have I forgot, my only Love, to love thee,
Severed at last by Time's all-severing wave?

Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
Over the mountains, on that northern shore,
Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover
Thy noble heart for ever, ever more?

Cold in the earth—and fifteen wild Decembers
From those brown hills, have melted into spring:
Faithful, indeed, is the spirit that remembers
After such years of change and suffering!

Sweet Love of youth, forgive, if I forget thee,
While the world's tide is bearing me along;
Other desires and other hopes beset me,
Hopes which obscure, but cannot do thee wrong!

No later light has lightened up my heaven,
No second morn has ever shone for me;
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given,
All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee!

But when the days of golden dreams had perished,
And even Despair was powerless to destroy,
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
Strengthened, and fed, without the aid of joy.

Then did I check the tears of useless passion—
Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine;
Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten
Down to that tomb already more than mine.

And, even yet, I dare not let it languish,
Dare not indulge in memory's rapturous pain;
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,
How could I seek the empty world again?

(1846)

The Visionary

Silent is the house: all are laid asleep:
One alone looks out o'er the snow-wreaths deep,
Watching every cloud, dreading every breeze
That whirls the 'wildering drift, and bends the groaning trees.

Cheerful is the hearth, soft the matted floor;
Not one shivering gust creeps through pane or door;
The little lamp burns straight, its rays shoot strong and far:
I trim it well, to be the wanderer's guiding-star.

Frown, my haughty sire! chide, my angry dame!
Set your slaves to spy; threaten me with shame:
But neither sire nor dame, nor prying serf shall know
What angel nightly tracks that waste of frozen snow.

What I love shall come like visitant of air,
Safe in secret power from lurking human snare;
Who loves me, no word of mine shall e'er betray,
Though for faith unstained my life must forfeit pay.

Burn then, little lamp; glimmer straight and clear—
Hush! a rustling wing stirs, methinks, the air:
He for whom whom I wait thus ever comes to me;
Strange Power! I trust thy might; trust thou my constancy.

(1850)

Last Lines

No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:
I see Heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life—that in me has rest,
As I—undying Life—have power in thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts: unutterably vain;
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main,

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by thine infinity;
So surely anchored on
The stedfast rock of immortality.

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou were left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.

There is not room for Death,
Nor atom that his might could render void:
Thou—Thou art Being and Breath,
And what Thou art may never be destroyed.

(1850)

Arthur Hugh Clough

(1819-1861)

Many people may be inclined to think of Clough only as a man immortalized by his friendship with Matthew Arnold and as one of the very few writers who have inspired a great elegy by a first-rate poet. But the devotion of Arnold and of other men of his generation was not without cause: Clough deserves to be studied for his own sake.

Though he was born in Liverpool, January 1, 1819, his childhood was spent in Charleston, South Carolina. From his ninth year onward, however, he went to school in England, most of the time at Rugby, where he came under the influence of Dr. Thomas Arnold and made friendships which were to remain with him through life. In 1837 he entered Balliol College, Oxford, on a scholarship, and there came into close association with a distinguished group of contemporaries such as Benjamin Jowett, Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, and Matthew Arnold.

The Oxford movement under the leadership of Newman was then at its height. Clough was repelled by the reactionary nature of the movement and, although he remained around Oxford a number of years as Fellow of Oriel College, he became more and more skeptical on religious matters until he felt impelled to resign his position in 1848.

Experiencing a great sense of relief, he now published poems and traveled to Paris and to Rome, where he witnessed the revolutions of 1848. The next five years were unsettled. His religious skepticism became deeper and was the cause of a great internal conflict. Notable during these years was a friendship with the Carlyles and with Emerson. Under the influence of the latter he visited Harvard in 1852, and there lectured and began work on a translation of Plutarch. He returned to England in 1853 and became an Examiner in the Education Office. In the same year he married. His last few years remaining were devoted to writing, to his duties, and particularly to his friends. In 1860 his health failed and he went to Italy to recuperate but died in Florence on November 13, 1861.

He began his poetic activity about 1840, but did not publish until 1848. From then until his death he issued four volumes, the last in 1861. His output is decidedly uneven, some of his poems being little more than hastily written memoranda of excursions or travels. On the other hand, at his best he has shown us perhaps as clearly as any poet the profound melancholy that comes to a spirit temperamentally conservative and fond of traditional ways of thinking when it is faced with what seems to be an intellectual certainty that all these ancient patterns of thought and conduct are mistakes. Clough met this challenge with courage, sincerity, and a certain joyous strength.

Perhaps the best appreciation of Clough as a man is to be found in Matthew Arnold's *Thyrsis* (cf. p. 632, *above*). His collected poems and prose were issued by his wife in 1869 and have been frequently reprinted. The poems were edited by H. S. Milford (1910) and also by C. Whibley (1913). Biographies have appeared by F. T. Palgrave (1865), S. Waddington (1883), J. I. Osborne (1920), and G. Levy (1938).

Qua Cursum Ventus[1]

As ships, becalmed at eve, that lay
With canvas drooping, side by side,
Two towers of sail at dawn of day
Are scarce long leagues apart descried;

When fell the night, upsprung the breeze,
And all the darkling hours they plied,
Nor dreamt but each the self-same seas
By each was cleaving, side by side:

E'en so—but why the tale reveal
Of those, whom year by year unchanged,
Brief absence joined anew to feel,
Astounded, soul from soul estranged?

At dead of night their sails were filled,
And onward each rejoicing steered—
Ah, neither blame, for neither willed,
Or wist, what first with dawn appeared!

To veer, how vain! On, onward strain,
Brave barks! In light, in darkness too,
Through winds and tides one compass guides—
To that, and your own selves, be true.

But O blithe breeze! and O great seas,
Though ne'er, that earliest parting past,
On your wide plain they join again,
Together lead them home at last.

One port, methought, alike they sought,
One purpose hold where'er they fare,—
O bounding breeze, O rushing seas!
At last, at last, unite them there.

(1843)

"With Whom Is No Variableness, Neither Shadow of Turning"

It fortifies my soul to know
That, though I perish, Truth is so:
That, howsoe'er I stray and range,
Whate'er I do, Thou dost not change.
I steadier step when I recall
That, if I slip Thou dost not fall.

(1843)

[1] As the wind blows (so the vessel takes its course); see Virgil's *Aeneid*, III, 269.

Say Not, the Struggle Nought Availeth

Say not, the struggle nought availeth,
The labor and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright.

(1849)

Qui Laborat, Orat[1]

O only Source of all our light and life,
Whom as our truth, our strength, we see and feel,
But whom the hours of mortal moral strife
Alone aright reveal!

Mine inmost soul, before Thee inly brought,
Thy presence owns ineffable, divine;
Chastised each rebel self-encentered thought,
My will adoreth Thine.

With eye down-dropt, if then this earthly mind
Speechless remain, or speechless e'en depart;
Nor seek to see—for what of earthly kind
Can see Thee as Thou art?—

If well-assured 'tis but profanely bold
In thought's abstractest forms to seem to see,
It dare not dare the dread communion hold
In ways unworthy Thee,

O not unowned, thou shalt unnamed forgive,
In worldly walks the prayerless heart prepare;
And if in work its life it seem to live,
Shalt make that work be prayer.

[1] He who labors, prays.

Nor times shall lack, when while the work it plies,
  Unsummoned powers the blinding film shall part,
And scarce by happy tears made dim, the eyes
  In recognition start.

But, as thou willest, give or e'en forbear
  The beatific supersensual sight,
So, with Thy blessing blest, that humbler prayer
  Approach Thee morn and night.

(1862)

All Is Well

Whate'er you dream with doubt possessed,
Keep, keep it snug within your breast,
And lay you down and take your rest;
Forget in sleep the doubt and pain,
And when you wake, to work again.
The wind it blows, the vessel goes,
And where and whither, no one knows.

'Twill all be well: no need of care;
Though how it will, and when, and where,
We cannot see, and can't declare.
In spite of dreams, in spite of thought,
'Tis not in vain, and not for nought,
The wind it blows, the ship it goes,
Though where and whither, no one knows.

(1869)

In a London Square

Put forth thy leaf, thou lofty plane,
  East wind and frost are safely gone;
With zephyr mild and balmy rain
  The summer comes serenely on;
Earth, air, and sun and skies combine
  To promise all that's kind and fair:—
But thou, O human heart of mine,
  Be still, contain thyself, and bear.

December days were brief and chill,
  The winds of March were wild and drear,
And, nearing and receding still,
  Spring never would, we thought, be here.
The leaves that burst, the suns that shine,
  Had, not the less, their certain date:—
And thou, O human heart of mine,
  Be still, refrain thyself, and wait.

(1869)

Life Is Struggle

To wear out heart, and nerves, and brain,
And give oneself a world of pain;
Be eager, angry, fierce, and hot,
Imperious, supple—God knows what,
For what's all one to have or not;
O false, unwise, absurd, and vain!
For 'tis not joy, it is not gain,
It is not in itself a bliss,
Only it is precisely this
  That keeps us all alive.

To say we truly feel the pain,
And quite are sinking with the strain;—
Entirely, simply, undeceived,
Believe, and say we ne'er believed
The object, e'en were it achieved,
A thing we e'er had cared to keep;
With heart and soul to hold it cheap.
And then to go and try it again;
O false, unwise, absurd, and vain!
O, 'tis not joy, and 'tis not bliss,
Only it is precisely this
  That keeps us still alive.

(1869)

THE LATER VICTORIANS AND AFTER

Toward a New Century

FOR MORE THAN fifty years England had exercised a virtual monopoly over exports to the rest of the world. The closing decades of the nineteenth century found the United States and Germany becoming important competitors. Even the home markets of English farmers were jeopardized, as a result of the rapid development of facilities for transportation, by American wheat-growers and Australian sheep-raisers. Rents came down, and thousands of bankruptcies occurred. It was the urban wage-earners who suffered most in this depression. In 1886 some 21,000 Englishmen emigrated, and in 1887-88 some 30,000 more. By this time the Liberal traditions were fairly exhausted; prosperity twenty-five years earlier had made it possible for the Liberals to introduce reforms slowly, while they boasted of the general excellence of all things British; but now they were unequal to the demands of the situation.

The working classes, spurred on by unemployment and the falling off in trade, strengthened in organization and influence. For many years their leaders had supported a vague sort of radicalism—as indicated by the popularity in England of Mazzini and Garibaldi. Socialistic thought had been slow in winning adherents. Although the essentials of socialism had been announced as early as 1848 in the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels, the first volume of Marx's *Capital* in 1867 confronted a public still unattuned to receive it. On the Continent the reaction consequent upon the failure of the Paris Commune of 1871 did much to consolidate the socialist movement. And England in 1880 began to exhibit signs of the penetration of Marx's teachings. In that year three Labor candidates won in the general elections. The following year the Democratic Federation (later called the Social Democratic Federation) came into being through the efforts of H. M. Hyndman, and soon possessed William Morris (cf. *above*) among its members. Many intellectuals were drawn into sympathy with socialism. In 1884 the Fabian Society, whose purpose was to prepare slowly and surely for a socialist state, was formed; among its famous leaders have been George Bernard Shaw, Sidney Webb, and, later, H. G. Wells. Even an esthete like Oscar Wilde (cf. *below*) was moved to write in a vein of complete sincerity an essay on *The Soul of Man under Socialism* (1891). But all such writing was still, by the end of the century, in the minority and completely unrepresentative of the bulk of literary composition.

Meanwhile the middle classes were better off than ever. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was able to prove that there had been a great increase in the number of incomes between £150 and £500 a year. Wealth was becoming more diffused among the bourgeoisie. From 1880 on there was a wild scramble among European nations

for colonies, and England set herself the task of building and extending her empire. In 1880 the British owned little in Africa besides the Cape Colony. By 1914 their possessions in that continent extended to more than three million square miles. Malaya was federated, and capital flowed into Canada, Australia, and India. The expansion of empire gave rise to the new pseudo-morality of "The White Man's Burden." Civilization followed the flag of trade, at the expense of the uncivilized, and helped to establish the prerogatives of imperialism.

The collapse of Liberalism made possible the victory of Conservatism, and jingoism became increasingly popular. Seeley's *Expansion of England* (1883) first gave expression to the idealization of the glories and responsibilities of empire. Of this sentiment Rudyard Kipling (cf. *below*) became the chief literary propagator. To him the building of the British Empire was not a matter of national self-interest but a duty to civilization, a task requiring self-sacrifice and heroism. Raising colonial exploitation to the level of mysticism, Kipling effectively obscured from the view of the British civilian the politician scheming in London offices, and made Tommy Atkins feel that he personally was bearing the White Man's Burden in subjugating other peoples, and thus was making a contribution to progress.

After 1900 Englishmen had the satisfaction of knowing London to be the financial center of the world. It has been said that the first fourteen years of the twentieth century showed "an ostentation of wealth and a vulgarity unknown since the days of James I." But beneath the successes of empire, forces of discontent were brewing. In the middle of the eighties unemployment began to assume the proportions of a major problem. It is significant that the phrase "the unemployed" first gained general currency in 1886. Shortly before, Henry George had come from America to lecture on Socialism in Ireland and England, and thereafter he devoted his life to working for a solution of the problems of labor and in urging workingmen to be articulate in their demands. The Dockers' Strike of 1889 gave a new impetus to trade unionism, and in 1892 the Parliamentary Labor Party was formed and labor began to elect its own representatives to Parliament.

The World War of 1914-18 for a while postponed the facing of basic economic problems. But when the "boom" it had created gave way to worldwide depression in 1929 England, like the rest of the world, had confronting her all those issues which still await solution. In a century the whole character of society had altered. A materialistic civilization, spurred on by a lust for possession, had come to demand regular toil at machines from large masses of the population. The machine, once only a tool, is now a master. The complexities of industrial society have brought mankind to the point where it must struggle to regain supremacy over the monster it has created.

Late Victorian, Edwardian, and Georgian Writers

Of necessity the clarity (doubtless a false clarity in most cases) with which we can view the tendencies of literature of the past becomes almost impossible to maintain as we approach our own epoch. Time has not yet separated the wheat from the chaff. The stature of the writers whom we must now consider has not yet been

finally estimated; the reputations of many of them, indeed, have been in a state of constant flux. We do not have the perspective which would enable us to reduce those figures who may eventually prove to have been minor, to their proper proportions, and thus it becomes difficult to discern the directions which are basic among the crowd of authors who are thrust upon our attention. We must be content, therefore, to allow the introductions to the individual authors to speak for themselves and to indicate only a few major movements in the literary current.

For many English writers the old Victorian struggle between faith and science was ended by 1880. The religious issue instead of being battled over was ignored. George Meredith (cf. *below*), perhaps the greatest writer of the period, occupied himself with solving the "riddle of the world," and, in accepting mankind's animal and intellectual nature, with pointing the evolutionary road to widening intelligence and spirituality. In the work of Walter Pater (cf. *below*) we find one of the leading tendencies of the times: the abandonment of the search for truth in favor of the search for beauty. This "esthetic movement," which claimed as one of its leading disciples Oscar Wilde (cf. *below*), was encouraged by the work of the French novelist, Flaubert (cf. *below*). Indeed, the movement itself was but a part of that cosmopolitan spirit which flourished during these decades. Baudelaire (cf. *above*) and Verlaine (cf. *below*), both superb poets in the French tongue, were widely read and admired, and a gifted poet, Ernest Dowson (cf. *below*), made some exquisite translations from the latter.

Pessimism, caused by many factors in Victorian life—the impossibility of finding any final meaning in human existence, the disgust with a society overweighted with material comforts, the ennui of an era succeeding so many decades of artistic inspiration—and nourished by the philosophic writings of the German Schopenhauer (cf. *below*), is a recurrent strain in the literature of these years. It is to be found in James Thomson (cf. *below*), Ernest Dowson (cf. *below*), Thomas Hardy (cf. *below*), and A. E. Housman (cf. *below*). Over against it stand the aggressive optimism of W. E. Henley (cf. *below*) and Rudyard Kipling (cf. *below*), and the romantic high spirits of R. L. Stevenson (cf. *below*). If these were days of gloom, however, they were also, in sharp contradistinction, days that evoked some of the choicest laughter English literature has known; and Lewis Carroll (cf. *below*) and W. S. Gilbert (cf. *below*) raised nonsense to the level of fine art. Nor were there wanting men of genius to find solace in orthodox religion: Francis Thompson (cf. *below*) and Gerard Manley Hopkins (cf. *below*), both Roman Catholics, brought religious poetry to new mystical heights. Other poets worthy of mention are: H. A. Dobson and Andrew Lang, experimenters with Old French verse-forms; Robert Bridges, keen student of the technical problems of poetry; and John Davidson, one of the best poets of the nineties, defiant of the world, and ignored by it.

More recent poets would find representation in our pages did space permit: W. B. Yeats, leader of the Celtic revival, a mystic of rare power; Rupert Brooke, a disciple of the esthetic school, whose career was cut short by the World War; John Masefield, Poet Laureate, a forceful realist of uneven talent; Lawrence Binyon and James Elroy Flecker, subtle classicists; Walter de la Mare, symbolist; Edmund Blunden, poetic

descendant of Vaughan; and T. S. Eliot, American by birth, a highly intellectual and learned poet.

The novel has in recent decades achieved a flourishing too rich and varied to admit of a brief summary. Besides Meredith, Stevenson, Kipling, and Hardy, whose works are discussed below, mention by name at least should be made of: George Gissing (1857-1903), Arthur Machen (1863-), H. G. Wells (1868-), John Galsworthy (1867-1933), Arnold Bennett (1867-1931), G. K. Chesterton (1874-1937), Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), George Moore (1852-1933), W. S. Maugham (1874-), E. M. Forster (1879-), Hugh Walpole (1884-), and D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930).

Drama, also, has taken a new lease on life. It is worthy of remark that the leading dramatists of recent decades have all been Irish: Oscar Wilde (cf. *below*), George Bernard Shaw (1856-), John M. Synge (1871-1909), and Sean O'Casey. Other notable dramatists have been: H. A. Jones (1851-1929), and A. W. Pinero (1885-1934).

Recommended studies: O. Burdett, *The Beardsley Period* (1925); J. W. Cunliffe, *Modern English Playwrights* (1927) and *English Literature in the Twentieth Century* (1933); B. Dobrée, *The Lamp and the Lute* (1929); B. J. Evans, *English Poetry in the Later Nineteenth Century* (1933); C. H. Grabo, *The Technique of the Novel* (1928); H. Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties* (1914); T. M. Parrott and W. Thorp, *Poetry of the Transition, 1850-1914* (1932); and C. Williams, *Poetry at Present* (1930).

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER (1788-1860)

Just a month later than Byron, Arthur Schopenhauer was born on February 22, 1788, at Danzig. His father was a wealthy merchant and his mother a well-known novelist. Accompanying his father on various commercial trips, the boy early mastered several languages. He entered the University of Göttingen in 1809 to pursue studies in natural science. But his interest was soon evoked by philosophy, and he fell under the spell of "Plato the divine and the marvelous Kant." He also attended the lectures of the great Fichte. In October 1813 he was awarded the degree of doctor of philosophy at Jena.

In 1818 appeared his fundamental work, *The World as Will and Idea*. He spent a short and unsuccessful time lecturing on philosophy at the University of Berlin. In 1833 he settled permanently at Frankfort, still awaiting recognition. This came at last upon the publication of his *Essays* in 1851. Schopenhauer's style was of a lucidity uncommon to German philosophy, and his *Essays*, of which *On the Sufferings of the World* (cf. *below*) is highly characteristic, gained a currency rarely before achieved by philosophic speculation. During the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries thousands of general readers all over Europe and America, who would have kept at a safe distance from the professional philosophers, read Schopenhauer avidly and quoted him constantly. His pessimism and misogyny made him peculiarly satisfying to the disillusioned, the morbid, the Bohemian, and the adolescent. At various periods, in fact, Schopenhauerian pessimism has been a fashionable intellectual pose. He has thus been a potent factor in the intellectual atmosphere of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. His popularity, indeed, has done considerable injustice to his real stature as a philosopher. And his particular opinions are far better known than his major work.

Following in Kant's footsteps, Schopenhauer held that only intuition can penetrate to reality, which ultimately is the individual will. Human desires, which motivate human will, far outnumber and by long survive their satisfactions. Our desires and our will being irrational, Schopenhauer views all human activity as futile. The greatest evil is birth. Happiness is unattainable, and the nearest approach to it for human beings is the repression of our impulses so that we may attain an unconsciousness of the world about us. This Nirvana, which Schopenhauer came to idealize through his admiration of the Hindu mystics, can best be attained by cultivating the arts and philosophy as escapes from the problems of life.

William Wallace thus sums up Schopenhauer's contribution: "He has shown with unusual lucidity of expression how feeble is the spontaneity of that intellect which is so highly lauded, and how overpowering the sway of original will in all our action. He thus

reasserted realism, whose gospel reads, 'In the beginning was appetite, passion, and will,' and has discredited the doctrinaire belief that ideas have original force of their own. This creed of naturalism is dangerous, and it may be true that the pessimism it implies often degenerates into cynicism and a cold-blooded denial that there is any virtue in truth. But in the crash of established creeds and the spread of political indifferentism and social disintegration it is probably wise, if not always agreeable, to lay bare the wounds under which humanity suffers, though pride would prompt their concealment. But Schopenhauer's theory has another side. If it is daringly realistic, it is no less audacious in its idealism. The second aspect of his influence is the doctrine of redemption of the soul from its sensual bonds, first by the medium of art and second by the path of renunciation and ascetic life."

These two strains can be found throughout this concluding period of our study. Pessimism is a large ingredient in the work of James Thomson (cf. *below*), Verlaine (cf. *below*), Dowson (cf. *below*), Hardy (cf. *below*), and Housman (cf. *below*). The devotion to art as an escape from life can be noted in Dowson, Pater (cf. *below*), and Wilde (cf. *below*). Just how much of both tendencies in the work of these men is directly traceable to the writings of Schopenhauer cannot, of course, be determined. What is certain is that Schopenhauer's philosophy was a very real factor in the intellectual heritage of the time in which they wrote.

For further study consult T. Whittaker's *Schopenhauer* (1909) and W. Caldwell's *Schopenhauer's System* (1896).

(*From the Essays*)

ON THE SUFFERINGS OF THE WORLD

Unless suffering is the direct and immediate object of life, our existence must entirely fail of its aim. It is absurd to look upon the enormous amount of pain that abounds everywhere in the world, and originates in needs and necessities inseparable from life itself, as serving no purpose at all and the result of mere chance. Each separate misfortune, as it comes, seems, no doubt, to be something exceptional; but misfortune in general is the rule.

I know of no greater absurdity than that propounded by most systems of philosophy in declaring evil to be negative in its character. Evil is just what is positive; it makes its own existence felt. Leibnitz[1] is particularly concerned to defend this absurdity; and he seeks to strengthen his position by using a palpable and paltry sophism. It is the good which is negative: in other words, happiness and satisfaction always imply some desire fulfilled, some state of pain brought to an end.

This explains the fact that we generally find pleasure to be not nearly so pleasant as we expected, and pain very much more painful.

The pleasure in this world, it has been said, outweighs the pain; or, at any rate, there is an even balance between the two. If the reader wishes to see shortly whether this statement is true, let him compare the respective feelings of two animals, one of which is engaged in eating the other.

The best consolation in misfortune or affliction of any kind will be thought of other people who are in a still worse plight than yourself; and this is a form of consolation open to every one. But what an awful fate this means for mankind as a whole!

We are like lambs in a field, disporting themselves under the eye of the butcher, who chooses out first one and then another for his prey. So it is that in our good days we are all unconscious of the evil fate may have presently in store for us—sickness, poverty, mutilation, loss of sight or reason.

No little part of the torment of existence lies in this, that Time is continually pressing upon us, never letting us take breath, but always coming after us, like a taskmaster with a whip. If at any moment Time stays his hand, it is only when we are delivered over to the misery of boredom.

But misfortune has its uses; for, as our bodily frame would burst asunder if the pressure of the atmosphere were removed, so, if the lives of men were relieved of all need, hardship and adversity; if everything they took in hand were successful, they would be so swollen with arrogance that, though they might not burst, they would present the spectacle of unbridled folly—nay, they would go mad. And I may say, further, that a certain amount of care or pain or trouble is necessary for every man at all times. A ship without ballast is unstable and will not go straight.

Certain it is that work, worry, labor and trouble, form the lot of almost all men their whole life long. But if all wishes were fulfilled as soon as they arose, how would men occupy their lives? what would they do with their time? If the world were a paradise of luxury and ease, a land flowing with milk and honey, where every Jack obtained his Jill at once and without difficulty, men would either die of boredom or hang themselves; or there would be wars, massacres, and murders; so that in the end mankind would inflict more suffering on itself than it has now to accept at the hands of Nature.

In early youth, as we contemplate our coming life,

[1] Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibnitz (1646-1716), German philosopher and mathematician.

we are like children in a theater before the curtain is raised, sitting there in high spirits and eagerly waiting for the play to begin. It is a blessing that we do not know what is really going to happen. Could we foresee it, there are times when children might seem like innocent prisoners, condemned not to death, but to life, and as yet all unconscious of what their sentence means. Nevertheless, every man desires to reach old age; in other words, a state of life of which it may be said: "It is bad to-day, and it will be worse to-morrow; and so on till the worst of all."

If you try to imagine, as nearly as you can, what an amount of misery, pain and suffering of every kind the sun shines upon in its course, you will admit that it would be much better if on the earth as little as on the moon the sun were able to call forth the phenemona of life; and if, here as there the surface were still in a crystalline state.

Again, you may look upon life as an unprofitable episode, disturbing the blessed calm of non-existence. And, in any case, even though things have gone with you tolerably well, the longer you live the more clearly you will feel that, on the whole, life is a disappointment, nay, a cheat.

If two men who are friends in their youth meet again when they are old, after being separated for a lifetime, the chief feeling they will have at the sight of each other will be one of complete disappointment at life as a whole; because their thoughts will be carried back to that earlier time when life seemed so fair as it lay spread out before them in the rosy light of dawn, promised so much—and then performed so little. This feeling will so completely predominate over every other that they will not even consider it necessary to give it words; but on either side it will be silently assumed, and form the ground-work of all they have to talk about.

He who lives to see two or three generations is like a man who sits some time in the conjurer's booth at a fair, and witnesses the performance twice or thrice in succession. The tricks were meant to be seen only once; and when they are no longer a novelty and cease to deceive, their effect is gone.

While no man is much to be envied for his lot, there are countless numbers whose fate is to be deplored.

Life is a task to be done. It is a fine thing to say *defunctus est*;[2] it means that the man has done his task.

If children were brought into the world by an act of pure reason alone, would the human race continue to exist? Would not a man rather have so much sympathy with the coming generation as to spare it the burden of existence? Or at any rate not take it upon himself to impose that burden upon it in cold blood.

[2] he is dead.

James Thomson ("B.V.")

(1834-1882)

The most melancholy poet of his generation, James Thomson was born at Port-Glasgow (Scotland), on November 23, 1834. He lived in an orphan asylum from his seventh year, and in 1850 entered a military asylum. When, as assistant army schoolmaster, he was stationed near Cork, he fell in love with the daughter of the armor-sergeant. She was beautiful and cultivated and returned his love. Her sudden death completely prostrated him, and thereafter his life was filled with gloom.

As early as 1858 he had begun to publish. Like Cowper, Coleridge, and Francis Thompson—derelict authors who were each saved by the unselfishness of a friend—"B. V.," as he called himself, owes his literary salvation to the help of Charles Bradlaugh, who stood by him in all the difficult moments of his life. Bradlaugh's journal furnished him an avenue for publication and his friendship also found him work when he had lost his post in the army. The monotony and gloom of his life were rarely broken. Except for a disastrous business venture in America and an unfortunate attempt as newspaper correspondent during the Spanish Revolution, he spent the rest of his years in an unattractive London room, becoming more and more a victim of drink. His most important poem, *The City of Dreadful Night,* was published in 1880. One volume appeared after his death, which occurred June 3, 1882.

Especially as seen in his principal poem, Thomson's pessimism is the darkest that appears in English literature. It seems ingrained in his nature; there is no literary pose about it, though it has kinship with Schopenhauer's convictions (cf. *above*). Such poetry will never be stimulating reading, but in its kind it has not been surpassed. Imaginative power, intensity, and utter gloom are fitly expressed in these sonorous and somewhat monotonous verses. There is, however, another side to Thomson, exhibited in such poems as *Give a Man a Horse He Can Ride* (cf. *below*) and the two on *Art* (cf. *below*). Here we find a man of virile energy and zest for living.

The standard edition of his *Poetical Works* was edited by B. Dobell in two volumes (1895). A good one-volume text is that of G. H. Gerould (1927). A critical biography was written by J. E. Meeker (1917).

From *The City of Dreadful Night*

Hounded by insomnia, Thomson walked the London streets during the eerie hours, and found it a city of horror and death. The imaginings of his tortured mind he recorded in this, the best known, of his poems.

4

He stood alone within the spacious square
Declaiming from the central grassy mound,
With head uncovered and with streaming hair,
As if large multitudes were gathered round:
A stalwart shape, the gestures full of might,
The glances burning with unnatural light:—

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: All was black,
In heaven no single star, on earth no track;
A brooding hush without a stir or note,
The air so thick it clotted in my throat;
And thus for hours; then some enormous things
Swooped past with savage cries and clanking wings:
But I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Eyes of fire
Glared at me throbbing with a starved desire;
The hoarse and heavy and carnivorous breath
Was hot upon me from deep jaws of death;
Sharp claws, swift talons, fleshless fingers cold
Plucked at me from the bushes, tried to hold:
But I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Lo you, there,
That hillock burning with a brazen glare;
Those myriad dusky flames with points a-glow
Which writhed and hissed and darted to and fro;
A Sabbath of the Serpents, heaped pell-mell
For Devil's roll-call and some fête of Hell:
Yet I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Meteors ran
And crossed their javelins on the black sky-span;
The zenith opened to a gulf of flame,
The dreadful thunderbolts jarred earth's fixed frame;
The ground all heaved in waves of fire that surged
And weltered round me sole there unsubmerged:
Yet I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Air once more,
And I was close upon a wild sea-shore;
Enormous cliffs arose on either hand,
The deep tide thundered up a league-broad strand;
White foambelts seethed there, wan spray swept and flew;
The sky broke, moon and stars and clouds and blue:
And I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: On the left,
The sun arose and crowned a broad crag-cleft;
There stopped and burned out black, except a rim,
A bleeding eyeless socket, red and dim;
Whereon the moon fell suddenly southwest,
And stood above the right-hand cliffs at rest:
Still I strode on austere;
No hope could have no fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: From the right
A shape came slowly with a ruddy light;
A woman with a red lamp in her hand,
Bareheaded and barefooted on that strand;
O desolation moving with such grace!
O anguish with such beauty in thy face!
I fell as on my bier,
Hope travailed with such fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: I was twain,
Two selves distinct that cannot join again;
One stood apart and knew but could not stir,
And watched the other stark in swoon and her;
And she came on, and never turned aside,
Between such sun and moon and roaring tide:
And as she came more near
My soul grew mad with fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: Hell is mild

And piteous matched with that accursed wild;
A large black sign was on her breast that bowed,
A broad black band ran down her snow-white shroud;
That lamp she held was her own burning heart,
Whose blood-drops trickled step by step apart:
The mystery was clear;
Mad rage had swallowed fear.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: By the sea
She knelt and bent above that senseless me;
Those lamp-drops fell upon my white brow there,
She tried to cleanse them with her tears and hair;
She murmured words of pity, love, and woe,
She heeded not the level rushing flow:
And mad with rage and fear,
I stood stonebound so near.

As I came through the desert thus it was,
As I came through the desert: When the tide
Swept up to her there kneeling by my side,
She clasped that corpse-like me, and they were borne
Away, and this vile me was left forlorn;
I know the whole sea cannot quench that heart,
Or cleanse that brow, or wash those two apart:
They love; their doom is drear,
Yet they nor hope nor fear;
But I, what do I here?

(1870-74)

Give a Man a Horse He Can Ride

This lyric shows the side of Thomson better known to his friends—a far cry from the brooding pessimism of *The City of Dreadful Night*. In common with the two poems on *Art*, it proves the poet a man with a vigorous, if frustrated love of life.

Give a man a horse he can ride,
Give a man a boat he can sail;
And his rank and wealth, his strength and health,
On sea nor shore shall fail.

Give a man a pipe he can smoke,
Give a man a book he can read;
And his home is bright with a calm delight,
Though the room be poor indeed.

Give a man a girl he can love,
As I, O my Love, love thee;
And his heart is great with the pulse of Fate,
At home, on land, on sea.

(1865)

Art

I

Singing is sweet; but be sure of this,
Lips only sing when they cannot kiss.

Did he ever suspire a tender lay
While her presence took his breath away?

Had his fingers been able to toy with her hair
Would they then have written the verses fair?

Had she let his arm steal round her waist
Would the lovely portrait yet be traced?

Since he could not embrace it flushed and warm
He has carved in stone the perfect form.

Who gives the fine report of the feast?
He who got none and enjoyed it least.

Were the wine really slipping down his throat
Would his song of the wine advance a note?

Will you puff out the music that sways the whirl,
Or dance and make love with a pretty girl?

Who shall the great battle-story write?
Not the hero down in the thick of the fight.

Statues and pictures and verse may be grand,
But they are not the Life for which they stand.

II

What precious thing are you making fast
In all these silken lines?
And where and to whom will it go at last?
Such subtle knots and twines!

I am tying up all my love in this,
With all its hopes and fears,
With all its anguish and all its bliss,
And its hours as heavy as years.

I am going to send it afar, afar,
To I know not where above;
To that sphere beyond the highest star
Where dwells the soul of my Love.

But in vain, in vain, would I make it fast
With countless subtle twines;
For ever its fire breaks out at last,
And shrivels all the lines.

(1881)

Arthur O'Shaughnessy

(1844-1881)

Although O'Shaughnessy is remembered today for only two or three poems, there was a time when he ranked very high in critical esteem. He was born in London March 14, 1844, and lived an uneventful life, varied only by periods of ill health. From the age of seventeen onward he held positions in the British Museum, where he specialized in ichthyology. His first literary success, *Epic of Women* (1870), was followed by the even more successful *Music and Moonlight* (1872). During the rest of his life he wrote nothing further. He died in London January 30, 1881.

O'Shaughnessy's poetry is characterized by its fine melodies, strengthened by echoes and repetitions. But though the lines possess a certain beauty, their intellectual import is negligible. His editors have taken the liberty of pruning his poetry of bad stanzas and have thus improved it. In this way Palgrave in his *Golden Treasury* reduced *We Are the Music-Makers* from its original seven stanzas to the present three. His latest editor, W. A. Percy (1922), has taken similar liberties.

Ode

We are the music makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;—
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams:
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems.

With wonderful deathless ditties
We build up the world's great cities,
And out of a fabulous story
We fashion an empire's glory:
One man with a dream, at pleasure,
Shall go forth and conquer a crown;
And three with a new song's measure
Can trample a kingdom down.

We, in the ages lying
In the buried past of the earth,
Built Nineveh with our sighing,
And Babel[1] itself in our mirth;
And o'erthrew them with prophesying
To the old of the new world's worth;
For each age is a dream that is dying,
Or one that is coming to birth.

(1872)

William Ernest Henley

(1849-1903)

William Ernest Henley was born August 23, 1849, at Gloucester. His education was confined to what he could obtain at the Gloucester Grammar School. Though in many ways he was intellectually a self-made man, he did have the good fortune to study under T. E. Brown, a poet of considerable talent who inspired him to read widely and awakened his literary ambitions.

From childhood he was affected with tuberculosis, and, in an effort to check the disease, his foot was amputated in the Edinburgh Hospital, where he had the services of the great surgeon Lister. Some of his most characteristic poems were written from the Hospital (1873-75). These were published in the *Cornhill Magazine* by the editor, Leslie Stephen. Through the offices of the latter, Robert Louis Stevenson visited Henley in the hospital and thus began a valued, influential friendship, unfortunately broken a few years before Stevenson's death.

In 1877 Henley began a long editorial career in London. He was successively editor of several important journals and acquired a position in the critical world that made him almost a literary dictator. For ten years he gave up his poetry and devoted himself unsparingly to journalism. In 1888, however, he renewed his poetic interest and published *A Book of Verse*. This volume was followed in the next years by *London Voluntaries* (1892) and *Hawthorne and Lavender* (1901). In 1890 he issued a volume of

[1] Babylon.

criticism in his *Views and Reviews*. In 1892 were published the three plays which he had written with Stevenson. During his last ten years he did much miscellaneous editorial work. This last decade was saddened by the death of his young daughter; from the effects of this grief he never recovered. He died July 11, 1903.

In many ways Henley's work is paradoxical. There is about some of his best-known poetry a masculinity so self-conscious as to approach mere blatancy. It is hardly an accident that Kipling's *Barrack Room Ballads* should have first seen the light under Henley's editorship. Henley gloried in these poems which sang the vigor and energy of soldiers. His own best-known poem sings of the fearlessness of the hero whose head is bloody but unbowed. But he could turn from stoic imperturbability and heroic endeavor to poems of infinite tenderness. There is thus both the masculine and the gracious in his work, but he hated above all things the characteristic effeminacy of the new esthetes of his day.

Henley's place in English poetry may not be high. His heroics are perhaps too strident and his imperialistic fervor may now leave us cold. But he has written a few poems that the world could ill afford to be without.

As a critic he was discerning, being one of the first Englishmen to appreciate the painter Whistler and the sculptor Rodin, both iconoclasts in their art. Henley himself employed a vocabulary plain and "unpoetical," frequently wrote on subjects generally considered too indelicate for poetry, and accepted the medium of free verse long before it achieved any popularity in his country.

L. C. Cornford has a valuable study of Henley (1913), and the poet Francis Thompson wrote an important essay on him.

Before

Behold me waiting—waiting for the knife.
A little while, and at a leap I storm
The thick, sweet mystery of chloroform,
The drunken dark, the little death-in-life.
The gods are good to me: I have no wife,
No innocent child, to think of as I near
The fateful minute; nothing all-too dear
Unmans me for my bout of passive strife.
Yet am I tremulous and a trifle sick,
And, face to face with chance, I shrink a little:
My hopes are strong, my will is something weak.
Here comes the basket? Thank you, I am ready.
But, gentlemen my porters, life is brittle:
You carry Cæsar and his fortunes—steady!

(1873-5)

Invictus

Out of the night that covers me,
  Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
  For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
  I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
  My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
  Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
  Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
  How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
  I am the captain of my soul.

(pub. 1888)

A Bowl of Roses

It was a bowl of roses:
  There in the light they lay,
Languishing, glorying, glowing
  Their life away.

And the soul of them rose like a presence,
  Into me crept and grew,
And filled me with something—someone—
  O, was it you?

To W. A.

Or ever the knightly years were gone
  With the old world to the grave,
I was a King in Babylon
  And you were a Christian Slave.

I saw, I took, I cast you by,
  I bent and broke your pride.

You loved me well, or I heard them lie,
But your longing was denied.
Surely I knew that by and by
You cursed your gods and died.

And a myriad suns have set and shone
Since then upon the grave
Decreed by the King of Babylon
To her that had been his Slave.

The pride I trampled is now my scathe,
For it tramples me again.
The old resentment lasts like death,
For you love, yet you refrain.
I break my heart on your hard unfaith,
And I break my heart in vain.

Yet not for an hour do I wish undone
The deed beyond the grave,
When I was King in Babylon
And you were a Virgin Slave.

Francis Thompson

(1859-1907)

The career of Cardinal Newman (cf. *above*) was part of, and largely responsible for, a revival of Roman Catholic prestige in England during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The elevating mysticism of great Catholic theologians and the beauty of the Church's ritual afforded a welcome haven for a number of poets and artists who experienced a revulsion against Victorian smugness and materialism. Among distinguished men and women who became converts were Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson (cf. *below*), Alice Meynell, Gerard Manley Hopkins (cf. *below*), Lawrence Housman, and Oscar Wilde (cf. *below*). To this group should be added the finest of these poets, Francis Thompson, whose parents were devout Catholics, and who was raised in their religion.

He was born on December 18, 1859, at Preston, the son of a doctor. It would seem that Thompson at first intended to enter the priesthood, and that he went to Ushaw College with that end in view. His father, however, desired him to become a physician, so that he later went to Owens College at Manchester. After failing three times to obtain his degree, he abandoned all idea of practicing medicine. A singularly unworldly man, Thompson drifted aimlessly for a long time. For three years he lived in the most abject poverty in London. Too poor even to purchase stationery, he was supplied with old account books by a bootmaker, and on scraps from these he wrote two poems and an essay which he sent to *Merry England*, a periodical edited by Wilfrid Meynell.

His failure to inscribe any address made it very difficult for Meynell to find the whereabouts of the author, whom he realized to be a poet of genius. Discovered at last by the Meynells, he was rescued from oblivion just in time. He had already fallen victim to the opium habit, which he had contracted in search of relief from neuralgia. The Meynells became second parents to him, helped him overcome his complete subservience to the drug, and managed somehow to fix him—for brief intervals, at least—into a schedule of regular literary work. He issued three volumes of verse: *Poems* (1893), *Sister Songs* (1895), and *New Poems* (1897). In addition he wrote a number of prose pieces, of which the most famous is his essay on his beloved Shelley, discovered among Thompson's papers after his death. He died of tuberculosis on November 13, 1907.

His poetry has been recognized as containing a fusion of Crashaw's mystical rapture (cf. Vol. I, p. 386) and Shelley's impassioned idealism. As Donald Davidson aptly describes Thompson, the poet, he "lifted up his eyes from London pavements and beheld Christ walking on Thames water, and Jacob's ladder shining over Charing Cross." Often he achieves an innocence almost childlike. At other times he has the rich sensuousness of his Pre-Raphaelite contemporaries. *The Hound of Heaven* (cf. *below*) is undoubtedly his most splendid creation.

Thompson's complete works were edited in three volumes by W. Meynell (1913). A. Meynell's *Life* (1926) is authoritative. R. L. Mégroz's *Francis Thompson* (1927) is a valuable study. F. P. Le Buffe's edition of *The Hound of Heaven* (1929) contains an interesting interpretation of the poem.

The Hound of Heaven

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.

But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
By many a hearted[1] casement, curtained red,
Trellised with intertwining charities;
(For, though I knew His love Who followèd,
Yet was I sore adread
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside);
But, if one little casement parted wide,
The gust of His approach would clash it to.
Fear wist not[2] to evade, as Love wist to pursue.
Across the margent of the world I fled,
And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,
Smiting for shelter on their clangèd bars;
Fretted to dulcet jars
And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.[3]
I said to dawn, Be sudden; to eve, Be soon;
With thy young skiey blossoms heap me over
From this tremendous Lover!
Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!
I tempted all His servitors, but to find
My own betrayal in their constancy,
In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.
To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.
But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,
The long savannahs of the blue;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,
They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven
Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet:—
Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.
Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat—
"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me."

I sought no more that after which I strayed
In face of man or maid;
But still within the little children's eyes
Seems something, something that replies;
They at least are for me, surely for me!
I turned me to them very wistfully;
But, just as their young eyes grew sudden fair
With dawning answers there,
Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.
"Come then, ye other children, Nature's—share
With me" (said I) "your delicate fellowship;
Let me greet you lip to lip,
Let me twine with you caresses,
Wantoning
With our Lady-Mother's[4] vagrant tresses,
Banqueting
With her in her wind-walled palace,
Underneath her azured daïs,
Quaffing, as your taintless way is,
From a chalice
Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring."
So it was done:
I in their delicate fellowship was one—
Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.
I knew all the swift importings
On the wilful face of skies;
I knew how the clouds arise
Spumèd of the wild sea-snortings;
All that's born or dies
Rose and drooped with—made them shapers
Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine—
With them joyed and was bereaven.
I was heavy with the even,
When she lit her glimmering tapers
Round the day's dead sanctities.
I laughed in the morning's eyes.
I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,
Heaven and I wept together,
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine;
Against the red throb of its sunset-heart
I laid my own to beat,
And share commingling heat;
But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.
In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.
For ah! we know not what each other says,
These things and I; in sound *I* speak—
Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.
Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;
Let her, if she would owe[5] me,
Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me
The breasts o' her tenderness:

[1] heart-shaped.
[2] knew not how.
[3] knocked at the doors of the moon until they were jarred into sweet and silvery sounds.
[4] Nature's.
[5] own.

Never did any milk of hers once bless
My thirsting mouth.
Nigh and nigh draws the chase,
With unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;
And past those noisèd Feet
A voice comes yet more fleet—
"Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me."

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,
And smitten me to my knee;
I am defenceless utterly.
I slept, methinks, and woke,
And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.
In the rash lustihead of my young powers,
I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears,
I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years—
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap
My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,
Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.
Yea, faileth now even dream
The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist;
Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist
I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
Are yielding; cords of all too weak account
For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.
Ah! is Thy love indeed
A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?
Ah! must—
Designer infinite!—
Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?
My freshness spent its wavering shower i' the dust;
And now my heart is as a broken fount,
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down ever
From the dank thoughts that shiver
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.
Such is; what is to be?
The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?
I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity;
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsèd turrets slowly wash again.
But not ere him who summoneth
I first have seen, enwound
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned;
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.
Whether man's heart or life it be which yields
The harvest, must Thy harvest fields
Be dunged with rotten death?
Now of that long pursuit
Comes on at hand the bruit;
That Voice is round me like a bursting sea:
"And is thy earth so marred,
Shattered in shard on shard?
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me!
Strange, piteous, futile thing,
Wherefore should any set thee love apart?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught" (He said),
"And human love needs human meriting:
How hast thou merited—
Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms,
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
"Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."

(pub. 1893)

PAUL VERLAINE (1844-1896)

In revolt against realism in literature, a school of French poets emerged around 1870, under the influence of the English Pre-Raphaelites. Their chief was one of France's greatest poets, Paul Verlaine. The group, dubbed "les Décadents" by the critics, included gifted men like Arthur Rimbaud, Francis Jammes, Albert Samain, and Georges Rodenbach.

Verlaine was a man of completely Bohemian temperament, incapable of living with stability for any prolonged period. His first success was with *Fêtes galantes* (1869), in which he achieved the eighteenth-century grace of the painter Watteau. His next was a collection of poems of sentiment in honor of his future wife, *La Bonne Chanson* (1870). Soon after his mar-

riage to the woman he dearly loved, fatality entered his life in the person of the strange, perverse boy wonder, Arthur Rimbaud. The latter sent Verlaine a sheaf of poems, obviously the creations of a genius. The older man, deeply impressed, soon was a bosom friend of the youth and evolving grand poetic theories with him. The fruit of this speculation was *Romances sans paroles* (1874), in which Verlaine's ability to portray evanescent moods in all their delicacy is revealed. He had found his style. But, unhappily, Rimbaud exerted a terrible fascination over him, began to corrupt Verlaine's pliable nature, and caused an estrangement between Verlaine and his wife. The two poets went off together to visit Belgium and England. After more than a year of nomadic life together, Verlaine in a quarrel wounded his friend with a revolver and was sentenced to a term in prison. There he became converted to Catholicism, and his ardent mystical faith found wonderful expression in his finest book, *Sagesse* (cf. *below*), published in 1881. On his release from jail, he lived in terrible poverty, earning by lectures and writing a mere pittance, and being dependent on his friends for sustenance. Deprivation destroyed his health, which was further damaged by his frequent recourse to the bottle in search of emotional stimulation. In his later years he spent much time in hospitals in vain hope of recovery. *Jadis et naguère* (1884) was his last important volume.

Verlaine states his artistic credo in the poem *Art Poétique*:

> *De la musique avant toute chose . . .*
> *Rien de plus cher que la chanson grise*
> *Où l'Indécis au Précis se joint.*

("Music before all things. . . . Nothing is dearer than the gray song in which the Uncertain and the Exact are fused as one.") Master of impressionistic pigments and sentiment, Verlaine handles tone-color and onomatopoeia superbly. His love of making sheer music in verse is well illustrated in his marvelous tone-poem *Song of Autumn*:

> *Les sanglots longs*
> *Des violons*
> *De l'automne*
> *Blessent mon cœur*
> *D'une langueur*
> *Monotone. . . .*

This superb piece of descriptive music is utterly untranslatable, for, as is characteristic of this school of poets, its delicate appeal is entirely to the ear, and its meaning lies in its overtones. These were the qualities which English "decadents" like Dowson (cf. *below*) tried to capture in their verse. But Verlaine's naïveté, as pure and childlike as Blake's, and his burning sincerity were quite beyond the reach of his imitators. Impossible as it is to communicate his peculiar beauties in another language, we are nevertheless fortunate that his profound admirer, Ernest Dowson, himself a fine poet, translated the handful of poems we here present.

E. Lepelletier's *Paul Verlaine, His Life and Work* (trans. 1909) is a good study.

TEARS FALL WITHIN MINE HEART

Il pleut doucement sur la ville—Rimbaud.

(*Translated by Ernest Dowson*)

Tears fall within mine heart,
As rain upon the town:
Whence does this languor start,
Possessing all mine heart?

O sweet fall of the rain
Upon the earth and roofs!
Unto an heart in pain,
O music of the rain!

Tears that have no reason
Fall in my sorry heart:
What! was there no treason?
This grief hath no reason.

Nay! the more desolate,
Because, I know not why,
(Neither for love nor hate)
Mine heart is desolate.

COLLOQUE SENTIMENTAL[1]

(*Translated by Ernest Dowson*)

Into the lonely park all frozen fast,
Awhile ago there were two forms who passed.

Lo, are their lips fallen and their eyes dead,
Hardly shall a man hear the words they said.

Into the lonely park, all frozen fast,
There came two shadows who recall the past.

"Dost thou remember our old ecstasy?"—
"Wherefore should I possess that memory?"—

"Doth thine heart beat at my sole name alway?
Still dost thou see my soul in visions?" "Nay!"—

"They were fair days of joy unspeakable,
Whereon our lips were joined?"—"I cannot tell."—

[1] Sentimental Conversation.

"Were not the heavens blue, was not hope high?"—
"Hope has fled vanquished down the darkling sky."—

So through the barren oats they wanderèd,
And the night only heard the words they said.

SPLEEN

(*Translated by Ernest Dowson*)

Around were all the roses red,
The ivy all round was black.

Dear, so thou only move thine head,
Shall all mine old despairs awake!

Too blue, too tender was the sky,
The air too soft, too green the sea.

Always I fear, I know not why,
Some lamentable flight from thee.

I am so tired of holly-sprays
And weary of the bright box-tree,

Of all the endless country ways;
Of everything alas! save thee.

SAGESSE[1]

(*Translated by Ernest Dowson*)

The sky is up above the roof
So blue, so soft!
A tree there, up above the roof,
Swayeth aloft.

A bell within that sky we see,
Chimes low and faint:
A bird upon that tree we see,
Maketh complaint.

Dear God! is not the life up there,
Simple and sweet?
How peacefully are borne up there
Sounds of the street!

What hast thou done, who comest here,
To weep alway?
Where hast thou laid, who comest here,
Thy youth away?

[1] Wisdom.

Ernest Dowson

(1867-1900)

The so-called "Decadent" group of late Victorians was associated in the public mind with the magazine *The Yellow Book*, whose first numbers appeared in April 1894 under the editorship of Henry Harland and Aubrey Beardsley. Flaunting before an easily shocked audience their moral emancipation, a number of "impudent" young men were anxious to exhibit the triumph of art for art's sake. Strongly influenced by the literary currents of France which had produced a Baudelaire (cf. *above*) and a Verlaine (cf. *above*), they attempted to prove the validity of the former's dictum that poetry "has no purpose but itself." They developed poetic techniques to a point of rare refinement, but had very little to say. Having denied any ethical or social import to poetry, they made a religion of art itself. Of these men perhaps the most characteristic was Ernest Dowson.

He was born in Kent on August 2, 1867. After attending Queen's College, Oxford, without taking his degree, he went to London, where he presently became a member of the Rhymer's Club, which included among its members John Davidson, Lionel Johnson, Richard Le Gallienne, Ernest Rhys, Arthur Symons, and W. B. Yeats. But Dowson's literary home was France, rather than England. Frequently he escaped to the Bohemian quarter of Paris or the countryside of Normandy. In London he felt like an expatriate, and often drugged himself with low company and alcohol.

It was his misfortune to fall madly in love with a restaurant-owner's daughter, the "Cynara" of his famous poem. She accepted his deeply felt worship for a few years, and then married a waiter. This was apparently the one experience of profound passion in his life. For the rest, he was a man who wasted himself, fluctuating between religious exaltation and a kind of half-sincere eroticism. Behind all he wrote is a sense of futility, a feeling of unimpassioned despair with life and himself. The failure of his unfulfilled love drove him into further recklessness, and he was destroyed by disease while still a young man.

His works include: two slender volumes of poetry, *Verses* (1896) and *Decorations* (1899); a poetic play, *The Pierrot of the Minute* (1897); a collection of stories, *Dilemmas* (1895); some fine translations (cf. Verlaine, *above*); and two novels written in collaboration with Arthur Moore. His poetry, though slight, has an admirable precision and finish which make the melancholy music of his verse all the more appeal-

ing. Certainly his poem to "Cynara" is one of the very best-known pieces of the period.

A. Symons's edition of Dowson's *Poems* (1905) contains an admirable introduction. O. Burdett's *The Beardsley Period* (1925) presents an interesting discussion of his work.

To One in Bedlam

With delicate, mad hands, behind his sordid bars,
Surely he hath his posies, which they tear and twine;
Those scentless wisps of straw, that miserably line
His strait, caged universe, whereat the dull world stares,

Pedant and pitiful. O, how his rapt gaze wars
With their stupidity! Know they what dreams divine
Lift his long, laughing reveries like enchaunted wine,
And make his melancholy germane to the stars?

O lamentable brother! if those pity thee,
Am I not fain of all thy lone eyes promise me;
Half a fool's kingdom, far from men who sow and reap,
All their days, vanity? Better than mortal flowers,
Thy moon-kissed roses seem: better than love or sleep,
The star-crowned solitude of thine oblivious hours!

Non Sum Qualis Eram Bonae Sub Regno Cynarae[1]

Last night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her lips and mine
There fell thy shadow, Cynara! thy breath was shed
Upon my soul between the kisses and the wine;
And I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
  Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

All night upon mine heart I felt her warm heart beat,
Night-long within mine arms in love and sleep she lay;
Surely the kisses of her bought red mouth were sweet;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
  When I awoke and found the dawn was gray:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind,
Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng,
Dancing, to put thy pale, lost lilies out of mind;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
  Yea, all the time, because the dance was long:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

I cried for madder music and for stronger wine,
But when the feast is finished and the lamps expire,
Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! the night is thine;
And I am desolate and sick of an old passion,
  Yea, hungry for the lips of my desire:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

[1] From Horace's Ode IV, 1. "I am not such as I was in the reign of good Cynara."

Sapientia Lunae[1]

The wisdom of the world said unto me:
  "Go forth and run, the race is to the brave;
Perchance some honor tarrieth for thee!"
  "As tarrieth," I said, "for sure, the grave."
  For I had pondered on a rune of roses,
  Which to her votaries the moon discloses.

The wisdom of the world said: *"There are bays:*
  Go forth and run, for victory is good,
After the stress of the laborious days."
  "Yet," said I, "shall I be the worms' sweet food,"
  As I went musing on a rune of roses,
  Which in her hour, the pale, soft moon discloses.

Then said my voices: *"Wherefore strive or run*
  On dusty highways ever, a vain race?
The long night cometh, starless, void of sun,
  What light shall serve thee like her golden face?"
  For I had pondered on a rune of roses,
  And knew some secrets which the moon discloses.

"Yea," said I, "for her eyes are pure and sweet
  As lilies, and the fragrance of her hair
Is many laurels; and it is not meet
  To run for shadows when the prize is here";
  And I went reading in that rune of roses
  Which to her votaries the moon discloses.

[1] The Wisdom of the Moon.

Villanelle[1] *of Marguerites*[2]

"A little, passionately, not at all?"
She casts the snow petals on the air:
And what care we how many petals fall!

Nay, wherefore seek the Seasons to forestall?
It is but playing, and she will not care,
A little, passionately, not at all!

She would not answer us if we should call
Across the years: her visions are too fair;
And what care we how many petals fall?

She knows us not, nor recks if she enthrall
With voice and eyes and fashion of her hair,
A little, passionately, not at all!

Knee-deep she goes in meadow grasses tall,
Kissed by the daisies that her fingers tear:
And what care we how many petals fall!

We pass and go: but she shall not recall
What men we were, nor all she made us bear:
"A little, passionately, not at all!"
And what care we how many petals fall!

Gerard Manley Hopkins

(1844-1889)

Gerard Manley Hopkins was born in Essex, at Stratford, studied at Sir Robert Cholmondeley's Grammar School in Highgate, and later at Balliol College, Oxford, where because of his fine mind and good fellowship he was nicknamed "the star of Balliol." From childhood he had been interested in music, drawing, and poetry. At Oxford he came under the influence of the great Jowett and Walter Pater (cf. *below*). About half a year before the time when he had expected to take his degree he wrote to Newman telling him of his desire to leave the Church of England and enter the Roman Catholic Church. Though his father and many of his friends opposed the move, he became a priest in the Society of Jesus. As he entered his novitiate, he burned his early verse and decided to write no more 'as not belonging to my profession, unless it were by the wish of my superiors." For seven years he composed no poetry, except for "two or three little presentation pieces which occasion called for." After a few months in Birmingham with Newman, and a period as missionary in Liverpool, he was given a church at Oxford. In 1884 he was granted a fellowship in the Catholic University at Dublin, and there he spent his last years.

When Hopkins began to write again; he received so little encouragement from the periodicals that he soon resigned himself to the prospect of his poems' remaining in manuscript. His chief audience was the poet Robert Bridges, to whom he sent his compositions. A few of these Bridges managed to insert into anthologies, but it was not until long after his friend's death that Bridges, to whose discretion Hopkins had left his poetry, issued Hopkins's *Poems* (1918) with an introduction and notes.

To find Hopkins's forebears we must go back to the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century. Like Vaughan and Crashaw (cf. Vol. I, pp. 383-386), Hopkins recorded in his poetry the intensity of his faith and of his spiritual experiences. On the technical side, however, Hopkins was very much of a "modern," and his volume has profoundly influenced our contemporaries. His letters reveal his devotion to prosodic theory, and his poems prove him to have been scrupulous in applying his theories. His careful concern over poetic effects made him, as is the case with many poets of our time, often obscure and strained in his utterance. But at its best his verse has the authentic sound of poetry.

In his preface, Hopkins explains that his poems are written in "Running Rhythm," "Sprung Rhythm," and "in a mixture of the two." By "Running Rhythm" he meant *syllabic verse*, and by "Sprung Rhythm" he meant *stressed verse*. His experiments in "Sprung Rhythm" were intended to revivify English versification by reintroducing the accentual basis of Old English verse—a basis which he considered more natural to the genius of our language. He was also a bold experimenter with alliteration and rhyme.

R. Bridges's edition of 1918 was enlarged by Charles Williams (1930), with a valuable introduction. The standard biography is G. F. Lahey's *Gerard Manley Hopkins* (1930). Hopkins's letters were published in 1935. The following poems are reprinted from *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins* (London, Oxford Press, 1930), by arrangement with the Oxford University Press and with the family of Father Gerard Manley Hopkins.

God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil

[1] a French poetic form which is here illustrated.
[2] Marguerite is the French for "daisy."

Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

I Wake and Feel

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.
What hours, O what black hours we have spent
This night! what sighs you, heart, saw; ways you went!
And more must, in yet longer light's delay.
With witness I speak this. But where I say
Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament
Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent
To dearest him that lives alas! away.

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.
Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

Carrion Comfort

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;
Not untwist—slack they may be—these last strands of man
In me ór, most weary, cry *I can no more.* I can;
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.
But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou rude on me
Thy wring-world right foot rock? lay a lionlimb against me? scan
With darksome devouring eyes my bruiséd bones? and fan,
O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoid thee and flee?

Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear.
Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems) I kissed the rod,
Hand, rather, my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, chéer.
Cheer whom though? the hero whose heaven-handling flung me, fóot tród
Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each one? That night, that year
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God.

Heaven-Haven

A Nun Takes the Veil

I have desired to go
Where springs not fail,
To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail
And a few lilies blow.

And I have asked to be
Where no storms come,
Where the green swell is in the havens dumb
And out of the swing of the sea.

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson ("Lewis Carroll")

(1832-1898)

Charles L. Dodgson, lecturer on mathematics at Oxford and author of texts in that subject, makes an entirely uninteresting study for the biographer. As Alexander Woollcott has said of him, you must picture him "as living precisely in his quarters in the Tom Quad at Christ Church, all his life neatly pigeonholed, all the letters he wrote or received in thirty-seven years elaborately summarized or catalogued, so that by the time he died there were more than 98,000 cross references in the files of his correspondence. He was the kind of man who kept a diagram showing

where you sat when you dined with him and what you ate, lest he serve you the same dish when you came again. . . . He was the kind of man who gravely stipulated that no illustrations for a book of his be drawn on Sunday. . . . Above all he was the kind of man who, in publishing his *Pillow Problems* . . . recommended these exercises in mental arithmetic not only as an agreeable diversion but, more especially, as a way of driving out the skeptical thoughts, the blasphemous thoughts, and 'the unholy thoughts, which torture with their hateful presence the fancy that would fain be pure.' "

But there was another personality hidden within the bosom of Charles Dodgson which adults, of whom he was shy, never saw, and to that other self he gave the name of "Lewis Carroll." Lewis Carroll loved children, struck up acquaintance with them in trains and at the seashore, and kept a supply of puzzles in his pockets for their delight. To please her, he made a story for his young friend Alice Liddell, with her as the heroine. The result, *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), won him fame all over the world. In the story which he wrote as a sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass,* she figured again. His other masterpieces of fun are *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876) and *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889-93).

It is now an old question as to whether children are able to enjoy these inimitable mixtures of humor, parody, and whimsicality as well as adults. The truth, at any rate, is that Lewis Carroll is beloved by children of all ages, and that "older children" are most suited to appreciate his immortal nonsense. Nonsense, indeed, would seem to be an almost exclusive property of the English, and good minds among other peoples have often been unable to tolerate it. (For example, the heaviness of hand of the French and German translators of *Alice* may be taken in evidence.) It can be found in Sterne, Smollett, and Dickens, for instance, among the novelists. And the Victorians were particularly productive in this field, as witness the work of Thomas Hood (cf. *above*), Edward Lear, Charles Stuart Calverley, and W. S. Gilbert (cf. *below*).

S. D. Collingwood's *Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll* (1898) is authoritative. There have been innumerable reprints of Carroll's works.

A Quadrille

"Will you walk a little faster?" said a whiting to a snail,
"There's a porpoise close behind us, and he's treading on my tail.
See how eagerly the lobsters and the turtles all advance!
They are waiting on the shingle—will you come and join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you join the dance?

"You can really have no notion how delightful it will be
When they take us up and throw us, with the lobsters, out to sea!"
But the snail replied, "Too far, too far!" and gave a look askance—
Said he thanked the whiting kindly, but he would not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could not, could not join the dance.
Would not, could not, would not, could not, could not join the dance.

"What matters it how far we go?" his scaly friend replied,
"There is another shore, you know, upon the other side.
The further off from England the nearer is to France;
Then turn not pale, beloved snail, but come and join the dance.
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?
Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, won't you join the dance?"

(1865)

The White Knight's Song

This is a delightful parody on Wordsworth's *Resolution and Independence* (cf. Vol. II, p. 124).

HADDOCKS' EYES *or* THE AGED AGED MAN *or* WAYS AND MEANS *or* A-SITTING ON A GATE

I'll tell thee everything I can;
There's little to relate.
I saw an aged, aged man,
A-sitting on a gate.
"Who are you, aged man?" I said.
"And how is it you live?"
And his answer trickled through my head
Like water through a sieve.

He said "I look for butterflies
That sleep among the wheat;
I make them into mutton-pies,
And sell them in the street.
I sell them unto men," he said,
"Who sail on stormy seas;
And that's the way I get my bread—
A trifle, if you please."

But I was thinking of a plan
To dye one's whiskers green,
And always use so large a fan
That they could not be seen.
So, having no reply to give
To what the old man said,
I cried, "Come, tell me how you live!"
And thumped him on the head.

His accents mild took up the tale;
He said, "I go my ways,
And when I find a mountain-rill,
I set it in a blaze;
And thence they make a stuff they call
Rowland's Macassar Oil—
Yet twopence-halfpenny is all
They give me for my toil."

But I was thinking of a way
To feed oneself on batter,
And so go on from day to day
Getting a little fatter.
I shook him well from side to side,
Until his face was blue;
"Come, tell me how you live," I cried
"And what it is you do!"

He said, "I hunt for haddocks' eyes
Among the heather bright,
And work them into waistcoat-buttons
In the silent night.
And these I do not sell for gold
Or coin of silvery shine,
But for a copper halfpenny,
And that will purchase nine.

"I sometimes dig for buttered rolls,
Or set limed twigs for crabs;
I sometimes search the grassy knolls
For wheels of hansom-cabs.
And that's the way" (he gave a wink)
"By which I get my wealth—
And very gladly will I drink
Your Honor's noble health."

I heard him then, for I had just
Completed my design
To keep the Menai[1] bridge from rust
By boiling it in wine.
I thanked him much for telling me
The way he got his wealth,
But chiefly for his wish that he
Might drink my noble health.

And now, if e'er by chance I put
My fingers into glue,
Or madly squeeze a right-hand foot
Into a left-hand shoe,
Or if I drop upon my toe
A very heavy weight,
I weep, for it reminds me so
Of that old man I used to know—
Whose look was mild, whose speech was slow,
Whose hair was whiter than the snow,
Whose face was very like a crow,
With eyes, like cinders, all aglow,
Who seemed distracted with his woe,
Who rocked his body to and fro,
And muttered mumblingly and low,
As if his mouth were full of dough,
Who snorted like a buffalo—
That summer evening long ago
A-sitting on a gate.

(1872)

From *Sylvie and Bruno*

These stanzas are among the finest examples of "pure nonsense" in English.

He thought he saw an Elephant
That practised on a fife;
He looked again, and found it was
A letter from his wife.
"At length I realise," he said,
"The bitterness of life!"

He thought he saw a Buffalo
Upon the chimney-piece;
He looked again, and found it was
His Sister's Husband's Niece.
"Unless you leave this house," he said,
"I'll send for the police!"

[1] the bridge connecting Wales and the island of Anglesea. It was built between 1819 and 1826 and was one of the longest bridges of that time.

He thought he saw a Rattlesnake
That questioned him in Greek;
He looked again, and found it was
The Middle of Next Week.
"The one thing I regret," he said,
"Is that it cannot speak!"

He thought he saw a Banker's Clerk
Descending from the 'bus;
He looked again, and found it was
A Hippopotamus.
"If this should stay to dine," he said,
"There won't be much for us!"

He thought he saw an Albatross
That fluttered round the lamp;
He looked again, and found it was
A Penny Postage-Stamp.
"You'd best be getting home," he said,
"The nights are very damp!"

William Schwenk Gilbert

(1836-1911)

The comic operas of Gilbert and Sullivan need no introduction to the English-speaking world. W. S. Gilbert, author of the libretti for these beloved operas, had a varied career. Born in London, he attended London University, was an officer in the Gordon Highlanders, then a clerk in a government office, and later practiced law. These experiences furnished ample material for his delightful satires on all these occupations. His gift for nonsense was first exhibited in his *Bab Ballads* of 1869 and 1873, for which he made his own characteristically fantastic drawings. In the meantime, he became interested in the stage, and after trying his hand at dramatic criticism, took to writing for the theatre himself. His fruitful collaboration with the composer Arthur Sullivan began with *Trial by Jury* (1875). This was succeeded by *H. M. S. Pinafore* (1878), *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879), *Patience* (1881), *Iolanthe* (1884), *The Mikado* (1885), *Ruddigore* (1887), *The Yeomen of the Guard* (1888), and *The Gondoliers* (1889)—a treasury of humor, satire, and nonsense which continues to delight thousands. Lovers of these infectious light operas have an excellent time arguing on the respective merits of each work. But there is not one of them that is not full of buoyant writing. Many of the plots are elaborations of items in Gilbert's earlier volumes of verse; as he himself put it, he was forced to admit "his indebtedness to the author of the *Bab Ballads*, from whom he had unblushingly cribbed."

Gilbert possessed a gift for rhyme and metrical device that many a serious poet might have envied. No one has succeeded in making rhyme so much of a treat as he has at his best—and he is often at his best. Thoroughly middle class in his tastes, he lashed out with zest at the nobility and its House of Lords, politicians in general, judges, lawyers, doctors, snobs, artistic pretenders, sentimentalists of various shades, and the claptrap of Italian opera. In many of his hits, he managed to strike at the kind of folly which has long been with us and will probably long continue so to be.

We reprint the following poems from *Bab Ballads and Songs of a Savoyard* (1924) by permission of The Macmillan Company, by whom they are copyrighted.

The Contemplative Sentry

When all night long a chap remains
On sentry-go, to chase monotony
He exercises of his brains,
That is, assuming that he's got any.
Though never nurtured in the lap
Of luxury, yet I admonish you,
I am an intellectual chap,
And think of things that would astonish you.
I often think it's comical
How Nature always does contrive
That every boy and every gal,
That's born into the world alive,
Is either a little Liberal,
Or else a little Conservative!
Fal lal la!

When in that house[1] M.P.'s divide,
If they've a brain and cerebellum, too,
They've got to leave that brain outside,
And vote just as their leaders tell 'em to
But then the prospect of a lot
Of dull M.P.'s, in close proximity,
A-thinking for themselves, is what
No man can face with equanimity.
Then let's rejoice with loud Fal lal
That Nature wisely does contrive
That every boy and every gal,
That's born into the world alive,
Is either a little Liberal,
Or else a little Conservative!
Fal lal la!

[1] House of Commons.

The Aesthete

To literary people *Patience* is likely to be the favorite of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas. It is a deadly satire on the whole "aesthetic" movement and takes chance shots at the languid medievalism of the Pre-Raphaelite paintings, the decorations of Morris, the "fleshly" lyricism of Swinburne, and the notoriety-seeking of Wilde. Swinburne it was, particularly, that Gilbert wished to ridicule; but since gossip at the time was rife about Wilde, the hero of *Patience*, Bunthorne, the fleshly poet, became identified in the public mind with the young "Professor of Aesthetics," Oscar Wilde. This song of Bunthorne manages to catch all that staid England objected to in the "aesthetes."

If you're anxious for to shine in the high aesthetic line as a man of culture rare,
You must get up all the germs[1] of the transcendental terms, and plant them everywhere.
You must lie upon the daisies, and discourse in novel phrases of your complicated state of mind,
The meaning doesn't matter if it's only idle chatter of a transcendental kind.
And everyone will say,
As you walk your mystic way,
"If this young man expresses himself in terms too deep for ME,
Why, what a very singularly deep young man this deep young man must be!"

Be eloquent in praise of the very dull old days which have long since passed away,
And convince 'em, if you can, that the reign of good Queen Anne was Culture's palmiest day.
Of course you will pooh-pooh whatever's fresh and new, and declare it's crude and mean,
For Art stopped short in the cultivated court of the Empress Josephine.
And everyone will say,
As you walk your mystic way,
"If that's not good enough for him which is good enough for ME,
Why, what a very cultivated kind of youth this kind of youth must be!"

Then a sentimental passion of a vegetable fashion must excite your languid spleen,
An attachment À LA Plato for a bashful young potato, or a not-too-French French bean!
Though the Philistines may jostle, you will rank as an apostle in the high aesthetic band,
If you walk down Piccadilly with a poppy or a lily in your medieval hand.
And everyone will say,
As you walk your flowery way,
"If he's content with a vegetable love, which would certainly not suit ME,
Why, what a most particularly pure young man this pure young man must be!"

(1881)

[1] perhaps a sly pun on the name of the pre-Raphaelite magazine, *The Germ*.

Etiquette

The *Ballyshannon* foundered off the coast of Cariboo,
And down in fathoms many went the captain and the crew;
Down went the owners—greedy men whom hope of gain allured:
Oh, dry the starting tear, for they were heavily insured.

Besides the captain and the mate, the owners and the crew,
The passengers were also drowned excepting only two:
Young *Peter Gray*, who tasted teas for *Baker, Croop*, and *Co.*,
And *Somers*, who from Eastern shores imported indigo.

These passengers, by reason of their clinging to a mast,
Upon a desert island were eventually cast.
They hunted for their meals, as *Alexander Selkirk*[1] used,
But they couldn't chat together—they had not been introduced.

For *Peter Gray*, and *Somers* too, though certainly in trade,
Were properly particular about the friends they made;
And somehow thus they settled it without a word of mouth—
That *Gray* should take the northern half, while *Somers* took the south.

[1] a Scottish sailor (1676-1723), the supposed original of Robinson Crusoe.

On *Peter's* portion oysters grew—a delicacy rare,
But oysters were a delicacy *Peter* couldn't bear.
On *Somers'* side was turtle, on the shingle lying thick,
Which *Somers* couldn't eat, because it always made him sick.

Gray gnashed his teeth with envy as he saw a mighty store
Of turtle unmolested on his fellow-creature's shore:
The oysters at his feet aside impatiently he shoved,
For turtle and his mother were the only things he loved.

And *Somers* sighed in sorrow as he settled in the south,
For the thought of *Peter's* oysters brought the water to his mouth.
He longed to lay him down upon the shelly bed, and stuff:
He had often eaten oysters, but had never had enough.

How they wished an introduction to each other they had had
When on board the *Ballyshannon*! And it drove them nearly mad
To think how very friendly with each other they might get,
If it wasn't for the arbitrary rule of etiquette!

One day, when out a-hunting for the *mus ridiculus*,[2]
Gray overheard his fellow-man soliloquising thus:
"I wonder how the playmates of my youth are getting on,
M'Connell, S. B. Walters, Paddy Byles, and *Robinson*?"

These simple words made *Peter* as delighted as could be,
Old chummies at the Charterhouse were *Robinson* and he!
He walked straight up to *Somers*, then he turned extremely red,
Hesitated, hummed and hawed a bit, then cleared his throat, and said:

"I beg your pardon—pray forgive me if I seem too bold,
But you have breathed a name I knew familiarly of old.
You spoke aloud of *Robinson*—I happened to be by—
You know him?" "Yes, extremely well." "Allow me—so do I!"

It was enough: they felt they could more sociably get on,
For (ah, the magic of the fact!) they each knew Robinson!
And Mr. *Somers'* turtle was at *Peter's* service quite,
And Mr. *Somers* punished *Peter's* oyster-beds all night.

They soon became like brothers from community of wrongs:
They wrote each other little odes and sang each other songs;
They told each other anecdotes disparaging their wives;
On several occasions, too, they saved each other's lives.

They felt quite melancholy when they parted for the night,
And got up in the morning soon as ever it was light;
Each other's pleasant company they reckoned so upon,
And all because it happened that they both knew *Robinson*!

They lived for many years on that inhospitable shore,
And day by day they learned to love each other more and more.
At last, to their astonishment, on getting up one day,
They saw a vessel anchored in the offing of the bay!

To *Peter* an idea occurred. "Suppose we cross the main?
So good an opportunity may not occur again."
And *Somers* thought a minute, then ejaculated, "Done!
I wonder how my business in the City's getting on?"

"But stay," said *Mr. Peter*: "when in England, as you know,

[2] ridiculous mouse, a reference to Horace's lines about the mountain in labor which gives birth to the ridiculous mouse.

I earned a living tasting teas for *Baker, Croop,* and *Co.*,
I may be superseded—my employers think me dead!"
"Then come with me," said *Somers*, "and taste indigo instead."

But all their plans were scattered in a moment when they found
The vessel was a convict ship from Portland, outward bound!
When a boat came off to fetch them, though they felt it very kind,
To go on board they firmly but respectfully declined.

As both the happy settlers roared with laughter at the joke,
They recognised an unattractive fellow pulling stroke:
'Twas *Robinson*—a convict, in an unbecoming frock!
Condemned to seven years for misappropriating stock!!!

They laughed no more, for *Somers* thought he had been rather rash
In knowing one whose friend had misappropriated cash;
And *Peter* thought a foolish tack he must have gone upon
In making the acquaintance of a friend of *Robinson.*

At first they didn't quarrel very openly, I've heard;
They nodded when they met, and now and then exchanged a word:
The word grew rare, and rarer still the nodding of the head,
And when they meet each other now, they cut each other dead.

To allocate the island they agreed by word of mouth,
And *Peter* takes the north again, and *Somers* takes the south;
And *Peter* has the oysters, which he loathes with horror grim,
And *Somers* has the turtle—turtle disagrees with him.

George Meredith

(1828-1909)

Although the maintenance of strict chronological order would have required considering the career of George Meredith before that of Swinburne, to have done so would have violated logic. For Meredith was the most completely modern of the Victorians, and even the designation of "Victorian" seems in his case peculiarly inappropriate. Yet his first novel was published before George Eliot's, when Dickens and Thackeray were at the height of their powers; and his first volume of poetry appeared long before those of Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, William Morris, Swinburne, Henley, Francis Thompson, or James Thomson. Despite the contradiction of dates, Meredith was so far in advance of the intellectual currents of his day that he seems essentially a man of our century. From the very beginning, however, he had a circle of admirers, though a small one. Even today his devotees are more limited to the ranks of the discriminating than are those of most men of his literary stature. His style, in both verse and prose, is not particularly inviting to hasty or careless readers; for it is not only informed with sparkling intelligence, but is also given to sudden, sharp transitions and subtle nuances. He has, in consequence, been the topic of lively dissension among critics, some of whom frankly dislike the "strangeness" of his manner, while others proudly worship him. His work, at any rate, has never evoked a tepid reaction, and where he has been liked, he has usually come to be loved. Some would couple his name with Shelley's among major nineteenth-century poets, and many would include two of his novels (*The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* and *The Egoist*) among the best half dozen novels in our language.

He was born in Portsmouth on February 12, 1828, over the shop where his father conducted his trade of tailoring. Meredith was proud of his Celtic descent—his father's family was Welsh and his mother's Irish—but he was curiously reluctant about revealing the details of his origin, probably because of his unhappy childhood. When he was only five years old his mother died; within a few years his father married again and soon after went to South Africa, leaving the boy behind at school to live on the small inheritance bequeathed him by his mother. He seems to have been rather proudly aloof as a lad, and it is conceivable that his great personal beauty could hardly have operated to make him popular with his fellow students. When he was fourteen he was sent to an excellent school at Neuwied, on the Rhine, where he acquired habits of scholarship and something of his cosmopolitan outlook on life. On his return to England, two years later, he was articled to a London solicitor of literary tastes who introduced him to a group of young writers editing the *Monthly Observer*, where, in 1849, Meredith published his first poem, *Chillianwallah*.

Among his new friends was Edward Peacock, son of the novelist, Thomas Love Peacock, who had been intimate with Shelley. Meredith fell violently in love with Edward's sister, Mary Ellen Nichols, a beautiful, gifted woman, the widow of a naval officer. Although she was nine years his senior and he had no certainty of earning a livelihood, they were married in his twenty-first year. Their union was doomed to catastrophe. Both mordantly clever and high-strung, they seemed to be markedly proficient in the art of making each other suffer. After years of futile attempts to find accord, they separated. Some time later the unhappy woman in despair committed suicide. The tragic story of their relationship Meredith subsequently recounted in his startlingly original sonnet-sequence, *Modern Love* (cf. *below*).

In the meantime Meredith's talents had not been idle. In 1851 he published his first volume of *Poems* at his own expense. Beyond the first version of *Love in the Valley* (cf. *below*) little of importance was contained in the collection; but the wonderful cadences of that poem drew the admiration of the new Poet Laureate, Tennyson. The general indifference with which the publication met, however, caused Meredith to turn to the novel, a field in which he was to make outstanding contributions. Throughout his life he was to write verse, and he thought of himself as a poet—a designation which is indeed accurate. For wonderful as are Meredith's character portrayals and analyses of human conduct, the most memorable passages in his novels are those which are highly poetic in inspiration and style—some of them appearing to be pages of free verse misprinted as prose.

His first novel was *The Shaving of Shagpat* (1855), a brilliant, gay, oriental fantasy modeled on the *Arabian Nights* (cf. Vol. I, p. 728). In 1858, having taken residence in London with his little son, after his separation from Mrs. Meredith, he set to work on his first masterpiece, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859). Much autobiography went into making this the first really modern treatment in the English novel of the crimes committed by well-intentioned parents against their children. In this work all of Meredith's distinctive qualities are already in full evidence: his fine critical mind, his poetic vision, his profound sympathy for young people, his completely enlightened apprehension of the dignity of women's souls, his brilliant style and radiant images.

It would not be too much to say that Meredith never wrote a novel that does not reward its reader with many riches. His greatest work is undoubtedly *The Egoist* (1879), a relentless revelation of the selfishness and vanity of the male in love; in it every man will find the unflattering truth about himself. Among Meredith's other novels the best are: *Rhoda Fleming* (1865), *Beauchamp's Career* (1875), *The Tragic Comedians* (1880), and *Diana of the Crossways* (1885). One must go to Shakespeare to find another author whose women have the flesh-and-blood veracity of Meredith's; and it has not been until the twentieth century that novelists have understood as well as Meredith how much society has deprived women of their natural rights, dignity, and worth. In one other respect

Meredith was in the vanguard of writers: in his absorption in the psychology of human action, and his keen awareness of the power of the most subtle and transitory of emotions to govern the destiny of men and women.

After the volume of 1851, Meredith issued many more collections of poetry: *Modern Love* (1862), *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* (1883), *Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life* (1887), *A Reading of Earth* (1888), *Odes in Contribution to the Song of French History* (1898), and *A Reading of Life* (1901). After his death his *Last Poems* (1909) were published. The same characteristics and difficulties of his prose are to be found in Meredith's verse—the compression, the strange transitions, the "flashes of lightning"—to borrow Oscar Wilde's phrase—the radiant intelligence, and the good health.

For despite the early appearance of tragedy in his life, his was not a blighted existence. In 1863 he met, and the next year married, Marie Vulliamy, an accomplished musician, with whom he had perfect happiness until her death in 1885. They took a home in the country on Box Hill in 1868, and here Meredith lived for the rest of his life. Walking the countryside with high spirits and resonant song, he filled his days with joyous activity. On these athletic jaunts with his friends, he would talk endlessly and invigoratingly, illuminating his treasure-house of philosophy and knowledge with swift wit and ready laughter. He seemed, even to the auburn curls surmounting his classic head, another Jove to the many comrades of his outdoor hours.

Wholesomeness, balance, and sanity—basic in the man's own character—shine in all that Meredith wrote. This inner harmony removes him by ages, one feels, from all the major figures of his century. In him (unlike Tennyson, Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold) there was no fierce conflict of soul. Confidently he accepted science and man's earthy inheritance. He rejoiced in the concept that man had evolved from lower forms of life, and in the struggle by which the fittest survive. For if he saw man as the acme of the evolutionary process, he looked upon intelligence as the flower of man's nature, the culminating triumph of Earth's labors. Such wisdom he did not have to fight for; it came almost like the fulfillment of his own temperament. He felt no inclination toward the Bohemianism of Rossetti or the self-conscious paganism of Swinburne. He was the harbinger in Victorian days of the best thought in our own.

The Memorial Edition of Meredith's works consists of twenty-seven volumes (1910). G. M. Trevelyan edited the *Poems* (1912). Among excellent critical studies are: G. M. Trevelyan's *The Poetry and Philosophy of George Meredith* (1906); M. S. Henderson's *George Meredith, Novelist, Poet, Reformer* (1907). Good biographies have been written by J. B. Priestley (1926) and R. E. Sencourt (1929).

Modern Love

Renaissance writers of the sonnet sometimes used the sixteen-line rather than the more usual fourteen-line form. The fifty poems that tell the tragic story of *Modern Love* may thus be considered as one of the great English sonnet-sequences, though narrow definers object to the narrative content. Meredith's own bitter experience in marriage furnished the deep human insight for this account of the moribund love of husband and wife. Like all of his work, these poems show Meredith to have been closer to the twentieth century, in his freedom from conventional notions of the relationship of men and women, than any other Victorian.

1

By this he knew she wept with waking eyes:
That, at his hand's light quiver by her head,
The strange low sobs that shook their common bed,
Were called into her with a sharp surprise,
And strangled mute, like little gaping snakes,
Dreadfully venomous to him. She lay
Stone-still, and the long darkness flowed away
With muffled pulses. Then, as midnight makes
Her giant heart of Memory and Tears
Drink the pale drug of silence, and so beat
Sleep's heavy measure, they from head to feet
Were moveless, looking through their dead black years,
By vain regret scrawled over the blank wall.
Like sculptured effigies they might be seen
Upon their marriage-tomb, the sword between;
Each wishing for the sword that severs all.

2

It ended, and the morrow brought the task.
Her eyes were guilty gates, that let him in
By shutting all too zealous for their sin:
Each sucked a secret, and each wore a mask.
But, oh, the bitter taste her beauty had!
He sickened as at breath of poison-flowers:
A languid humor stole among the hours,
And if their smiles encountered, he went mad,
And raged deep inward, till the light was brown
Before his vision, and the world forgot,
Looked wicked as some old dull murder-spot.
A star with lurid beams, she seemed to crown
The pit of infamy: and then again
He fainted on his vengefulness, and strove
To ape the magnanimity of love,
And smote himself, a shuddering heap of pain.

16

In our old shipwrecked days there was an hour
When, in the firelight steadily aglow,
Joined slackly, we beheld the red chasm grow
Among the clicking coals. Our library-bower
That eve was left to us; and hushed we sat
As lovers to whom Time is whispering.
From sudden-opened doors we heard them sing;
The nodding elders mixed good wine with chat.
Well knew we that Life's greatest treasure lay
With us, and of it was our talk. 'Oh, yes!
Love dies!' I said: I never thought it less.
She yearned to me that sentence to unsay.
Then when the fire domed blackening, I found
Her cheek was salt against my kiss, and swift
Up the sharp scale of sobs her breast did lift:—
Now am I haunted by that taste! that sound.

43

Mark where the pressing wind shoots javelin-like,
Its skeleton shadow on the broad-backed wave!
Here is a fitting spot to dig Love's grave;
Here where the ponderous breakers plunge and strike,
And dart their hissing tongues high up the sand:
In hearing of the ocean, and in sight
Of those ribbed wind-streaks running into white.
If I the death of Love had deeply planned,
I never could have made it half so sure,
As by the unblest kisses which upbraid
The full-waked senses; or failing that, degrade!
'T is morning: but no morning can restore
What we have forfeited. I see no sin:
The wrong is mixed. In tragic life, God wot,
No villain need be! Passions spin the plot:
We are betrayed by what is false within.

47

We saw the swallows gathering in the sky
And in the osier-isle we heard them noise.
We had not to look back on summer joys,
Or forward to a summer of bright dye:
But in the largeness of the evening earth
Our spirits grew as we went side by side.
The hour became her husband and my bride.
Love that had robbed us so, thus blessed our dearth!
The pilgrims of the year waxed very loud
In multitudinous chatterings, as the flood
Full brown came from the West, and like pale blood
Expanded to the upper crimson cloud.
Love that had robbed us of immortal things,
This little moment mercifully gave,
Where I have seen across the twilight wave
The swan sail with her young beneath her wings.

48

Their sense is with their senses all mixed in,
Destroyed by subtleties these women are!
More brain, O Lord, more brain! or we shall mar
Utterly this fair garden we might win.
Behold! I looked for peace, and thought it near.
Our inmost hearts had opened, each to each.
We drank the pure daylight of honest speech.
Alas! that was the fatal draught, I fear.
For when of my lost Lady came the word,
This woman, O this agony of flesh!
Jealous devotion bade her break the mesh,
That I might seek that other like a bird.
I do adore the nobleness! despise
The act! She has gone forth, I know not where.
Will the hard world my sentience of her share?
I feel the truth; so let the world surmise.

49

He found her[1] by the ocean's moaning verge,
Nor any wicked change in her discerned;
And she believed his old love had returned,
Which was her exultation, and her scourge.
She took his hand, and walked with him, and seemed
The wife he sought, though shadow-like and dry.
She had one terror, lest her heart should sigh,
And tell her loudly she no longer dreamed.
She dared not say, "This is my breast; look in."
But there's a strength to help the desperate weak.
That night he learned how silence best can speak
The awful things when Pity pleads for Sin.
About the middle of the night her call
Was heard, and he came wondering to the bed.
"Now kiss me, dear! it may be, now!" she said.
Lethe had passed those lips,[2] and he knew all.

50

Thus piteously Love closed what he begat:
The union of this ever-diverse pair!
These two were rapid falcons in a snare,
Condemned to do the flitting of the bat.
Lovers beneath the singing sky of May,
They wandered once; clear as the dew on flowers:
But they fed not on the advancing hours:
Their hearts held cravings for the buried day.
Then each applied to each that fatal knife,
Deep questioning, which probes to endless dole.
Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul
When hot for certainties in this our life!—
In tragic hints here see what evermore
Moves dark as yonder midnight ocean's force,
Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse,
To throw that faint thin line upon the shore!

(1862)

[1] The husband found the wife.
[2] She had killed herself.

Love in the Valley

Under yonder beech-tree single on the greensward,
Couched with her arms behind her golden head,
Knees and tresses folded to slip and ripple idly,
Lies my young love sleeping in the shade.
Had I the heart to slide an arm beneath her,
Press her parting lips as her waist I gather slow,
Waking in amazement she could not but embrace me:
Then would she hold me and never let me go?

Shy as the squirrel and wayward as the swallow,
Swift as the swallow along the river's light
Circleting the surface to meet his mirrored winglets,
Fleeter she seems in her stay than in her flight.
Shy as the squirrel that leaps among the pine-tops,
Wayward as the swallow overhead at set of sun,
She whom I love is hard to catch and conquer,
Hard, but O the glory of the winning were she won!

When her mother tends her before the laughing mirror,
Tying up her laces, looping up her hair,
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,
More love should I have, and much less care.
When her mother tends her before the lighted mirror,
Loosening her laces, combing down her curls,
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,
I should miss but one for many boys and girls.

Heartless she is as the shadow in the meadows,
Flying to the hills on a blue and breezy noon.
No, she is athirst and drinking up her wonder:
Earth to her is young as the slip of the new moon.

Deals she an unkindness, 'tis but her rapid measure,
Even as in a dance; and her smile can heal no less:
Like the swinging May-cloud that pelts the flowers with hailstones
Off a sunny border, she was made to bruise and bless.

Lovely are the curves of the white owl sweeping
Wavy in the dusk lit by one large star.
Lone on the fir-branch, his rattle-note unvaried,
Brooding o'er the gloom, spins the brown eve-jar.
Darker grows the valley, more and more forgetting:
So were it with me if forgetting could be willed.
Tell the grassy hollow that holds the bubbling well-spring,
Tell it to forget the source that keeps it filled.

Stepping down the hill with her fair companions,
Arm in arm, all against the raying West,
Boldly she sings, to the merry tune she marches,
Brave in her shape, and sweeter unpossessed.
Sweeter, for she is what my heart first awaking
Whispered the world was; morning light is she.
Love that so desires would fain keep her changeless;
Fain would fling the net, and fain have her free.

Happy happy time, when the white star hovers
Low over dim fields fresh with gloomy dew,
Near the face of dawn, that draws athwart the darkness,
Threading it with color, like yewberries the yew.
Thicker crowd the shades as the grave East deepens
Glowing, and with crimson a long cloud swells.
Maiden still the morn is; and strange she is, and secret;
Strange her eyes; her cheeks are cold as cold sea-shells.

Sunrays, leaning on our southern hills and lighting
Wild cloud-mountains that drag the hills along,
Oft ends the day of your shifting brilliant laughter
Chill as a dull face frowning on a song.
Ay, but shows the South-West a ripple-feathered bosom
Blown to silver while the clouds are shaken and ascend
Scaling the mid-heavens as they stream, there comes a sunset
Rich, deep like love in beauty without end.

When at dawn she sighs, and like an infant to the window
Turns grave eyes craving light, released from dreams,
Beautiful she looks, like a white water-lily
Bursting out of bud in havens of the streams.
When from bed she rises clothed from neck to ankle
In her long nightgown sweet as boughs of May,
Beautiful she looks, like a tall garden lily
Pure from the night, and splendid for the day.

Mother of the dews, dark eye-lashed twilight,
Low-lidded twilight, o'er the valley's brim,
Rounding on thy breast sings the dew-delighted skylark,
Clear as though the dewdrops had their voice in him.
Hidden where the rose-flush drinks the rayless planet,
Fountain-full he pours the spraying fountain-showers.
Let me hear her laughter, I would have her ever
Cool as dew in twilight, the lark above the flowers.

All the girls are out with their baskets for the primrose;
Up lanes, woods through, they troop in joyful bands.
My sweet leads: she knows not why, but now she loiters,
Eyes the bent anemones, and hangs her hands.
Such a look will tell that the violets are peeping,
Coming the rose: and unaware a cry
Springs in her bosom for odors and for color,
Covert and the nightingale; she knows not why.

Kerchiefed head and chin she darts between her tulips,
Streaming like a willow gray in arrowy rain:
Some bend beaten cheek to gravel, and their angel
She will be; she lifts them, and on she speeds again.
Black the driving raincloud breasts the iron gateway:
She is forth to cheer a neighbor lacking mirth.
So when sky and grass met rolling dumb for thunder
Saw I once a white dove, sole light of earth.

Prim little scholars are the flowers of her garden,
Trained to stand in rows, and asking if they please.
I might love them well but for loving more the wild ones.
O my wild ones! they tell me more than these.
You, my wild one, you tell of honeyed field-rose,
Violet, blushing eglantine in life; and even as they,
They by the wayside are earnest of your goodness,
You are of life's, on the banks that line the way.

Peering at her chamber the white crowns the red rose,
Jasmine winds the porch with stars two and three.
Parted is the window; she sleeps; the starry jasmine
Breathes a falling breath that carries thoughts of me.
Sweeter unpossessed, have I said of her my sweetest?
Not while she sleeps: while she sleeps the jasmine breathes,
Luring her to love; she sleeps, the starry jasmine
Bears me to her pillow under white rose-wreaths.

Yellow with birdfoot-trefoil are the grass-glades;
Yellow with cinquefoil of the dew-gray leaf;
Yellow with stonecrop; the moss-mounds are yellow;
Blue-necked the wheat sways, yellowing to the sheaf.
Green-yellow bursts from the copse the laughing yaffle;
Sharp as a sickle is the edge of shade and shine:
Earth in her heart laughs looking at the heavens,
Thinking of the harvest: I look and think of mine.

This I may know: her dressing and undressing
Such a change of light shows as when the skies in sport
Shift from cloud to moonlight; or edging over thunder
Slips a ray of sun; or sweeping into port
White sails furl; or on the ocean borders
White sails lean along the waves leaping green.
Visions of her shower before me, but from eyesight
Guarded she would be like the sun were she seen.

Front door and back of the mossed old farmhouse
Open with the morn, and in a breezy link
Freshly sparkles garden to stripe-shadowed orchard,
Green across a rill where on sand the minnows wink.
Busy in the grass the early sun of summer
Swarms, and the blackbird's mellow fluting notes
Call my darling up with round and roguish challenge:
Quaintest, richest carol of all the singing throats!

Cool was the woodside; cool as her white dairy
Keeping sweet the cream-pan; and there the boys from school,
Cricketing below, rushed brown and red with sunshine;
O the dark translucence of the deep-eyed cool!
Spying from the farm, herself she fetched a pitcher
Full of milk, and tilted for each in turn the beak.
Then a little fellow, mouth up and on tip-toe,
Said, "I will kiss you": she laughed and leaned her cheek.

Doves of the fir-wood walling high our red roof
Through the long noon coo, crooning through the coo.
Loose droop the leaves, and down the sleepy roadway
Sometimes pipes a chaffinch; loose droops the blue.
Cows flap a slow tail knee-deep in the river,
Breathless, given up to sun and gnat and fly.
Nowhere is she seen; and if I see her nowhere,
Lightning may come, straight rains and tiger sky.

O the golden sheaf, the rustling treasure-armful!
O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!
O the treasure-tresses one another over
Nodding! O the girdle slack about the waist!
Slain are the poppies that shot their random scarlet
Quick amid the wheatears: wound about the waist,
Gathered, see these brides of Earth one blush of ripeness!
O the nutbrown tresses nodding interlaced!

Large and smoky red the sun's cold disk drops,
Clipped by naked hills, on violet shaded snow:
Eastward large and still lights up a bower of moonrise,
Whence at her leisure steps the moon aglow.
Nightlong on black print-branches our beech-tree

Gazes in this whiteness: nightlong could I.
Here may life on death or death on life be painted.
Let me clasp her soul to know she cannot die!

Gossips count her faults; they scour a narrow chamber
Where there is no window, read not heaven or her.
"When she was tiny," one aged woman quavers,
Plucks at my heart and leads me by the ear.
Faults she had once as she learned to run and tumbled:
Faults of feature some see, beauty not complete.
Yet, good gossips, beauty that makes holy
Earth and air, may have faults from head to feet.

Hither she comes; she comes to me; she lingers,
Deepens her brown eyebrows, while in new surprise
High rise the lashes in wonder of a stranger;
Yet am I the light and living of her eyes.
Something friends have told her fills her heart to brimming,
Nets her in her blushes, and wounds her, and tames.—
Sure of her haven, O like a dove alighting,
Arms up, she dropped: our souls were in our names.

Soon will she lie like a white-frost sunrise.
Yellow oats and brown wheat, barley pale as rye,
Long since your sheaves have yielded to the thresher,
Felt the girdle loosened, seen the tresses fly.
Soon will she lie like a blood-red sunset.
Swift with the to-morrow, green-winged Spring!
Sing from the South-West, bring her back the truants,
Nightingale and swallow, song and dipping wing.

Soft new beech-leaves, up to beamy April
Spreading bough on bough a primrose mountain, you,
Lucid in the moon, raise lilies to the sky-fields,
Youngest green transfused in silver shining through:
Fairer than the lily, than the wild white cherry:
Fair as in image my seraph love appears
Borne to me by dreams when dawn is at my eyelids:
Fair as in the flesh she swims to me on tears.

Could I find a place to be alone with heaven,
I would speak my heart out: heaven is my need.
Every woodland tree is flushing like the dogwood,
Flashing like the whitebeam, swaying like the reed.
Flushing like the dogwood crimson in October;
Streaming like the flag-reed South-West blown;
Flashing as in gusts the sudden-lighted whitebeam:
All seem to know what is for heaven alone.

(1851-78)

The Lark Ascending

It is highly instructive to compare this brilliant piece with Wordsworth's and Shelley's poems on the lark. Wordsworth sees only the symbol in the bird's habits; Shelley catches the exaltation of the bird's song, and is moved to wish for such power of joy in his own poetic utterance; Meredith, owing something to Shelley, hears in the bird's clear song the voice of the good Earth singing. It is in reproducing the scintillating music of the bird itself that this poem excels.

He rises and begins to round,
He drops the silver chain of sound,
Of many links without a break,
In chirrup, whistle, slur and shake,
All intervolved and spreading wide,
Like water-dimples down a tide
Where ripple ripple overcurls
And eddy into eddy whirls;
A press of hurried notes that run
So fleet they scarce are more than one,
Yet changingly the trills repeat
And linger ringing while they fleet,
Sweet to the quick o' the ear, and dear
To her beyond the handmaid ear,
Who sits beside our inner springs,
Too often dry for this he brings,
Which seems the very jet of earth
At sight of sun, her music's mirth,
As up he wings the spiral stair,
A song of light, and pierces air
With fountain ardor, fountain play,
To reach the shining tops of day,
And drink in everything discerned
An ecstasy to music turned,
Impelled by what his happy bill
Disperses; drinking, showering still,
Unthinking save that he may give
His voice the outlet, there to live

Renewed in endless notes of glee,
So thirsty of his voice is he,
For all to hear and all to know
That he is joy, awake, aglow,
The tumult of the heart to hear
Through pureness filtered crystal-clear,
And know the pleasure sprinkled bright
By simple singing of delight,
Shrill, irreflective, unrestrained,
Rapt, ringing, on the jet sustained
Without a break, without a fall,
Sweet-silvery, sheer lyrical,
Perennial, quavering up the chord
Like myriad dews of sunny sward
That trembling into fullness shine,
And sparkle dropping argentine;
Such wooing as the ear receives
From zephyr caught in choric leaves
Of aspens when their chattering net
Is flushed to white with shivers wet;
And such the water-spirit's chime
On mountain heights in morning's prime,
Too freshly sweet to seem excess,
Too animate to need a stress;
But wider over many heads
The starry voice ascending spreads,
Awakening, as it waxes thin,
The best in us to him akin;
And every face to watch him raised
Puts on the light of children praised,
So rich our human pleasure ripes
When sweetness on sincereness pipes,
Though nought be promised from the seas,
But only a soft-ruffling breeze
Sweep glittering on a still content,
Serenity in ravishment.
For singing till his heaven fills,
'Tis love of earth that he instills,
And ever winging up and up,
Our valley is his golden cup,
And he the wine which overflows
To lift us with him as he goes:
The woods and brooks, the sheep and kine,
He is, the hills, the human line,
The meadows green, the fallows brown,
The dreams of labor in the town;
He sings the sap, the quickened veins;
The wedding song of sun and rains
He is, the dance of children, thanks
Of sowers, shout of primrose-banks,
And eye of violets while they breathe;
All these the circling song will wreathe,
And you shall hear the herb and tree,
The better heart of men shall see,
Shall feel celestially, as long
As you crave nothing save the song.

Was never voice of ours could say
Our inmost in the sweetest way,
Like yonder voice aloft, and link
All hearers in the song they drink.
Our wisdom speaks from failing blood,
Our passion is too full in flood,
We want the key of his wild note
Of truthful in a tuneful throat,
The song seraphically free
Of taint of personality,
So pure that it salutes the suns,
The voice of one for millions,
In whom the millions rejoice
For giving their one spirit voice.

Yet men have we, whom we revere,
Now names, and men still housing here,
Whose lives, by many a battle-dint
Defaced, and grinding wheels on flint,
Yield substance, though they sing not, sweet
For song our highest heaven to greet:
Whom heavenly singing gives us new,
Enspheres them brilliant in our blue,
From firmest base to farthest leap,
Because their love of Earth is deep,
And they are warriors in accord
With life to serve, and pass reward,
So touching purest and so heard
In the brain's reflex of yon bird:
Wherefore their soul in me, or mine,
Through self-forgetfulness divine,
In them, that song aloft maintains,
To fill the sky and thrill the plains
With showerings drawn from human stores,
As he to silence nearer soars,
Extends the world at wings and dome,
More spacious making more our home,
Till lost on his aërial rings
In light, and then the fancy sings.

(1881)

Lucifer in Starlight

On a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose.
Tired of his dark dominion swung the fiend
Above the rolling ball in cloud part screened,

Where sinners hugged their spectre of repose.
Poor prey to his hot fit of pride were those.
And now upon his western wing he leaned,
Now his huge bulk o'er Afric's sands careened,
Now the black planet shadowed Arctic snows.
Soaring through wider zones that pricked his scars
With memory of the old revolt from Awe,
He reached a middle height, and at the stars,
Which are the brain of heaven, he looked, and sank.
Around the ancient track marched, rank on rank,
The army of unalterable law.

(1883)

Phoebus with Admetus[1]

I

When by Zeus relenting the mandate was revoked,
Sentencing to exile the bright Sun-God,
Mindful were the ploughmen of who the steer had yoked,
Who: and what a track showed the upturned sod!
Mindful were the shepherds as now the noon severe
Bent a burning eyebrow to brown evetide,
How the rustic flute drew the silver to the sphere,
Sister of his own, till her rays fell wide.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

II

Chirping none the scarlet cicalas crouched in ranks:
Slack the thistle-head piled its down-silk grey:
Scarce the stony lizard sucked hollows in his flanks:
Thick on spots of umbrage our drowsed flocks lay.
Sudden bowed the chestnuts beneath a wind unheard,
Lengthened ran the grasses, the sky grew slate:
Then amid a swift flight of winged seed white as curd,
Clear of limb a Youth smote the master's gate.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure

III

Water, first of singers, o'er rocky mount and mead,
First of earthly singers, the sun-loved rill,
Sang of him, and flooded the ripples on the reed,
Seeking whom to waken and what ear fill.
Water, sweetest soother to kiss a wound and cool,
Sweetest and divinest, the sky-born brook,
Chuckled, with a whimper, and made a mirror-pool
Round the guest we welcomed, the strange hand shook.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

IV

Many swarms of wild bees descended on our fields;
Stately stood the wheatstalk with head bent high:
Big of heart we labored at storing mighty yields,
Wool and corn, and clusters to make men cry!
Hand-like rushed the vintage; we strung the bellied skins
Plump, and at the sealing the Youth's voice rose:
Maidens clung in circle, on little fists their chins;
Gentle beasties through pushed a cold long nose.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

V

Foot to fire in snowtime we trimmed the slender shaft:
Often down the pit spied the lean wolf's teeth
Grin against his will, trapped by masterstrokes of craft;
Helpless in his froth-wrath as green logs seethe!
Safe the tender lambs tugged the teats, and winter sped
Whirled before the crocus, the year's new gold.
Hung the hooky beak up aloft the arrow head
Reddened through his feathers for our dear fold.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

[1] Apollo, having quarreled with Zeus, slew the Cyclopes. In punishment for this Zeus sent him to earth to be a servant of King Admetus.

VI

Tales we drank of giants at war with Gods above:
Rocks were they to look on, and earth climbed air!
Tales of search for simples, and those who sought of love
Ease because the creature was all too fair.
Pleasant ran our thinking that while our work was good,
Sure as fruits for sweat would the praise come fast.
He that wrestled stoutest and tamed the billow-brood
Danced in rings with girls, like a sail-flapped mast.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

VII

Lo, the herb of healing, when once the herb is known,
Shines in shady woods bright as new-sprung flame.
Ere the string was tightened we heard the mellow tone,
After he had taught how the sweet sounds came.
Stretched about his feet, labor done, 't was as you see
Red pomegranates tumble and burst hard rind.
So began contention to give delight and be
Excellent in things aimed to make life kind.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

VIII

You with shelly horns, rams! and promontory goats,
You whose browsing beards dip in coldest dew!
Bulls, that walk the pastures in kingly-flashing coats!
Laurel, ivy, vine, wreathed for feasts not few!
You that build the shade-roof, and you that court the rays,
You that leap besprinkling the rock stream-rent:
He has been our fellow, the morning of our days;
Us he chose for housemates, and this way went.
God! of whom music
And song and blood are pure,
The day is never darkened
That had thee here obscure.

(1883)

Melampus

Melampus was, in Greek mythology, a soothsayer who had his ears cleansed by the tongues of snakes that he had aided and thus was given to understand the language of bird and beast.

I

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

II

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

III

And this he deemed might be boon of love to a breast
Embracing tenderly each little motive shape,
The prone, the flitting, who seek their food whither best

Their wits direct, whither best from their foes escape:
For closer drawn to our mother's natural milk,
As babes they learn where her motherly help is great:
They know the juice for the honey, juice for the silk,
And need they medical antidotes find them straight.

IV

Of earth and sun they are wise, they nourish their broods,
Weave, build, hive, burrow and battle, take joy and pain
Like swimmers varying billows: never in woods
Runs white insanity fleeing itself: all sane
The woods revolve: as the tree its shadowing limns
To some resemblance in motion, the rooted life
Restrains disorder: you hear the primitive hymns
Of earth in woods issue wild of the web of strife.

V

Now sleeping once on a day of marvelous fire,
A brood of snakes he had cherished in grave regret
That death his people had dealt their dam and their sire,
Through savage dread of them, crept to his neck, and set
Their tongues to lick him: the swift affectionate tongue
Of each ran licking the slumberer: then his ears
A forked red tongue tickled shrewdly: sudden upsprung,
He heard a voice piping: Ay, for he has no fears!

VI

A bird said that, in the notes of birds, and the speech
Of men, it seemed: and another renewed: He moves
To learn and not to pursue, he gathers to teach;
He feeds his young as do we, and as we love loves.
No fears have I of a man who goes with his head
To earth, chance looking aloft at us, kind of hand:
I feel to him as to earth of whom we are fed;
I pipe him much for his good could he understand.

VII

Melampus touched at his ears, laid finger on wrist:
He was not dreaming, he sensibly felt and heard.
Above, through leaves, where the tree-twigs thick intertwist,
He spied the bird and the bill of the speaking bird.
His cushion mosses in shades of various green,
The lumped, the antlered, he pressed, while the sunny snake
Slipped under: draughts he had drunk of clear Hippocrene,[1]
It seemed, and sat with a gift of the Gods awake.

VIII

Divinely thrilled was the man, exultingly full,
As quick well-waters that come of the heart of earth,
Ere yet they dart in a brook, are one bubble-pool
To light and sound, wedding both at the leap of birth.
The soul of light vivid shone, a stream within stream;
The soul of sound from a musical shell outflew;
Where others hear but a hum and see but a beam,
The tongue and eye of the fountain of life he knew.

IX

He knew the Hours: they were round him, laden with seed
Of hours bestrewn upon vapor, and one by one
They winged as ripened in fruit the burden decreed
For each to scatter; they flushed like the buds in sun,
Bequeathing seed to successive similar rings,
Their sisters, bearers to men of what men have earned:
He knew them, talked with the yet unreddened; the stings,
The sweets, they warmed at their bosoms divined, discerned.

[1] The spring of the Muses.

X

Not unsolicited, sought by diligent feet,
By riddling fingers expanded, oft watched in growth
With brooding deep as the noon-ray's quickening wheat,
Ere touch'd, the pendulous flower of the plants of sloth,
The plants of rigidness, answered question and squeeze,
Revealing wherefore it bloomed uninviting, bent,
Yet making harmony breathe of life and disease,
The deeper chord of a wonderful instrument.

XI

So passed he luminous-eyed for earth and the fates
We arm to bruise or caress us: his ears were charged
With tones of love in a whirl of voluble hates,
With music wrought of distraction his heart enlarged.
Celestial-shining, though mortal, singer, though mute,
He drew the Master of harmonies, voiced or stilled,
To seek him; heard at the silent medicine-root
A song, beheld in fulfilment the unfulfilled.

XII

Him Phoebus,[2] lending to darkness color and form
Of light's excess, many lessons and counsels gave;
Showed Wisdom lord of the human intricate swarm,
And whence prophetic it looks on the hives that rave;
And how acquired, of the zeal of love to acquire,
And where it stands, in the centre of life a sphere;
And Measure, mood of the lyre, the rapturous lyre,
He said was Wisdom, and struck him the notes to hear.

XIII

Sweet, sweet: 'twas glory of vision, honey, the breeze
In heat, the run of the river on root and stone,
All senses joined, as the sister Pierides[3]
Are one, uplifting their chorus, the Nine, his own.
In stately order, evolved of sound into sight,
From sight to sound intershifting, the man descried
The growths of earth, his adored, like day out of night,
Ascend in song, seeing nature and song allied.

XIV

And there vitality, there, there solely in song,
Resides, where earth and her uses to men, their needs,
Their forceful cravings, the theme are: there is it strong,
The Master said: and the studious eye that reads
(Yea, even as earth to the crown of Gods on the mount)
In links divine with the lyrical tongue is bound.
Pursue thy craft: it is music drawn of a fount,
To spring perennial; well-spring is common ground.

XV

Melampus dwelt among men: physician and sage,
He served them, loving them, healing them; sick or maimed
Or them that frenzied in some delirious rage
Outran the measure, his juice of the woods reclaimed.
He played on men, as his master, Phoebus, on strings
Melodious: as the God did he drive and check,
Through love exceeding a simple love of the things
That glide in grasses and rubble of woody wreck.

(1883)

[2] Apollo, god of the sun and of the arts.

[3] the Muses.

The Appeasement of Demeter

I

Demeter devastated our good land,
In blackness for her daughter snatched below.[1]

[1] Proserpine, who was snatched away by Dis, the god of the lower world.

Smoke-pillar or loose hillock was the sand,
Where soil had been to clasp warm seed and throw
The wheat, vine, olive, ripe to Summer's ray.
Now whether night advancing, whether day,
Scarce did the baldness show:
The hand of man was a defeated hand.

II

Necessity, the primal goad to growth,
Stood shrunken; Youth and Age appeared as one;
Like Winter Summer; good as labor sloth;
Nor was there answer wherefore beamed the sun,
Or why men drew the breath to carry pain.
High reared the ploughshare, broken lay the wain,
Idly the flax-wheel spun
Unridered: starving lords were wasp and moth.

III

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

IV

No smile Demeter cast: the gloom she saw
Well draped her direful musing; for in gloom,
In thicker gloom, deep down the cavern-maw,
Her sweet had vanished; liker unto whom,
And whose pale place of habitation mute,
She and all seemed where seasons, pledged for fruit
Anciently, gaped for bloom:
Where hand of man was as a plucked fowl's claw.

V

The wrathful Queen descended on a vale,
That ere the ravished hour for richness heaved.
Iambe,[2] maiden of the merry tale,
Beside her eyed the once red-cheeked, green-leaved.
It looked as if the Deluge had withdrawn.

[2] Dem r's maidservant.

Pity caught at her throat; her jests were gone.
More than for her who grieved,
She could for this waste home have piped the wail.

VI

Iambe, her dear mountain-rivulet
To waken laughter from cold stones, beheld
A riven wheatfield cracking for the wet,
And seed like infant's teeth, that never swelled,
Apeep up flinty ridges, milkless round.
Teeth of the giants marked she where thin ground
Rocky in spikes rebelled
Against the hand here slack as rotted net.

VII

The valley people up the ashen scoop
She beckoned, aiming hopelessly to win
Her Mistress in compassion of yon group
So pinched and wizened; with their aged grin,
For lack of warmth to smile, on mouths of woe,
White as in chalk outlining little O
Dumb, from a falling chin;
Young, old, alike half-bent to make the hoop.

VIII

Their tongues of birds they wagged, weak-voiced as when
Dark underwaters the recesses choke;
With cluck and upper quiver of a hen
In grasp, past pecking: cry before the croak.
Relentlessly their gold-haired Heaven, their fount
Bountiful of old days, heard them recount
This and that cruel stroke:
Nor eye nor ear had she for piteous men.

IX

A figure of black rock by sunbeams crowned
Through stormclouds, where the volumed shades enfold
An earth in awe before the claps resound
And woods and dwellings are as billows rolled,
The barren Nourisher unmelted shed
Death from the looks that wandered with the dead
Out of the realms of gold,
In famine for her lost, her lost unfound.

X

Iambe from her Mistress tripped; she raised
The cattle-call above the moan of prayer;
And slowly out of the fields their fancy grazed
Among the droves, defiled a horse and mare:
The wrecks of horse and mare: such ribs as view
Seas that have struck brave ships ashore, while through
Shoots the swift foamspit: bare
They nodded, and Demeter on them gazed.

XI

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

XII

The nod was that we gather for consent;
And mournfully amid the group a dame,
Interpreting the thing in nature meant,
Her hands held out like bearers of the flame,
And nodded for the negative sideways.
Keen at her Mistress glanced Iambe: rays
From the Great Mother[3] came:
Her lips were opened wide; the curse was rent.

XIII

She laughed: since our first harvesting heard none
Like thunder of the song of heart: her face,
The dreadful darkness, shook to mounted sun,
And peal on peal across the hills held chase.
She laughed herself to water; laughed to fire;
Laughed the torrential laugh on dam and sire
Full of the marrowy race.
Her laughter, Gods! was flesh on skeleton.

XIV

The valley people huddled, broke, afraid,
Assured, and taking lightning in the veins
They puffed, they leaped, linked hands, together swayed,
Unwitting happiness till golden rains
Of tears in laughter, laughter weeping, smote
Knowledge of milky mercy from that throat
Pouring to heal their pains:
And one bold youth set mouth at a shy maid.

XV

Iambe clapped to see the kindly lusts
Inspire the valley people, still on seas,
Like poplar-tops relieved from stress of gusts,
With rapture in their wonderment; but these,
Low homage being rendered, ran to plough,
Fed by the laugh, as by the mother cow
Calves at the teats they tease:
Soon drove they through the yielding furrow-crusts.

XVI

Uprose the blade in green, the leaf in red,
The tree of water and the tree of wood:
And soon among the branches overhead
Gave beauty juicy issue sweet for food.
O Laughter! beauty plumped and love had birth.
Laughter! O thou reviver of sick Earth!
Good for the spirit, good
For body, thou! to both art wine and bread!

(1888)

[3] Cybele, the Great Mother of the gods.

Walter Pater

(1839-1894)

That quest for beauty to which the Pre-Raphaelites, and Rossetti in particular, had given impetus, resulted toward the end of the century in the growth of the "esthetic movement." Its creed has been identified in the public mind with the doctrine of "art for art's sake." Of this estheticism the philosopher was Walter Pater, the popularizer Oscar Wilde (cf. *below*), and the satirist W. S. Gilbert (in *Patience*; cf. *above*). During the political stress of our own century it has been common to speak contemptuously of the esthetes as a collection of futile, precious, emasculate men. But such a judgment is as rash as it is undeserved. Viewed historically, the esthetic movement was a culmination of the reaction of artistic taste against the ugliness of industrial society. Walter Pater, therefore, in a sense, took up the work of Ruskin and Arnold where they had left it. Nor was the basis of his teaching unsound, for his insistence on the fact that art must be judged by criteria of its own was both just and necessary. Whatever preciosity developed from the exaggeration—and distortion—of his ideas cannot, with any fairness, be charged against him. He was not, like many of his disciples, amoral. On the contrary, he felt that art had this "moral significancy": to teach us to make of life itself an art.

He was born on August 4, 1839, in a poor quarter of the East End of London, where his father practiced the locally unlucrative profession of physician. Pater's father died when the boy was five, and the family moved to Enfield, a village a few miles out of London. There he remained under the tutelage of three attentive women—his mother, aunt, and grandmother—who encouraged him in such pursuits as increased his natural sensitiveness at the expense of all the physical exploits and sports which are common to boyhood. These years of almost exclusively feminine influence, which he has immortalized in his beautiful essay, *The Child in the House* (cf. *below*), were responsible for a certain absence of virility in Pater's make-up, the rare refinement of his perceptions, and his studious avoidance of contact with the world of practical affairs. At the age of fourteen he was sent to King's College, Canterbury, where he was agreeable to his aunt's desire to have him prepare for the ministry. In 1858 he entered Queen's College, Oxford, and it was at this university that he was to make his home for the rest of his life. His studies induced religious skepticism in him, and by the time he was twenty-one he renounced all belief in Christianity. He now devoted himself to philosophy, particularly the works of Plato and the German thinkers. Several visits to Germany during college vacations augmented his enthusiasm for German culture. In 1864 he was elected to a classical fellowship at Brasenose College, Oxford, and thereafter his life was the uneventful one of a college don—a destiny utterly to the satisfaction of a man of his tastes and inclinations.

His readings in the German estheticians led him to a study of the Renaissance, and in 1865 he went to Italy to make personal acquaintance with classic and Renaissance art. At this time, too, he was considerably interested in the English romanticists, and his first published paper, which appeared in the *Westminster Review* for January 1866, was on Coleridge, the apostle of German philosophy in England. Perhaps his most important intellectual experience was his discovery of a biography of Winckelman, the famous German critic of Greek art. In 1867 Pater published an essay, *Winckelman*, the first of a series on art of the Renaissance, which were collected in 1873 as *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. The celebrated *Conclusion* to this volume (cf. *below*) contains what is per-

haps the fullest statement of Pater's philosophy. So far from facing, as did most Victorian leaders, the challenge of social problems, Pater gave no place to them in his speculations. Taking as his point of departure the axiom that all a man can know of his soul is what it experiences in this terrestrial world, he argued, as did Epicurus long ago, that it was the intelligent being's duty to seek, select, and cherish as many moments of exquisite sensation as possible. Such a view struck the English middle-class mind as practically immoral, and certainly irreligious, and Pater felt obliged to modify it in the second edition of the book.

In 1885 appeared his novel, *Marius the Epicurean,* on which he had worked for five years, a wonderful reconstruction of Roman society at the time of Marcus Aurelius, in which Pater's favorite idea is again exemplified through the person of his hero. Here we find a cultivated disciple of Epicurus who discovers that the perfect fulfillment of the only life he believes in, is sacrificing that life for another man.

To Pater the quintessential worth of all art is its style. Here he adopted completely the doctrine of Flaubert (cf. *below*) that the author must find the perfect expression for every one of his ideas, for every part of each idea, and that the conscientious writer is obliged to be satisfied with nothing less than *le mot juste* (the precise word) for his meaning. His essay on *Style* (cf. *below*), which appeared in the volume of *Appreciations* (1889), is an exposition of his theory of writing as a fine art. Pater's own style, over which he worked with loving care, has perhaps too much the air of self-conscious perfection to serve as a model; and the thought which he lavished upon the weight and worth of every word tends to rob his writings of all power and masculinity. But it must be conceded that he attained the perfection he sought, and there is a languorous grace in all his compositions.

His other works include *Imaginary Portraits* (1887), called by some critics his masterpiece, *Plato and Platonism* (1893), *The Child in the House* (1894), *Greek Studies* (1895), and *Miscellaneous Studies* (1895). Pater's greatest triumphs are his splendid reproductions through the medium of language of the masterworks of other arts, of which he was ever a sensitive and discriminating devotee.

The Collected Edition of Pater's works is published in ten volumes (1910). T. Wright's biography (1907) is authoritative. Shorter biographies have been written by A. C. Benson (1911) and F. Greenslet (1911). Excellent critical studies will be found in E. Dowden's *Essays Modern and Elizabethan* (1910); E. Gosse's *Critical Kit-Kats* (1896), P. E. More's *The Drift of Romanticism* (1913), A. Symons's *Studies in Prose and Verse* (1904), and E Thomas's *Walter Pater* (1913).

Studies in the History of the Renaissance

Conclusion

To regard all things and principles of things as inconstant modes or fashions has more and more become the tendency of modern thought. Let us begin with that which is without—our physical life. Fix upon it in one of its more exquisite intervals,—the moment, for instance, of delicious recoil from the flood of water in summer heat. What is the whole physical life in that moment but a combination of natural elements to which science gives their names? But these elements, phosphorus and lime and delicate fibres, are present not in the human body alone: we detect them in places most remote from it. Our physical life is a perpetual motion of them—the passage of the blood, the wasting and repairing of the lenses of the eye, the modification of the tissues of the brain by every ray of light and sound—processes which science reduces to simpler and more elementary forces. Like the elements of which we are composed, the action of these forces extends beyond us; it rusts iron and ripens corn. Far out on every side of us those elements are broadcast, driven by many forces; and birth and gesture and death and the springing of violets from the grave are but a few

out of ten thousand resultant combinations. That clear, perpetual outline of face and limb is but an image of ours, under which we group them—a design in a web, the actual threads of which pass out beyond it. This at least of flame-like our life has, that it is but the concurrence, renewed from moment to moment, of forces parting sooner or later on their ways.

Or if we begin with the inward whirl of thought and feeling, the whirlpool is still more rapid, the flame more eager and devouring. There it is no longer the gradual darkening of the eye and fading of color from the wall,—the movement of the shore-side, where the water flows down indeed, though in apparent rest,—but the race of the midstream, a drift of momentary acts of sight and passion and thought. At first sight experience seems to bury us under a flood of external objects, pressing upon us with a sharp and importunate reality, calling us out of ourselves in a thousand forms of action. But when reflection begins to act upon those objects they are dissipated under its influence; the cohesive force seems suspended like a trick of magic; each object is loosed into a group of impressions—color, odor, texture—in the mind of the observer. And if we continue to dwell in thought on this world, not of objects in the solidity with which language invests them, but of impressions unstable, flickering, inconsistent, which burn and are extinguished with our consciousness of them, it contracts still further; the whole scope of observation is dwarfed to the narrow chamber of the individual mind. Experience, already reduced to a swarm of impressions, is ringed round for each one of us by that thick wall of personality through which no real voice has ever pierced on its way to us, or from us to that which we can only conjecture to be without. Every one of those impressions is the impression of the individual in his isolation, each mind keeping as a solitary prisoner its own dream of a world.

Analysis goes a step farther still, and assures us that those impressions of the individual mind to which, for each one of us, experience dwindles down, are in perpetual flight; that each of them is limited by time, and that as time is infinitely divisible, each of them is infinitely divisible also; all that is actual in it being a single moment, gone while we try to apprehend it, of which it may ever be more truly said that it has ceased to be than that it is. To such a tremulous wisp constantly reforming itself on the stream, to a single sharp impression, with a sense in it—a relic more or less fleeting—of such moments gone by, what is real in our life fines itself down. It is with this movement, with the passage and dissolution of impressions, images, sensations, that analysis leaves off—that continual vanishing away, that strange, perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves.

Philosophiren, says Novalis,[1] *ist dephlegmatisiren, vivificiren.*[2] The service of philosophy, of speculative culture, towards the human spirit is to rouse, to startle it into sharp and eager observation. Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive for us,—but for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point, and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits: for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world, and meantime it is only the roughness of the eye that makes any two persons, things, situations, seem alike. While all melts under our feet, we may well catch at any exquisite passion, or any contribution to knowledge that seems by a lifted horizon to set the spirit free for a moment, or any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange colors, and curious odors, or work of the artist's hands, or the face of one's friend. Not to discriminate every moment some passionate attitude in those about us, and in the brilliancy of their gifts some tragic dividing of forces on their ways, is, on this short day of frost and sun, to sleep before evening. With this sense of the splendor of our experience and of its awful brevity, gathering all we are into one desperate effort to see and touch, we shall hardly have time to make theories about the things we see and touch. What we have to do is to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions, never acquiescing in a facile orthodoxy of

[1] German lyric poet (1772-1801).

[2] This German is accurately paraphrased in the succeeding sentence.

Comte,[3] or of Hegel,[4] or of our own. Philosophical theories or ideas, as points of view, instruments of criticism, may help us to gather up what might otherwise pass unregarded by us. "Philosophy is the microscope of thought." The theory or idea or system which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract theory we have not identified with ourselves, or what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.

One of the most beautiful passages in the writings of Rousseau is that in the sixth book of the *Confessions,* where he describes the awakening in him of the literary sense. An undefinable taint of death had always clung about him, and now in early manhood he believed himself smitten by mortal disease. He asked himself how he might make as much as possible of the interval that remained; and he was not biased by anything in his previous life when he decided that it must be by intellectual excitement, which he found just then in the clear, fresh writings of Voltaire. Well! we are all *condamnés,*[5] as Victor Hugo says: we are all under sentence of death but with a sort of indefinite reprieve—*les hommes sont tous condamnés à mort avec des sursis indéfinis;* we have an interval, and then our place knows us no more. Some spend this interval in listlessness, some in high passions, the wisest—at least among "the children of this world"—in art and song. For our one chance lies in expanding that interval, in getting as many pulsations as possible into the given time. Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life, ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion—that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness. Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake, has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake.

(1873)

The Child in the House

As Florian Deleal walked, one hot afternoon, he overtook by the wayside a poor aged man, and, as he seemed weary with the road, helped him on with the burden which he carried, a certain distance. And as the man told his story, it chanced that he named the place, a little place in the neighborhood of a great city, where Florian had passed his earliest years, but which he had never since seen, and, the story told, went forward on his journey comforted. And that night, like a reward for his pity, a dream of that place came to Florian, a dream which did for him the office of the finer sort of memory, bringing its object to mind with a great clearness, yet, as sometimes happens in dreams, raised a little above itself, and above ordinary retrospect. The true aspect of the place, especially of the house there in which he had lived as a child, the fashion of its doors, its hearths, its windows, the very scent upon the air of it, was with him in sleep for a season; only, with tints more musically blent on wall and floor, and some finer light and shadow running in and out along its curves and angles, and with all its little carvings daintier. He awoke with a sigh at the thought of almost thirty years which lay between him and that place, yet with a flutter of pleasure still within him at the fair light, as if it were a smile, upon it. And it happened that this accident of his dream was just the thing needed for the beginning of a certain design he then had in view, the noting, namely, of some things in the story of his spirit—in that process of brain-building by which we are, each one of us, what we are. With the image of the place so clear and favorable upon him, he fell to thinking of himself therein, and how his thoughts had grown up to him. In that half-spiritualized house he could watch the better, over again, the gradual expansion of the soul which had come to be there—of which, indeed, through the law which makes the material objects about them so large an element in children's lives, it had actually become a part; inward and outward being woven through and through each other into one inextricable texture—half, tint and trace and

[3] Auguste Comte (1798-1857), French philosopher and founder of positivism.

[4] Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), German philosopher.

[5] sentenced to death.

accident of homely color and form, from the wood and the bricks; half, mere soul-stuff, floated thither from who knows how far. In the house and garden of his dream he saw a child moving, and could divide the main streams at least of the winds that had played on him, and study so the first stage in that mental journey.

The *old house*, as when Florian talked of it afterwards he always called it (as all children do, who can recollect a change of home, soon enough but not too soon to mark a period in their lives), really was an old house; and an element of French descent in its inmates—descent from Watteau, the old court-painter, one of whose gallant pieces still hung in one of the rooms—might explain, together with some other things, a noticeable trimness and comely whiteness about everything there —the curtains, the couches, the paint on the walls with which the light and shadow played so delicately; might explain also the tolerance of the great poplar in the garden, a tree most often despised by English people, but which French people love, having observed a certain fresh way its leaves have of dealing with the wind, making it sound, in never so slight a stirring of the air, like running water.

The old-fashioned, low wainscoting went round the rooms, and up the staircase with carved balusters and shadowy angles, landing half-way up at a broad window, with a swallow's nest below the sill, and the blossom of an old pear-tree showing across it in late April, against the blue, below which the perfumed juice of the find of fallen fruit in autumn was so fresh. At the next turning came the closet which held on its deep shelves the best china. Little angel faces and reedy flutings stood out round the fireplace of the children's room. And on the top of the house, above the large attic, where the white mice ran in the twilight—an infinite, unexplored wonderland of childish treasures, glass beads, empty scent-bottles still sweet, thrum of colored silks, among its lumber—a flat space of roof, railed round, gave a view of the neighboring steeples; for the house, as I said, stood near a great city, which sent up heavenwards, over the twisting weather-vanes, not seldom, its beds of rolling cloud and smoke, touched with storm or sunshine. But the child of whom I am writing did not hate the fog because of the crimson lights which fell from it sometimes upon the chimneys, and the whites which gleamed through its openings, on summer mornings, on turret or pavement. For it is false to suppose that a child's sense of beauty is dependent on any choiceness of special fineness in the objects which present themselves to it, though this indeed comes to be the rule with most of us in later life; earlier, in some degree, we see inwardly; and the child finds for itself, and with unstinted delight, a difference for the sense, in those whites and reds through the smoke on very homely buildings, and in the gold of the dandelions at the roadside, just beyond the houses, where not a handful of earth is virgin and untouched, in the lack of better ministries to its desire of beauty.

This house then stood not far beyond the gloom and rumors of the town, among high garden-walls, bright all summer-time with golden-rod and brown-and-golden wall-flower—*flos parietis*, as the children's Latin-reading father taught them to call it, while he was with them. Tracing back the threads of his complex spiritual habit, as he was used in after years to do, Florian found that he owed to the place many tones of sentiment afterwards customary with him, certain inward lights under which things most naturally presented themselves to him. The coming and going of travellers to the town along the way, the shadow of the streets, the sudden breath of the neighboring gardens, the singular brightness of bright weather there, its singular darknesses which linked themselves in his mind to certain engraved illustrations in the old big Bible at home, the coolness of the dark, cavernous shops round the great church, with its giddy winding stair up to the pigeons and the bells—a citadel of peace in the heart of the trouble—all this acted on his childish fancy, so that ever afterwards the like aspects and incidents never failed to throw him into a well-recognized imaginative mood, seeming actually to have become a part of the texture of his mind. Also, Florian could trace home to this point a pervading preference in himself for a kind of comeliness and dignity, an *urbanity* literally, in modes of life, which he connected with the pale people of towns, and which made him susceptible to a kind of exquisite satisfaction in the trimness and well-considered grace of certain things and persons he afterwards met with, here and there, in his way through the world.

So the child of whom I am writing lived on there quietly; things without ministering to him, as he sat daily at the window with the bird-cage hanging below it, and his mother taught him to read, wondering at the ease with which he learned, and at the quickness of his memory. The perfume

of the little flowers of the lime-tree fell through the air upon them like rain; while time seemed to move ever more slowly to the murmur of the bees in it, till it almost stood still on June afternoons. How insignificant, at the moment, seem the influences of the sensible things which are tossed and fall and lie about us, so, or so, in the environment of early childhood. How indelibly, as we afterwards discover, they affect us; with what capricious attractions and associations they figure themselves on the white paper, the smooth wax, of our ingenuous souls, as "with lead in the rock for ever," giving form and feature, and as it were assigned house-room in our memory, to early experiences of feeling and thought, which abide with us ever afterwards, thus, and not otherwise. The realities and passions, the rumors of the greater world without, steal in upon us, each by its own special little passage-way, through the wall of custom about us; and never afterwards quite detach themselves from this or that accident, or trick, in the mode of their first entrance to us. Our susceptibilities, the discovery of our powers, manifold experiences—our various experiences of the coming and going of bodily pain, for instance—belong to this or the other well-remembered place in the material habitation—that little white room with the window across which the heavy blossoms could beat so peevishly in the wind, with just that particular catch or throb, such a sense of teasing in it, on gusty mornings; and the early habitation thus gradually becomes a sort of material shrine or sanctuary of sentiment; a system of visible symbolism interweaves itself through all our thoughts and passions; and irresistibly, little shapes, voices, accidents—the angle at which the sun in the morning fell on the pillow—become parts of the great chain wherewith we are bound.

Thus far, for Florian, what all this had determined was a peculiarly strong sense of home—so forcible a motive with all of us—prompting to us our customary love of the earth, and the larger part of our fear of death, that revulsion we have from it, as from something strange, untried, unfriendly; though life-long imprisonment, they tell you, and final banishment from home is a thing bitterer still; the looking forward to but a short space, a mere childish *goûter* and dessert of it, before the end, being so great a resource of effort to pilgrims and wayfarers, and the soldier in distant quarters, and lending, in lack of that, some power of solace to the thought of sleep in the home churchyard, at least—dead cheek by dead cheek, and with the rain soaking in upon one from above.

So powerful is this instinct, and yet accidents like those I have been speaking of so mechanically determine it; its essence being indeed the early familiar, as constituting our ideal, or typical conception, of rest and security. Out of so many possible conditions, just this for you and that for me, brings ever the unmistakable realization of the delightful *chez soi*[1]; this for the Englishman, for me and you, with the closely drawn white curtain and the shaded lamp; that, quite other, for the wandering Arab, who folds his tent every morning, and makes his sleeping-place among haunted ruins or in old tombs.

With Florian then the sense of home became singularly intense, his good fortune being that the special character of his home was in itself so essentially homelike. As after many wanderings I have come to fancy that some parts of Surrey and Kent are, for Englishmen, the true landscape, true home-counties, by right, partly, of a certain earthy warmth in the yellow of the sand below their gorse-bushes, and of a certain gray-blue mist after rain, in the hollows of the hills there, welcome to fatigued eyes, and never seen farther south; so I think that the sort of house I have described, with precisely those proportions of red-brick and green, and with a just perceptible monotony in the subdued order of it, for its distinguishing note, is for Englishmen at least typically homelike. And so for Florian that general human instinct was reinforced by this special home-likeness in the place his wandering soul had happened to light on, as, in the second degree, its body and earthly tabernacle; the sense of harmony between his soul and its physical environment became, for a time at least, like perfectly played music, and the life led there singularly tranquil and filled with a curious sense of self-possession. The love of security, of an habitually undisputed standing-ground or sleeping-place, came to count for much in the generation and correcting of his thoughts, and afterwards as a salutary principle of restraint in all his wanderings of spirit. The wistful yearning towards home, in absence from it, as the shadows of evening deepened, and he followed in thought what was doing there from hour to hour, interpreted to him much of a yearning and regret he experienced afterwards, towards he knew not what, out of strange ways of feeling and thought in which, from time to time, his spirit found itself alone;

[1] at home.

and in the tears shed in such absences there seemed always to be some soul-subduing foretaste of what his last tears might be.

And the sense of security could hardly have been deeper, the quiet of the child's soul being one with the quiet of its home, a place "inclosed" and "sealed." But upon this assured place, upon the child's assured soul which resembled it, there came floating in from the larger world without, as at windows left ajar unknowingly, or over the high garden walls, two streams of impressions, the sentiments of beauty and pain—recognitions of the visible, tangible, audible loveliness of things, as a very real and somewhat tyrannous element in them —and of the sorrow of the world, of grown people and children and animals, as a thing not to be put by in them. From this point he could trace two predominant processes of mental change in him—the growth of an almost diseased sensibility to the spectacle of suffering, and, parallel with this, the rapid growth of a certain capacity of fascination by bright color and choice form—the sweet curvings, for instance, of the lips of those who seemed to him comely persons, modulated in such delicate unison to the things they said or sang,—marking early the activity in him of a more than customary sensuousness, "the lust of the eye," as the Preacher says, which might lead him, one day, how far! Could he have foreseen the weariness of the way! In music sometimes the two sorts of impressions came together, and he would weep, to the surprise of older people. Tears of joy too the child knew, also to older people's surprise; real tears, once, of relief from long-strung, childish expectation, when he found returned at evening, with new roses in her cheeks, the little sister who had been to a place where there was a wood, and brought back for him a treasure of fallen acorns, and black crow's feathers, and his peace at finding her again near him mingled all night with some intimate sense of the distant forest, the rumor of its breezes, with the glossy blackbirds aslant and the branches lifted in them, and of the perfect nicety of the little cups that fell. So those two elementary apprehensions of the tenderness and of the color in things grew apace in him, and were seen by him afterwards to send their roots back into the beginnings of life.

Let me note first some of the occasions of his recognition of the element of pain in things—incidents, now and again, which seemed suddenly to awake in him the whole force of that sentiment which Goethe[2] has called the *Weltschmerz*,[3] and in which the concentrated sorrow of the world seemed suddenly to lie heavy upon him. A book lay in an old book-case, of which he cared to remember one picture—a woman sitting, with hands bound behind her, the dress, the cap, the hair, folded with a simplicity which touched him strangely, as if not by her own hands, but with some ambiguous care at the hands of others—Queen Marie Antoinette, on her way to execution —we all remember David's[4] drawing, meant merely to make her ridiculous. The face that had been so high had learned to be mute and resistless; but out of its very resistlessness seemed now to call on men to have pity, and forbear; and he took note of that, as he closed the book, as a thing to look at again, if he should at any time find himself tempted to be cruel. Again, he would never quite forget the appeal in the small sister's face, in the garden under the lilacs, terrified at a spider lighted on her sleeve. He could trace back to the look then noted a certain mercy he conceived always for people in fear, even of little things, which seemed to make him, though but for a moment, capable of almost any sacrifice of himself. Impressible, susceptible persons, indeed, who had had their sorrows, lived about him; and this sensibility was due in part to the tacit influence of their presence, enforcing upon him habitually the fact that there are those who pass their days, as a matter of course, in a sort of "going quietly." Most poignantly of all he could recall, in unfading minutest circumstance, the cry on the stair, sounding bitterly through the house, and struck into his soul for ever, of an aged woman, his father's sister, come now to announce his death in distant India; how it seemed to make the aged woman like a child again; and, he knew not why, but this fancy was full of pity to him. There were the little sorrows of the dumb animals too—of the white angora, with a dark tail like an ermine's, and a face like a flower, who fell into a lingering sickness, and became quite delicately human in its valetudinarianism, and came to have a hundred different expressions of voice—how it grew worse and worse, till it began to feel the light too much for it, and at last, after one wild morning of pain, the little soul flickered away from the body, quite worn to death already, and now but feebly retaining it.

So he wanted another pet; and as there were starlings about the place, which could be taught to speak, one of them was caught, and he meant to

[2] Cf. Vol. II, p. 194. [3] sentimental pessimism. [4] Jacques Louis David (1748-1825), French painter.

treat it kindly; but in the night its young ones could be heard crying after it, and the responsive cry of the mother-bird towards them; and at last, with the first light, though not till after some debate with himself, he went down and opened the cage, and saw a sharp bound of the prisoner up to her nestlings; and therewith came the sense of remorse,—that he too was become an accomplice in moving, to the limit of his small power, the springs and handles of that great machine in things, constructed so ingeniously to play pain-fugues on the delicate nerve-work of living creatures.

I have remarked how, in the process of our brain-building, as the house of thought in which we live gets itself together, like some airy bird's-nest of floating thistle-down and chance straws, compact at last, little accidents have their consequence; and thus it happened that as he walked one evening, a garden gate, usually closed, stood open; and lo! within, a great red hawthorn in full flower, embossing heavily the bleached and twisted trunk and branches, so aged that there were but few green leaves thereon—a plumage of tender, crimson fire out of the heart of the dry wood. The perfume of the tree had now and again reached him, in the currents of the wind, over the wall, and he had wondered what might be behind it, and was now allowed to fill his arms with the flowers—flowers enough for all the old blue-china pots along the chimney-piece, making *fête* in the children's room. Was it some periodic moment in the expansion of soul within him, or mere trick of heat in the heavily laden summer air? But the beauty of the thing struck home to him feverishly; and in dreams at night he loitered along a magic roadway of crimson flowers, which seemed to open ruddily in thick, fresh masses about his feet, and fill softly all the little hollows in the banks on either side. Always afterwards, summer by summer, as the flowers came on, the blossom of the red hawthorn still seemed to him absolutely the reddest of all things; and the goodly crimson, still alive in the works of old Venetian masters or old Flemish tapestries, called out always from afar the recollection of the flame in those perishing little petals, as it pulsed gradually out of them, kept long in the drawers of an old cabinet. Also then, for the first time, he seemed to experience a passionateness in his relation to fair outward objects, an inexplicable excitement in their presence, which disturbed him, and from which he half longed to be free. A touch of regret or desire mingled all night with the remembered presence of the red flowers, and their perfume in the darkness about him: and the longing for some undivined, entire possession of them was the beginning of a revelation to him, growing ever clearer, with the coming of the gracious summer guise of fields and trees and persons in each succeeding year, of a certain, at times seemingly exclusive, predominance in his interests, of beautiful physical things, a kind of tyranny of the senses over him.

In later years he came upon philosophies which occupied him much in the estimate of the proportion of the sensuous and the ideal elements in human knowledge, the relative parts they bear in it; and, in his intellectual scheme, was led to assign very little to the abstract thought, and much to its sensible vehicle or occasion. Such metaphysical speculation did but reinforce what was instinctive in his way of receiving the world, and for him, everywhere, that sensible vehicle or occasion became, perhaps only too surely, the necessary concomitant of any perception of things, real enough to be of any weight or reckoning, in his house of thought. There were times when he could think of the necessity he was under of associating all thoughts to touch and sight, as a sympathetic link between himself and actual, feeling, living objects; a protest in favor of real men and women against mere grey, unreal abstractions; and he remembered gratefully how the Christian religion, hardly less than the religion of the ancient Greeks, translating so much of its spiritual verity into things that may be seen, condescends in part to sanction this infirmity, if so it be, of our human existence, wherein the world of sense is so much with us, and welcomed this thought as a kind of keeper and sentinel over his soul therein. But certainly he came more and more to be unable to care for or think of soul but as in an actual body, or of any world but that wherein are water and trees, and where men and women look so or so, and press actual hands. It was the trick even his pity learned, fastening those who suffered in any wise to his affections by a kind of sensible attachments. He would think of Julian, fallen into incurable sickness, as spoiled in the sweet blossom of his skin like pale amber, and his honey-like hair; of Cecil, early dead, as cut off from the lilies, from golden summer days, from women's voices; and then what comforted him a little was the thought of the turning of the child's flesh to violets in the turf above him. And thinking of the very poor, it was not the things which most men care most for that he yearned to give them; but fairer

roses, perhaps, and power to taste quite as they will, at their ease and not task-burdened, a certain desirable clear light in the new morning, through which sometimes he had noticed them, quite unconscious of it, on their way to their early toil.

So he yielded himself to these things, to be played upon by them like a musical instrument, and began to note with deepening watchfulness, but always with some puzzled, unutterable longing in his enjoyment, the phases of the seasons and of the growing or waning day, down even to the shadowy changes wrought on bare wall or ceiling —the light cast up from the snow, bringing out their darkest angles; the brown light in the cloud, which meant rain; that almost too austere clearness, in the protracted light of the lengthening day, before warm weather began, as if it lingered but to make a severer work-day, with the schoolbooks opened earlier and later; that beam of June sunshine, at last, as he lay awake before the time, a way of gold-dust across the darkness; all the humming, the freshness, the perfume of the garden seemed to lie upon it—and coming in one afternoon in September, along the red gravel walk, to look for a basket of yellow crab-apples left in the cool, old parlor, he remembered it the more, and how the colors struck upon him, because a wasp on one bitten apple stung him, and he felt the passion of sudden, severe pain. For this too brought its curious reflections; and, in relief from it, he would wonder over it—how it had then been with him—puzzled at the depth of the charm or spell over him, which lay, for a little while at least, in the mere absence of pain; once, especially, when an older boy taught him to make flowers of sealing-wax, and he had burnt his hand badly at the lighted taper, and been unable to sleep. He remembered that also afterwards, as a sort of typical thing—a white vision of heat about him, clinging closely, through the languid scent of the ointments, put upon the place to make it well.

Also, as he felt this pressure upon him of the sensible world, then, as often afterwards, there would come another sort of curious questioning how the last impressions of eye and ear might happen to him, how they would find him—the scent of the last flower, the soft yellowness of the last morning, the last recognition of some object of affection, hand or voice; it could not be but that the latest look of the eyes, before their final closing, would be strangely vivid; one would go with the hot tears, the cry, the touch of the wistful bystander, impressed how deeply on one! or would it be, perhaps, a mere frail retiring of all things, great or little, away from one, into a level distance?

For with this desire of physical beauty mingled itself early the fear of death—the fear of death intensified by the desire of beauty. Hitherto he had never gazed upon dead faces, as sometimes, afterwards, at the Morgue in Paris, or in that fair cemetery at Munich, where all the dead must go and lie in state before burial, behind glass windows, among the flowers and incense and holy candles—the aged clergy with their sacred ornaments, the young men in their dancing-shoes and spotless white linen—after which visits, those waxen, resistless faces would always live with him for many days, making the broadest sunshine sickly. The child had heard indeed of the death of his father, and how, in the Indian station, a fever had taken him, so that though not in action he had yet died as a soldier; and hearing of the "resurrection of the just," he could think of him as still abroad in the world, somehow, for his protection—a grand though perhaps rather terrible figure, in beautiful soldier's things, like the figure in the picture of Joshua's Vision in the Bible—and of that round which the mourners moved so softly, and afterwards with such solemn singing, as but a worn-out garment left at a deserted lodging. So it was, until on a summer day he walked with his mother through a fair churchyard. In a bright dress he rambled among the graves, in the gay weather, and so came, in one corner, upon an open grave for a child—a dark space on the brilliant grass—the black mould heaped up round it, weighing down the little jeweled branches of the dwarf rosebushes in flower. And therewith came, full-grown, never wholly to leave him, with the certainty that even children do sometimes die, the physical horror of death, with its wholly selfish recoil from the association of lower forms of life, and the suffocating weight above. No benign, grave figure in beautiful soldier's things any longer abroad in the world for his protection! only a few poor, piteous bones; and above them, possibly, a certain sort of figure he hoped not to see. For sitting one day in the garden below an open window, he heard people talking, and could not but listen, how, in a sleepless hour, a sick woman had seen one of the dead sitting beside her, come to call her hence; and from the broken talk evolved with much clearness the notion that not all those dead people had really departed to the churchyard, nor were quite so motionless as they looked,

but led a secret, half-fugitive life in their old homes, quite free by night, though sometimes visible in the day, dodging from room to room, with no great goodwill towards those who shared the place with them. All night the figure sat beside him in the reveries of his broken sleep, and was not quite gone in the morning—an odd, irreconcilable new member of the household, making the sweet familiar chambers unfriendly and suspect by its uncertain presence. He could have hated the dead he had pitied so, for being thus. Afterwards he came to think of those poor, home-returning ghosts, which all men have fancied to themselves —the *revenants*—pathetically, as crying, or beating with vain hands at the doors, as the wind came, their cries distinguishable in it as a wilder inner note. But, always making death more unfamiliar still, that old experience would ever, from time to time, return to him; even in the living he sometimes caught its likeness; at any time or place, in a moment, the faint atmosphere of the chamber of death would be breathed around him, and the image with the bound chin, the quaint smile, the straight stiff feet, shed itself across the air upon the bright carpet, amid the gayest company, or happiest communing with himself.

To most children the sombre questionings to which impressions like these attach themselves, if they come at all, are actually suggested by religious books, which therefore they often regard with much secret distaste, and dismiss, as far as possible, from their habitual thoughts as a too depressing element in life. To Florian such impressions, these misgivings as to the ultimate tendency of the years, of the relationship between life and death, had been suggested spontaneously in the natural course of his mental growth by a strong innate sense for the soberer tones in things, further strengthened by actual circumstances; and religious sentiment, that system of biblical ideas in which he had been brought up, presented itself to him as a thing that might soften and dignify, and light up as with a "lively hope," a melancholy already deeply settled in him. So he yielded himself easily to religious impressions, and with a kind of mystical appetite for sacred things, the more as they came to him through a saintly person who loved him tenderly, and believed that this early preoccupation with them already marked the child out for a saint. He began to love, for their own sakes, church lights, holy days, all that belonged to the comely order of the sanctuary, the secrets of its white linen, and holy vessels, and fonts of pure water; and its hieratic purity and simplicity became the type of something he desired to have about him in actual life. He pored over the pictures in religious books, and knew by heart the exact mode in which the wrestling angel grasped Jacob, how Jacob looked in his mysterious sleep, how the bells and pomegranates were attached to the hem of Aaron's vestment, sounding sweetly as he glided over the turf of the holy place. His way of conceiving religion came then to be in effect what it ever afterwards remained—a sacred history indeed, but still more a sacred ideal, a transcendent version or representation, under intense and more expressive light and shade, of human life and its familiar or exceptional incidents, birth, death, marriage, youth, age, tears, joy, rest, sleep, waking —a mirror, towards which men might turn away their eyes from vanity and dullness, and see themselves therein as angels, with their daily meat and drink, even, become a kind of sacred transaction —a complementary strain or burden, applied to our every-day existence, whereby the stray snatches of music in it re-set themselves, and fall into the scheme of some higher and more consistent harmony. A place adumbrated itself in his thoughts, wherein those sacred personalities, which are at once the reflex and the pattern of our nobler phases of life, housed themselves; and this region in his intellectual scheme all subsequent experience did but tend still further to realize and define. Some ideal, hieratic persons he would always need to occupy it and keep a warmth there. And he could hardly understand those who felt no such need at all, finding themselves quite happy without such heavenly companionship, and sacred double of their life, beside them.

Thus a constant substitution of the typical for the actual took place in his thoughts. Angels might be met by the way, under English elm or beech-tree; mere messengers seemed like angels, bound on celestial errands; a deep mysticity brooded over real meetings and partings; marriages were made in heaven; and deaths also, with hands of angels thereupon, to bear soul and body quietly asunder, each to its appointed rest. All the acts and accidents of daily life borrowed a sacred color and significance; the very colors of things became themselves weighty with meanings like the sacred stuffs of Moses' tabernacle, full of penitence or peace. Sentiment, congruous in the first instance only with those divine transactions, the deep, effusive unction of the House of Bethany, was assumed as the due attitude for the reception of our every-day existence; and

for a time he walked through the world in a sustained, not unpleasurable awe, generated by the habitual recognition, beside every circumstance and event of life, of its celestial correspondent.

Sensibility—the desire of physical beauty—a strange biblical awe, which made any reference to the unseen act on him like solemn music—these qualities the child took away with him, when, at about the age of twelve years, he left the old house, and was taken to live in another place. He had never left his home before, and, anticipating much from this change, had long dreamed over it, jealously counting the days till the time fixed for departure should come; had been a little careless about others even, in his strong desire for it—when Lewis fell sick, for instance, and they must wait still two days longer. At last the morning came, very fine; and all things—the very pavement with its dust, at the roadside—seemed to have a white, pearl-like lustre in them. They were to travel by a favorite road on which he had often walked a certain distance, and on one of those two prisoner days, when Lewis was sick, had walked farther than ever before, in his great desire to reach the new place. They had started and gone a little way when a pet bird was found to have been left behind, and must even now—so it presented itself to him—have already all the appealing fierceness and wild self-pity at heart of one left by others to perish of hunger in a closed house; and he returned to fetch it, himself in hardly less stormy distress. But as he passed in search of it from room to room, lying so pale, with a look of meekness in their denudation, and at last through that little stripped white room, the aspect of the place touched him like the face of one dead; and a clinging back towards it came over him, so intense that he knew it would last long, and spoiling all his pleasure in the realization of a thing so eagerly anticipated. And so, with the bird found, but himself in an agony of homesickness, thus capriciously sprung up within him, he was driven quickly away, far into the rural distance, so fondly speculated on, of that favorite country road. (1878)

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT (1821-1880)

There have been few examples in history to parallel the devotion of Gustave Flaubert to literature. Master of realism though he was, he exhibited more than the most extreme of romanticists a complete consecration to the service of his art. His description of himself as a "Benedictine of letters" was accurate, for he held that all activity which did not conduce to his artistic growth was a sacrilegious waste of time and energy.

He was born at Rouen, the son of a distinguished surgeon, and went to Paris to study law. But when still a youth his preference for literature was already manifested in writings of a highly romantic cast. Of a peculiarly intense and passionate nature, he paid a heavy toll in health for his two ill-fated love affairs, and became subject to severe nervous attacks which darkened his days with melancholy. When only twenty-five he retired from the society of his friends to settle on the estate of his family at Croisset, near Rouen. There he assumed the voluntary servitude of a "galley-slave" to literature. Except for a long trip to the Orient with Maxime Du Camp in 1849, and brief visits to Paris, he rarely left his home. As he grew older he developed increasingly that hatred for everything "middle class" which the English esthetes, who were greatly influenced by him, shared. With the severity of a monk, he disciplined himself to remain constant in all things to his artistic convictions, of which the chief articles were his worship of perfection in style and his pursuit of undisguised truth in the representation of life.

This is not the place to discourse on the greatness of his masterpiece, *Madame Bovary* (1857), which many critics would call the finest of all realistic novels, or of his gorgeous recreation of Carthaginian civilization, *Salammbô* (1862), or of his wonderful collection, *Three Tales* (1877). What concerns us particularly is Flaubert's artistic method. Two principles were paramount with him: accurate (almost scientific) observation of life, and objectivity of style. In his elaboration of the perfect style, he insisted that for what one wished to write there was, at every point of the composition, only one precise phrase to express it—*le mot juste* ("the exact word"), as he called it. It is, he insisted, the artist's duty to be satisfied with nothing less than this perfection of expression. Flaubert's concept of style was adopted *in toto* by the English prose-artist Walter Pater, and by such younger esthetes as Oscar Wilde (cf. *below*) who were affected by the teachings of Pater. No doctrine, in fact, became more identified with the esthetic movement of the late nineteenth century than this preoccupation with *le mot juste*.

Flaubert's letters to Louise Colet and other friends, written when he was in his twenties, show how early the bent of his artistic sincerity was determined. Wal-

ter Pater's essay on *Style* (cf. *below*) makes plain that he profoundly respected the French master's literary opinions. Indeed, it is impossible not to revere Flaubert's unstinting surrender of self to the severe demands of his religion of beauty. There will always be a fascinating paradox in the career of this most conscientious of artists: no novel before *Madame Bovary* presented so devastatingly and mercilessly truthful a portrait of a sentimental woman; but no author more consistently than Flaubert remained in an "ivory tower" above the stress of everyday life for the sake of keeping his art pure.

F. Steegmuller's *Flaubert and Madame Bovary* (1939) is a splendid study of the artistic struggles of the author. E. Faguet's *Flaubert* (trans. 1914) is worthy of consultation. Dr. Isabel Gordon has graciously made the following translation from Flaubert's *Letters* expressly for this work.

From his LETTERS

(*Translated by Isabel Gordon*)

To Louise Colet, August 12, 1846

The young man of today, the soul that at sixteen flowers to a great love which makes him yearn for luxury, for glory, for all the splendors of life,—that poetry, murmurous and sad, of the adolescent heart,—*there* is a new chord no one has yet struck. Oh, Louise, what I'm going to say is hard; and yet it springs from the most profound sympathy, from the most intimate pity. If ever it happens that some poor boy falls in love, finds you lovely,—such a child as I was, timid, gentle, trembling,—a boy who is afraid of you, and yet seeks you out, avoids you and pursues you—be good to him; don't repulse him. Only give him your hand to kiss,—he will die of joy. Drop your handkerchief; he will pick it up, and take it to bed with him; he will fling himself upon it, weeping. The spectacle I saw a little while ago has once more opened the grave where my mummified youth slept; I have breathed once more those spent odors; there came back to me something that was like those forgotten melodies one recaptures in the twilight of dawn, in those slow hours when Memory walks among our thoughts of the past like a ghost among the ruins. No, my dear, no woman will ever know anything of all that; still less, would a woman ever speak of it. Women do love; perhaps they love even better than we do—their love is stronger, but not so forward. And then, does being possessed by an emotion give one the power to express it? Was any drinking song ever written by a man who was drunk? One mustn't always think the emotion itself is everything. In the arts, emotion is nothing without Form. All this is to say that women know nothing of love, they who have loved so much, because they have been too much taken up with love. They have not a *disinterested* appetite for the Beautiful. For them the Beautiful must always be attached to something—to a goal, or to a practical question. They write to satisfy their hearts, but not because of the magnetism of Art, a principle complete in itself, with no more need of support than a star. I know very well that this is not your idea of women's love, but it is mine.

August 15, 1846

I have always tried not to degrade Art to the satisfying of an isolated personality. I have written some very tender pages without love, and some burning pages without the slightest fire in my blood. I have imagined, I have recalled, and I have combined. What you read is not the memory of any event whatsoever. You prophesy that I shall one day do great things. Who knows? (that's my favorite expression). I doubt it; my imagination is dying out; I am becoming too much of a gourmet.[1] All I ask is to go on being able to admire the master with that intimate inward enchantment I'd give up everything else for—everything, everything! But as for my getting to be one—never; I'm sure of that; there is so much I lack—first of all, true inwardness, and then, perseverance at my work. Style can be achieved only by atrocious labor, by fanatic and self-sacrificing stubbornness. Buffon's[2] saying is a great blasphemy: genius is not a long patience. But there is some truth in it, and more than people think, nowadays especially.

To Louise Colet, September 18, 1846

You tell me, my angel, that I have not initiated you into my inmost life, my most secret thoughts.

Do you know what is most intimate, most hidden in my heart,—the most "me" in me? Two or three poor ideas about Art that I have brooded over lovingly; that is all. The greatest events of my life have been some thoughts, some readings, certain sunsets at Trouville by the sea, and some conversations, five or six hours long, with a friend who is now married and lost to me. The way I look at life is so different from the way others look at it that it has led me to isolate myself always (alas, not enough) in a lonely bitterness out of which nothing could come. I have been so often hu-

[1] a person of exquisite taste in eating and drinking.
[2] celebrated French naturalist (1707-88).

miliated; I have shocked people so, and caused so much talk, that I came to realize long, long ago, that if you wish to live in tranquility, you have to live alone, and seal your windows to keep out the air of the world . . .

Poet of the form! that is the final insult the utilitarian hurls at the true artist. As for myself, so long as no one has succeeded in distinguishing clearly and in so many words, the form from the content, I shall maintain that those two are words empty of all meaning. There are no beautiful thoughts without beautiful form, and no beautiful form without beautiful thoughts. Beauty emanates from Form in the world of art, just as in our world, temptation, love, emanate from Beauty. Just as you cannot abstract from a physical object the qualities that constitute it,—i.e., color, extension, mass, without reducing it to an empty abstraction, in a word, without destroying it; just so you cannot separate the Form from the Idea, for the Idea exists only by virtue of its form. Imagine an Idea without Form,—impossible; so, too, a form that expresses no idea. All that is just a heap of stupidities that criticism thrives on. People who write a good style are accused by the critics of neglecting the Idea, the moral end, as if the physician had any end but healing, or the painter any aim but painting, the nightingale any aim but singing, as if the end of Art were not above all else the Beautiful.

September 27, 1846

. . . or else the only man who can take the place of all the rest, my old Shakespeare, whom I mean to reread from cover to cover, and whom I shall not leave this time until I have the pages at my fingers' end. When I read Shakespeare, I become greater, more intelligent and more pure. When I reach the climax of one of his works, I feel as though I were on a high mountain: everything disappears and everything appears. One ceases to be a man, one is an Eye; new horizons widen about one; perspectives lengthen out to Infinity; one does not pause to think that one has lived in the cabins one can scarcely make out below; that one has drunk of all those streams that seem smaller now than little brooks; that one has been tossed about in that ant-hill and has left it behind. I wrote once, in a surge of happy pride (I wish I could feel it once more) a sentence you would understand: I was speaking of the joy that springs from reading the works of the great poets: "It seems to me sometimes that the enthusiasm they inspire in me makes me their equal and raises me up to them."

To Louise Colet, October 3, 1846

. . . don't be annoyed at my speaking to you about Shakespeare, instead of about myself. It seems more interesting to me, that's all. And, besides, what should one speak of, if not of that which is the exclusive subject of preoccupation of one's mind? For my part, I don't know how people manage to live, who are in an esthetic state of mind from morning to night. I have enjoyed more than most people the pleasures of family life; as much as any man of my age, the joys of the senses; more than many, those of love. Well, none of these has ever given me any joy comparable to that inspired in me by the illustrious dead, whose works I have read or contemplated.

The three loveliest things God has made are: the sea, Hamlet, and Mozart's *Don Juan*.

October 23, 1846

No, I do not despise fame; no one despises what he cannot attain. More than the hearts of other men, my heart has thrilled to that word. I used to spend long hours dreaming of overwhelming triumphs whose acclaim startled me as if I had already heard them. But, I don't know why, one fine morning I woke up and found myself rid of that desire, and more completely so than if the desire had been fulfilled. I realized then that I was not great and set all my powers of reasoning to work to study my own nature, its depths and above all its limitations. The poets I admire seemed to me all the greater, removed as they were further from me, and I rejoiced, in the good faith of my heart, in that humbleness which might have made another burst with rage. When one has some worth, seeking success is a mere self-indulgence, and seeking fame may be complete ruin. For there are two types of poet. The greatest, the rare one, the true masters, sum up humanity; without being taken up with themselves or their own passions, setting aside their own personalities, to lose themselves in those of others, they represent the Universe which is reflected in their works, sparkling, various, multiple, like a whole sky mirrored in the sea with all its stars and all its azure. There are others who have only to cry out to be harmonious, who have only to weep to touch the heart, only to be absorbed in themselves to remain eternal. They could not perhaps have gone any further by doing anything else; but they have ardor and verve to make up for the lack of scope, so that, if they had been born with other temperaments, they might not have had genius at all. Byron was of this family; Shakespeare of the other. Who can tell

what Shakespeare really loved, what he hated, what he felt? He is a colossus that terrifies us; it is hard to believe that he was ever a man. Well, to return to fame. Fame should be pure, real, solid, like the fame of the demi-gods; one strains and struggles to clamber up toward them; one prunes one's capricious artlessness and one's instinctive fantasies with one's talent to force them into a set type, a ready-made mould. Or else, other times, one is vain enough to believe that one can create beauty by saying what one thinks and what one feels (like Montaigne and Byron). This last plan is perhaps the wisest for original people, for one would often have more qualities if one did not seek them, and any chance-comer might if he could write correctly, make a superb book by writing his memoirs in full, if he could only write them sincerely. So, to come back to me, I found myself not lofty enough to create true works of art, nor eccentric enough to be able to fill all my works with myself alone. And, having neither the cleverness to attain success nor the genius to achieve glory, I have condemned myself to writing for myself alone, for my own personal diversion, just as one rides horseback or smokes. Almost certainly I shall never have one line printed, and my offspring (I use the word "offspring" in its literal sense, for I no more desire family posterity than I count on the other kind) will probably make cocked hats for their grandchildren of my whimsical novels, and screen their kitchen candles with the oriental tales, the plays, the mystery stories and the other nonsense I so seriously set down on good white paper. There, my dear Louise, you have, once and for all the very depths of my thoughts on this subject and on myself.

I do not need to be sustained in my studies by the idea of any sort of reward; and the queer thing is that, though I busy myself with Art, I no more believe in it than in anything else, for the cornerstone of my faith is to have no faith at all in anything whatever. I do not even believe in myself; I do not know whether I am stupid or clever, good or bad, stingy or prodigal. Like everybody else, I am now the one, and now the other; my merit is perhaps that I am aware of it, and my chief fault that I am frank enough to admit it. Besides, is anyone sure of himself? Is one sure of what one really thinks? of what one feels? You, for example, you who love me, who love me so much that you would wish to deny it to yourself, is it really me you love in me, or is it some other man you think you have seen in me, who is not really to be found in me at all . . . ?

Style

Since all progress of mind consists for the most part in differentiation, in the resolution of an obscure and complex object into its component aspects, it is surely the stupidest of losses to confuse things which right reason has put asunder, to lose the sense of achieved distinctions, the distinction between poetry and prose, for instance, or, to speak more exactly, between the laws and characteristic excellences of verse and prose composition. On the other hand, those who have dwelt most emphatically on the distinction between prose and verse, prose and poetry, may sometimes have been tempted to limit the proper functions of prose too narrowly; and this again is at least false economy, as being, in effect, the renunciation of a certain means or faculty, in a world where after all we must needs make the most of things. Critical efforts to limit art *a priori*, by anticipations regarding the natural incapacity of the material with which this or that artist works, as the sculptor with solid form, or the prose-writer with the ordinary language of men, are always liable to be discredited by the facts of artistic production; and while prose is actually found to be a colored thing with Bacon,[1] picturesque with Livy[2] and Carlyle,[3] musical with Cicero[4] and Newman,[5] mystical and intimate with Plato[6] and Michelet[7] and Sir Thomas Browne,[8] exalted or florid, it may be, with Milton[9] and Taylor,[10] it will be useless to protest that it can be nothing at all except something very tamely and narrowly confined to mainly practical ends—a kind of "good round-hand"; as useless as the protest that poetry might not touch prosaic subjects as with Wordsworth,[11] or an abstruse matter as with Browning,[12] or treat contemporary life nobly as with Tennyson.[13] In subordination to one essential beauty in all good literary style, in all literature

[1] Cf. Vol. I, p. 358.
[2] Roman historian (59 B.C.-17 A.D.). [3] Cf. *above*.
[4] Roman orator and essayist (106-43 B.C.).
[5] Cf. Vol. II, p. 487. [6] Greek philosopher (427-347 B.C.).
[7] French historian (1798-1874). [8] Cf. Vol. I, p. 404.
[9] Cf. Vol. I, p. 483.
[10] Jeremy Taylor (1613-67), English bishop and author.
[11] Cf. Vol. II, p. 102. [12] Cf. Vol. II, p. 557.
[13] Cf. Vol. II, p. 508.

as a fine art, as there are many beauties of poetry, so the beauties of prose are many and it is the business of criticism to estimate them as such; as it is good in the criticism of verse to look for those hard, logical and quasi-prosaic excellences which that too has, or needs. To find in the poem, amid the flowers, the allusions, the mixed perspectives, of *Lycidas*[14] for instance, the thought, the logical structure:—how wholesome! how delightful! as to identify in prose what we call the poetry, the imaginative power, not treating it as out of place and a kind of vagrant intruder, but by way of an estimate of its rights, that is, of its achieved powers, there.

Dryden,[15] with the characteristic instinct of his age, loved to emphasize the distinction between poetry and prose, the protest against their confusion with each other, coming with somewhat diminished effect from one whose poetry was so prosaic. In truth, his sense of prosaic excellence affected his verse rather than his prose, which is not only fervid, richly figured, poetic, as we say, but vitiated, all unconsciously, by many a scanning line. Setting up correctness, that humble merit of prose, as the central literary excellence, he is really a less correct writer than he may seem, still with an imperfect mastery of the relative pronoun. It might have been foreseen that, in the rotations of mind, the province of poetry in prose would find its assertor; and, a century after Dryden, amid very different intellectual needs, and with the need therefore of great modifications in literary form, the range of the poetic force in literature was effectively enlarged by Wordsworth. The true distinction between prose and poetry he regarded as the almost technical or accidental one of the absence or presence of metrical beauty, or, say! metrical restraint; and for him the opposition came to be between verse and prose of course; but, as the essential dichotomy[16] in this matter, between imaginative and unimaginative writing, parallel to De Quincey's distinction between "the literature of power and the literature of knowledge," in the former of which the composer gives us not fact. but his peculiar sense of fact, whether past or present.

Dismissing then, under sanction of Wordsworth, that harsher opposition of poetry to prose, as savoring in fact of the arbitrary psychology of the last century, and with it the prejudice that there can be but one only beauty of prose style, I propose here to point out certain qualities of all literature as a fine art, which, if they apply to the literature of fact, apply still more to the literature of the imaginative sense of fact, while they apply indifferently to verse and prose, so far as either is really imaginative—certain conditions of true art in both alike, which conditions may also contain in them the secret of the proper discrimination and guardianship of the peculiar excellences of either.

The line between fact and something quite different from external fact is, indeed, hard to draw. In Pascal,[17] for instance, in the persuasive writers generally, how difficult to define the point where, from time to time, argument which, if it is to be worth anything at all, must consist of facts or groups of facts, becomes a pleading—a theorem no longer, but essentially an appeal to the reader to catch the writer's spirit, to think with him, if one can or will—an expression no longer of fact but of his sense of it, his peculiar intuition of a world prospective, or discerned below the faulty conditions of the present, in either case changed somewhat from the actual world. In science, on the other hand, in history so far as it conforms to scientific rule, we have a literary domain where the imagination may be thought to be always an intruder. And as, in all science, the functions of literature reduce themselves eventually to the transcribing of fact, so all the excellences of literary form in regard to science are reducible to various kinds of painstaking; this good quality being involved in all "skilled work" whatever, in the drafting of an act of parliament, as in sewing. Yet here again, the writer's sense of fact, in history especially, and in all those complex subjects which do but lie on the borders of science, will still take the place of fact, in various degrees. Your historian, for instance, with absolutely truthful intention, amid the multitude of facts presented to him must needs select, and in selecting assert something of his own humor, something that comes not of the world without but of a vision within. So Gibbon[18] molds his unwieldy material to a preconceived view. Livy, Tacitus,[19] Michelet, moving full of poignant sensibility amid the records of the past, each, after his own sense, modifies—who can tell where and to what degree?—and becomes something else than a transcriber; each, as he

[14] Cf. Vol. I, p. 428.
[15] Cf. Vol. I, p. 534.
[16] two-fold division.
[17] Blaise Pascal (1623-62), French philosopher.
[18] The reference here is to his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.
[19] Roman historian of the first century A.D.

thus modifies, passing into the domain of art proper. For just in proportion as the writer's aim, consciously or unconsciously, comes to be the transcribing, not of the world, not of mere fact, but of his sense of it, he becomes an artist, his work *fine* art; and good art (as I hope ultimately to show) in proportion to the truth of his presentment of that sense; as in those humbler or plainer functions of literature also, truth—truth to bare fact, there—is the essence of such artistic quality as they may have. Truth! there can be no merit, no craft at all, without that. And further, all beauty is in the long run only *fineness* of truth, or what we call expression, the finer accommodation of speech to that vision within.

—The transcript of his sense of fact rather than the fact, as being preferable, pleasanter, more beautiful to the writer himself. In literature, as in every other product of human skill, in the moulding of a bell or a platter for instance, wherever this sense asserts itself, wherever the producer so modifies his work as, over and above its primary use or intention, to make it pleasing (to himself, of course, in the first instance) there, "fine" as opposed to merely serviceable art, exists. Literary art, that is, like all art which is in any way imitative or reproductive of fact—form, or color, or incident—is the representation of such fact as connected with soul, of a specific personality, in its preferences, its volition and power.

Such is the matter of imaginative or artistic literature—this transcript, not of mere fact, but of fact in its infinite variety, as modified by human preference in all its infinitely varied forms. It will be good literary art not because it is brilliant or sober, or rich, or impulsive, or severe, but just in proportion as its representation of that sense, that soul-fact, is true, verse being only one department of such literature, and imaginative prose, it may be thought, being the special art of the modern world. That imaginative prose should be the special and opportune art of the modern world results from two important facts about the latter: first, the chaotic variety and complexity of its interests, making the intellectual issue, the really master currents of the present time incalculable—a condition of mind little susceptible of the restraint proper to verse form, so that the most characteristic verse of the nineteenth century has been lawless verse; and secondly, an all-pervading naturalism, a curiosity about everything whatever as it really is, involving a certain humility of attitude, cognate to what must, after all, be the less ambitious form of literature. And prose thus asserting itself as the special and privileged artistic faculty of the present day, will be, however critics may try to narrow its scope, as varied in its excellence as humanity itself reflecting on the facts of its latest experience —an instrument of many stops, meditative, observant, descriptive, eloquent, analytic, plaintive, fervid. Its beauties will be not exclusively "pedestrian:" it will exert, in due measure, all the varied charms of poetry, down to the rhythm which, as in Cicero, or Michelet, or Newman, at their best, gives its musical value to every syllable.

The literary artist[20] is of necessity a scholar, and in what he proposes to do will have in mind, first of all, the scholar and the scholarly conscience—the male conscience in this matter, as we must think it, under a system of education which still to so large an extent limits real scholarship to men. In his self-criticism, he supposes always that sort of reader who will go (full of eyes) warily, considerately, though without consideration for him, over the ground which the female conscience traverses so lightly, so amiably. For the material in which he works is no more a creation of his own than the sculptor's marble. Product of a myriad various minds and contending tongues, compact of obscure and minute association, a language has its own abundant and often recondite laws, in the habitual and summary recognition of which scholarship consists. A writer, full of a matter he is before all things anxious to express, may think of those laws, the limitations of vocabulary, structure, and the like, as a restriction, but if a real artist, will find in them an opportunity. His punctilious observance of the proprieties of his medium will diffuse through all he writes a general air of sensibility, of refined usage. *Exclusiones debitae naturae*—the exclusions, or rejections, which nature demands—we know how large a part these play, according to Bacon, in the science of nature. In a somewhat changed sense, we might say that the art of the scholar is summed up in the observance of those rejections demanded by the nature of his medium, the material he must use. Alive to the

[20] "Mr. Saintsbury, in his *Specimens of English Prose, from Malory to Macaulay*, has succeeded in tracing, through successive English prose-writers, the tradition of that severer beauty in them, of which this admirable scholar of our literature is known to be a lover. *English Prose, from Mandeville to Thackeray* more recently 'chosen and edited' by a younger scholar, Mr. Arthur Galton, of New College, Oxford, a lover of our literature at once enthusiastic and discreet, aims at a more various illustration of the eloquent powers of English prose, and is a delightful companion."—Pater.

value of an atmosphere in which every term finds its utmost degree of expression, and with all the jealousy of a lover of words, he will resist a constant tendency on the part of the majority of those who use them to efface the distinctions of language, the facility of writers often reinforcing in this respect the work of the vulgar. He will feel the obligation not of the laws only, but of those affinities, avoidances, those mere preferences, of his language, which through the associations of literary history have become a part of its nature, prescribing the rejection of many a neology,[21] many a license, many a gipsy phrase which might present itself as actually expressive. His appeal, again, is to the scholar, who has great experience in literature, and will show no favor to short-cuts, or hackneyed illustration, or an affectation of learning designed for the unlearned. Hence a contention, a sense of self-restraint and renunciation, having for the susceptible reader the effect of a challenge for minute consideration; the attention of the writer, in every minutest detail, being a pledge that it is worth the reader's while to be attentive too, that the writer is dealing scrupulously with his instrument, and therefore, indirectly, with the reader himself also, that he has the science of the instrument he plays on, perhaps, after all, with a freedom which in such case will be the freedom of a master.

For meanwhile, braced only by those restraints, he is really vindicating his liberty in the making of a vocabulary, an entire system of composition, for himself, his own true manner; and when we speak of the manner of a true master we mean what is essential in his art. Pedantry being only the scholarship of *le cuistre* (we have no English equivalent), he is no pedant, and does but show his intelligence of the rules of language in his freedoms with it, addition or expansion, which like the spontaneities of manner in a well-bred person will still further illustrate good taste.—The right vocabulary! Translators have not invariably seen how all-important that is in the work of translation, driving for the most part at idiom or construction; whereas, if the original be first-rate, one's first care should be with its elementary particles, Plato, for instance, being often reproducible by an exact following, with no variation in structure, of word after word, as the pencil follows a drawing under tracing-paper, so only each word or syllable be not of false color, to change my illustration a little.

Well! that is because any writer worth translating at all has winnowed and searched through his vocabulary, is conscious of the words he would select in systematic reading of a dictionary, and still more of the words he would reject were the dictionary other than Johnson's;[22] and doing this with his peculiar sense of the world ever in view, in search of an instrument for the adequate expression of that, begets a vocabulary faithful to the coloring of his own spirit, and in the strictest sense original. That living authority which language needs lies, in truth, in its scholars, who recognizing always that every language possesses a genius, a very fastidious genius, of its own, expand at once and purify its very elements, which must needs change along with the changing thoughts of living people. Ninety years ago, for instance, great mental force, certainly, was needed by Wordsworth, to break through the consecrated poetic associations of a century, and speak the language that was his, that was to become in a measure the language of the next generation. But he did it with the tact of a scholar also. English, for a quarter of a century past, has been assimilating the phraseology of the great German metaphysical movement of eighty years ago; in part also the language of mystical theology: and none but pedants will regret a great consequent increase of its resources. For many years to come its enterprise may well lie in the naturalization of the vocabulary of science, so only it be under the eye of sensitive scholarship—in a liberal naturalization of the ideas of science too, for after all, the chief stimulus of good style is to possess a full, rich, complex matter to grapple with. The literary artist, therefore, will be well aware of physical science; science also attaining, in its turn, its true literary ideal. And then, as the scholar is nothing without the historic sense, he will be apt to restore not really obsolete or really worn-out words, but the finer edge of words still in use: *ascertain, communicate, discover*—words like these it has been part of our "business" to misuse. And still, as language was made for man, he will be no authority for correctnesses which, limiting freedom of utterance, were yet but accidents in their origin; as if one vowed not to say *"its,"* which ought to have been in Shakespeare, *"his"* and *"hers,"* for inanimate objects, being but a barbarous and really inexpressive survival. Yet we have known many things like this. Racy Saxon monosyllables, close to us as touch and sight, he will intermix readily with those long, savorsome, Latin words,

[21] newly-invented word.

[22] The dictionary of Dr. Samuel Johnson (Vol. I, p. 754) is not nearly so large as some of the later ones.

rich in "second intention." In this late day certainly, no critical process can be conducted reasonably without eclecticism. Of such eclecticism we have a justifying example in one of the first poets of our time. How illustrative of monosyllablic effect, of sonorous Latin, of the phraseology of science, of metaphysic, of colloquialism even, are the writings of Tennyson; yet with what a fine, fastidious scholarship throughout!

A scholar writing for the scholarly, he will of course leave something to the willing intelligence of his reader. "To go preach to the first passer-by," says Montaigne,[23] "to become tutor to the ignorance of the first I meet, is a thing I abhor;" a thing, in fact, naturally distressing to the scholar, who will therefore ever be shy of offering uncomplimentary assistance to the reader's wit. To really strenuous minds there is a pleasurable stimulus in the challenge for a continuous effort on their part, to be rewarded by securer and more intimate grasp of the author's sense. Self-restraint, a skilful economy of means, *ascêsis*,[24] that too has a beauty of its own; and for the reader supposed, there will be an aesthetic satisfaction in that frugal closeness of style which makes the most of a word, in the exaction from every sentence of a precise relief, in the just spacing out of words to thought, in the logically filled space connected always with the delightful sense of difficulty overcome.

Different classes of persons, at different times, make, of course, very various demands upon literature. Still, scholars, I suppose, and not only scholars, but all disinterested lovers of books, will always look to it, as to all other fine art, for a refuge, a sort of cloistral refuge, from a certain vulgarity in the actual world. A perfect poem like *Lycidas*, a perfect fiction like *Esmond*,[25] the perfect handling of a theory like Newman's *Idea of a University*,[26] has for them something of the uses of a religious "retreat." Here, then, with a view to the central need of a select few, those "men of a finer thread" who have formed and maintain the literary ideal, everything, every component element will have undergone exact trial, and, above all, there will be no uncharacteristic or tarnished or vulgar decoration, permissible ornament being for the most part structural, or necessary. As the painter in his picture, so the artist in his book, aims at the production by honorable artifice of a peculiar atmosphere. "The artist," says Schiller,[27] "may be known rather by what he *omits*;" and in literature, too, the true artist may be best recognized by his tact of omission. For to the grave reader words too are grave; and the ornamental word, the figure, the accessory form or color or reference, is rarely content to die to thought precisely at the right moment, but will inevitably linger awhile, stirring a long "brain-wave" behind it of perhaps quite alien associations.

Just there, it may be, is the detrimental tendency of the sort of scholarly attentiveness of mind I am recommending. But the true artist allows for it. He will remember that, as the very word ornament indicates what is in itself non-essential, so the "one beauty" of all literary style is of its very essence, and independent, in prose and verse alike, of all removable decoration; that it may exist in its fullest luster, as in Flaubert's[28] *Madame Bovary*, for instance, or in Stendhal's[29] *Le Rouge et Le Noir*, in a composition utterly unadorned, with hardly a single suggestion of visibly beautiful things. Parallel, allusion, the allusive way generally, the flowers in the garden:—he knows the narcotic force of these upon the negligent intelligence to which any *diversion*, literally, is welcome, any vagrant intruder, because one can go wandering away with it from the immediate subject. Jealous, if he have a really quickening motive within, of all that does not hold directly to that, of the facile, the otiose, he will never depart from the strictly pedestrian process, unless he gains a ponderable something thereby. Even assured of its congruity, he will still question its serviceableness. Is it worth while, can we afford, to attend to just that, to just that figure or literary reference, just then?—Surplusage! he will dread that, as the runner on his muscles. For in truth all art does but consist in the removal of surplusage, from the last finish of the gem-engraver blowing away the last particle of invisible dust, back to the earliest divination of the finished work to be, lying somewhere, according to Michelangelo's[30] fancy, in the rough-hewn block of stone.

And what applies to figure or flower must be understood of all other accidental or removable ornaments of writing whatever; and not of specific ornament only, but of all that latent color and imagery which language as such carries in it. A lover of words for their own sake, to whom nothing

[23] Cf. Vol. I, p. 353.
[24] exercise, training.
[25] a novel by Thackeray.
[26] Cf. Vol. II, p. 489.
[27] Cf. Vol. II, p. 198.
[28] French novelist (1821-1880).
[29] Pen name of Marie Henri Beyle, French novelist (1783-1842).
[30] Italian sculptor and painter (1475-1564).

about them is unimportant, a minute and constant observer of their physiognomy, he will be on the alert not only for obviously mixed metaphors of course, but for the metaphor that is mixed in all our speech, though a rapid use may involve no cognition of it. Currently recognizing the incident, the color, the physical elements or particles in words like *absorb, consider, extract,* to take the first that occur, he will avail himself of them, as further adding to the resources of expression. The elementary particles of language will be realized as color and light and shade through his scholarly living in the full sense of them. Still opposing the constant degradation of language by those who use it carelessly, he will not treat colored glass as if it were clear; and while half the world is using figure unconsciously, will be fully aware not only of all that latent figurative texture in speech, but of the vague, lazy, half-formed personification—a rhetoric, depressing, and worse than nothing, because it has no really rhetorical motive—which plays so large a part there, and, as in the case of more ostentatious ornament, scrupulously exact of it, from syllable to syllable, its precise value.

So far I have been speaking of certain conditions of the literary art arising out of the medium or material in or upon which it works, the essential qualities of language and its aptitudes for contingent ornamentation, matters which define scholarship as science and good taste respectively. They are both subservient to a more intimate quality of good style: more intimate, as coming nearer to the artist himself. The otiose, the facile, surplusage: why are these abhorrent to the true literary artist, except because, in literary as in all other art, structure is all-important, felt, or painfully missed, everywhere?—that architectural conception of work, which foresees the end in the beginning and never loses sight of it, and in every part is conscious of all the rest, till the last sentence does but, with undiminished vigor, unfold and justify the first—a condition of literary art, which, in contradistinction to another quality of the artist himself, to be spoken of later, I shall call the necessity of *mind* in style.

An acute philosophical writer, the late Dean Mansel[81] (a writer whose works illustrate the literary beauty there may be in closeness, and with obvious repression or economy of a fine rhetorical gift) wrote a book, of fascinating precision in a very obscure subject, to show that all the technical laws of logic are but means of securing, in each and all of its apprehensions, the unity, the strict identity with itself, of the apprehending mind. All the laws of good writing aim at a similar unity or identity of the mind in all the processes by which the word is associated to its import. The term is right, and has its essential beauty, when it becomes, in a manner, what it signifies, as with the names of simple sensations. To give the phrase, the sentence, the structural member, the entire composition, song, or essay, a similar unity with its subject and with itself:—style is in the right way when it tends towards that. All depends upon the original unity, the vital wholeness and identity, of the initiatory apprehension or view. So much is true of all art, which therefore requires always its logic, its comprehensive reason—insight, foresight, retrospect, in simultaneous action—true, most of all, of the literary art, as being of all the arts most closely cognate to the abstract intelligence. Such logical coherency may be evidenced not merely in the lines of composition as a whole, but in the choice of a single word, while it by no means interferes with, but may even prescribe, much variety, in the building of the sentence for instance, or in the manner, argumentative, descriptive, discursive, of this or that part or member of the entire design. The blithe, crisp sentence, decisive as a child's expression of its needs, may alternate with the long-contending, victoriously intricate sentence; the sentence, born with the integrity of a single word, relieving the sort of sentence in which, if you look closely, you can see much contrivance, much adjustment, to bring a highly qualified matter into compass at one view. For the literary architecture, if it is to be rich and expressive, involves not only foresight of the end in the beginning, but also development or growth of design, in the process of execution, with many irregularities, surprises, and after-thoughts; the contingent as well as the necessary being subsumed under the unity of the whole. As truly, to the lack of such architectural design, of a single, almost visual, image, vigorously informing an entire, perhaps very intricate, composition, which shall be austere, ornate, argumentative, fanciful, yet true from first to last to that vision within, may be attributed those weaknesses of conscious or unconscious repetition of word, phrase, motive, or member of the whole matter, indicating, as Flaubert was aware, an original structure in thought not organically complete. With such foresight, the actual conclusion will most often get itself written

[81] Henry Longueville Mansel (1820-71), English philosopher.

out of hand, before, in the more obvious sense, the work is finished. With some strong and leading sense of the world, the tight hold of which secures true *composition* and not mere loose accretion, the literary artist, I suppose, goes on considerably, setting joint to joint, sustained by yet restraining the productive ardor, retracing the negligences of his first sketch, repeating his steps only that he may give the reader a sense of secure and restful progress, readjusting mere assonances even, that they may soothe the reader, or at least not interrupt him on his way; and then, somewhere before the end comes, is burdened, inspired, with his conclusion, and betimes delivered of it, leaving off, not in weariness and because he finds *himself* at an end, but in all the freshness of volition. His work now structurally complete, with all the accumulating effect of secondary shades of meaning, he finishes the whole up to the just proportion of that ante-penultimate conclusion, and all becomes expressive. The house he has built is rather a body he has informed. And so it happens, to its greater credit, that the better interest even of a narrative to be recounted, a story to be told, will often be in its second reading. And though there are instances of great writers who have been no artists, an unconscious tact sometimes directing work in which we may detect, very pleasurably, many of the effects of conscious art, yet one of the greatest pleasures of really good prose literature is in the critical tracing out of that conscious artistic structure, and the pervading sense of it as we read. Yet of poetic literature too; for, in truth, the kind of constructive intelligence here supposed is one of the forms of the imagination.

That is the special function of mind, in style. Mind and soul:—hard to ascertain philosophically, the distinction is real enough practically, for they often interfere, are sometimes in conflict, with each other. Blake,[32] in the last century, is an instance of preponderating soul, embarrassed, at a loss, in an era of ponderating mind. As a quality of style, at all events, soul is a fact, in certain writers—the way they have of absorbing language, of attracting it into the peculiar spirit they are of, with a subtlety which makes the actual result seem like some inexplicable inspiration. By mind, the literary artist reaches us, through static and objective indications of design in his work, legible to all. By soul, he reaches us, somewhat capriciously perhaps, one and not another, through vagrant sympathy and a kind of immediate contact. Mind we cannot choose but approve where we recognize it; soul may repel us, not because we misunderstand it. The way in which theological interests sometimes avail themselves of language is perhaps the best illustration of the force I mean to indicate generally in literature, by the word *soul*. Ardent religious persuasion may exist, may make its way, without finding any equivalent heat in language: or, again, it may enkindle words to various degrees, and when it really takes hold of them doubles its force. Religious history presents many remarkable instances in which, through no mere phrase-worship, an unconscious literary tact has, for the sensitive, laid open a privileged pathway from one to another. "The altar-fire," people say, "has touched those lips!" The Vulgate,[33] the English Bible,[34] the English Prayer-Book, the writings of Swedenborg,[35] the Tracts for the Times:[36]—there, we have instances of widely different and largely diffused phases of religious feeling in operation as soul in style. But something of the same kind acts with similar power in certain writers of quite other than theological literature, on behalf of some wholly personal and peculiar sense of theirs. Most easily illustrated by theological literature, this quality lends to profane writers a kind of religious influence. At their best, these writers become, as we say sometimes, 'prophets'; such character depending on the effect not merely of their matter, but of their matter as allied to, in "electric affinity" with, peculiar form, and working in all cases by an immediate sympathetic contact, on which account it is that it may be called soul, as opposed to mind, in style. And this too is a faculty of choosing and rejecting what is congruous or otherwise, with a drift towards unity—unity of atmosphere here, as there of design—soul securing color (or perfume, might we say?) as mind secures form, the latter being essentially finite, the former vague or infinite, as the influence of a living person is practically infinite. There are some to whom nothing has any real interest, or real meaning, except as operative in a given person; and it is they who best appreciate the quality of soul in literary art. They seem to know a *person*, in a book, and make way by intuition: yet, although they thus enjoy the completeness of a

[32] Cf. Vol. II, p. 74.

[33] The Latin translation of the Bible by St. Jerome at the end of the fourth century.

[34] Cf. Vol. I, p. 346.

[35] Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), Swedish mystic and philosopher.

[36] A series of tracts written in the 1830's at Oxford on problems of the English Church.

personal information, it is still a characteristic of soul, in this sense of the word, that it does but suggest what can never be uttered, not as being different from, or more obscure than, what actually gets said, but as containing that plenary substance of which there is only one phase or facet in what is there expressed.

If all high things have their martyrs, Gustave Flaubert[37] might perhaps rank as the martyr of literary style. In his printed correspondence, a curious series of letters, written in his twenty-fifth year, records what seems to have been his one other passion—a series of letters which, with its fine casuistries, its firmly repressed anguish, its tone of harmonious gray, and the sense of disillusion in which the whole matter ends, might have been, a few slight changes supposed, one of his own fictions. Writing to Madame X. certainly he does display, by "taking thought" mainly, by constant and delicate pondering, as in his love for literature, a heart really moved, but still more, and as the pledge of that emotion, a loyalty to his work. Madame X., too, is a literary artist, and the best gifts he can send her are precepts of perfection in art, counsels for the effectual pursuit of that better love. In his love-letters it is the pains and pleasures of art he insists on, its solaces: he communicates secrets, reproves, encourages, with a view to that. Whether the lady was dissatisfied with such divided or indirect service, the reader is not enabled to see; but sees that, on Flaubert's part at least, a living person could be no rival of what was, from first to last, his leading passion, a somewhat solitary and exclusive one.

"I must scold you," he writes, "for one thing, which shocks, scandalizes me, the small concern, namely, you show for art just now. As regards glory be it so: there, I approve. But for art!—the one thing in life that is good and real—can you compare with it an earthly love?—prefer the adoration of a relative beauty to the *cultus* of the true beauty? Well! I tell you the truth. That is the one thing good in me: the one thing I have, to me estimable. For yourself, you blend with the beautiful a heap of alien things, the useful, the agreeable, what not?—

"The only way not to be unhappy is to shut yourself up in art, and count everything else as nothing. Pride takes the place of all beside when it is established on a large basis. Work! God wills it. That, it seems to me, is clear.—

"I am reading over again the *Aeneid*, certain verses of which I repeat to myself to satiety. There are phrases there which stay in one's head, by which I find myself beset, as with those musical airs which are forever returning, and cause you pain, you love them so much. I observe that I no longer laugh much, and am no longer depressed. I am ripe. You talk of my serenity, and envy me. It may well surprise you. Sick, irritated, the prey a thousand times a day of cruel pain, I continue my labor like a true working-man, who, with sleeves turned up, in the sweat of his brow, beats away at his anvil, never troubling himself whether it rains or blows, for hail or thunder. I was not like that formerly. The change has taken place naturally, though my will has counted for something in the matter.—

"Those who write in good style are sometimes accused of a neglect of ideas, and of the moral end, as if the end of the physician were something else than healing, of the painter than painting—as if the end of art were not, before all else, the beautiful."

What, then, did Flaubert understand by beauty, in the art he pursued with so much fervor, with so much self-command? Let us hear a sympathetic commentator:—

"Possessed of an absolute belief that there exists but one way of expressing one thing, one word to call it by, one adjective to qualify, one verb to animate it, he gave himself to superhuman labor for the discovery, in every phrase, of that word, that verb, that epithet. In this way, he believed in some mysterious harmony of expression, and when a true word seemed to him to lack euphony still went on seeking another, with invincible patience, certain that he had not yet got hold of the *unique* word. . . . A thousand preoccupations would beset him at the same moment, always with this desperate certitude fixed in his spirit: Among all the expressions in the world, all forms and turns of expression, there is but *one*—one form, one mode—to express what I want to say."

The one word for the one thing, the one thought, amid the multitude of words, terms, that might just do: the problem of style was there!—the unique word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, essay, or song, absolutely proper to the single mental presentation or vision within. In that perfect justice, over and above the many contingent and removable beauties with which beautiful style may charm us, but which it can exist without, independent of them yet dexterously availing itself of them, omnipresent in good work, in function

[37] French novelist (1821-1880).

at every point, from single epithets to the rhythm of a whole book, lay the specific, indispensable, very intellectual, beauty of literature, the possibility of which constitutes it a fine art.

One seems to detect the influence of a philosophic idea there, the idea of a natural economy, of some preëxistent adaptation, between a relative, somewhere in the world of thought, and its correlative, somewhere in the world of language—both alike, rather, somewhere in the mind of the artist, desiderative, expectant, inventive—meeting each other with the readiness of "soul and body reunited," in Blake's rapturous design; and, in fact, Flaubert was fond of giving his theory philosophical expression.—

"There are no beautiful thoughts," he would say, "without beautiful forms, and conversely. As it is impossible to extract from a physical body the qualities which really constitute it—color, extension, and the like—without reducing it to a hollow abstraction, in a word, without destroying it; just so it is impossible to detach the form from the idea, for the idea only exists by virtue of the form."

All the recognized flowers, the removable ornaments of literature (including harmony and ease in reading aloud, very carefully considered by him) counted certainly; for these too are part of the actual value of what one says. But still, after all, with Flaubert, the search, the unwearied research, was not for the smooth, or winsome, or forcible word, as such, as with false Ciceronians, but quite simply and honestly for the word's adjustment to its meaning. The first condition of this must be, of course, to know yourself, to have ascertained your own sense exactly. Then, if we suppose an artist, he says to the reader,—I want you to see precisely what I see. Into the mind sensitive to "form," a flood of random sounds, colors, incidents, is ever penetrating from the world without, to become, by sympathetic selection, a part of its very structure, and, in turn, the visible vesture and expression of that other world it sees so steadily within, nay, already with a partial conformity thereto, to be refined, enlarged, corrected, at a hundred points; and it is just there, just at those doubtful points that the function of style, as tact or taste, intervenes. The unique term will come more quickly to one than another, at one time than another, according also to the kind of matter in question. Quickness and slowness, ease and closeness alike, have nothing to do with the artistic character of the true word found at last. As there is a charm of ease, so there is also a special charm in the signs of discovery, of effort and contention towards a due end, as so often with Flaubert himself —in the style which has been pliant, as only obstinate, durable metal can be, to the inherent perplexities and recusancy of a certain difficult thought.

If Flaubert had not told us, perhaps we should never have guessed how tardy and painful his own procedure really was, and after reading his confession may think that his almost endless hesitation had much to do with diseased nerves. Often, perhaps, the felicity supposed will be the product of a happier, a more exuberant nature than Flaubert's. Aggravated, certainly, by a morbid physical condition, that anxiety in "seeking the phrase," which gathered all the other small *ennuis* of a really quiet existence into a kind of battle, was connected with his lifelong contention against facile poetry, facile art—art, facile and flimsy; and what constitutes the true artist is not the slowness or quickness of the process, but the absolute success of the result. As with those laborers in the parable, the prize is independent of the mere length of the actual day's work. "You talk," he writes, odd, trying lover, to Madame X.—

"You talk of the exclusiveness of my literary tastes. That might have enabled you to divine what kind of a person I am in the matter of love. I grow so hard to please as a literary artist, that I am driven to despair. I shall end by not writing another line."

"Happy," he cries, in a moment of discouragement at that patient labor, which for him, certainly, was the condition of a great success.—

"Happy those who have no doubts of themselves! who lengthen out, as the pen runs on, all that flows forth from their brains. As for me, I hesitate, I disappoint myself, turn around upon myself in despite: my taste is augmented in proportion as my natural vigor decreases, and I afflict my soul over some dubious word out of all proportion to the pleasure I get from a whole page of good writing. One would have to live two centuries to attain a true idea of any matter whatever. What Buffon said is a big blasphemy: genius is not long-continued patience. Still, there is some truth in the statement, and more than people think, especially as regards our own day. Art! art! art! bitter deception! phantom that glows with light, only to lead one on to destruction."

Again—

"I am growing so peevish about my writing. I

am like a man whose ear is true but who plays falsely on the violin: his fingers refuse to reproduce precisely those sounds of which he has the inward sense. Then the tears come rolling down from the poor scraper's eyes and the bow falls from his hand."

Coming slowly or quickly, when it comes, as it came with so much labor of mind, but also with so much luster, to Gustave Flaubert, this discovery of the word will be, like all artistic success and felicity, incapable of strict analysis: effect of an intuitive condition of mind, it must be recognized by like intuition on the part of the reader, and a sort of immediate sense. In every one of those masterly sentences of Flaubert there was, below all mere contrivance, shaping and afterthought, by some happy instantaneous concourse of the various faculties of the mind with each other, the exact apprehension of what was *needed* to carry the meaning. And that it fits with absolute justice will be a judgment of immediate sense in the appreciative reader. We all feel this in what may be called inspired translation. Well! all language involves translation from inward to outward. In literature, as in all forms of art, there are the absolute and the merely relative or accessory beauties; and precisely in that exact proportion of the term to its purpose is the absolute beauty of style, prose or verse. All the good qualities, the beauties, of verse also, are such, only as precise expression.

In the highest as in the lowliest literature, then, the one indispensable beauty is, after all, truth:—truth to bare fact in the latter, as to some personal sense of fact, diverted somewhat from men's ordinary sense of it, in the former; truth there as accuracy, truth here as expression, that finest and most intimate form of truth, the *vraie vérité*.[38] And what an eclectic principle this really is! employing for its one sole purpose—that absolute accordance of expression to idea—all other literary beauties and excellences whatever: how many kinds of style it covers, explains, justifies, and at the same time safeguards! Scott's facility, Flaubert's deeply pondered evocation of "the phrase," are equally good art. Say what you have to say, what you have a will to say, in the simplest, the most direct and exact manner possible, with no surplusage:—there, is the justification of the sentence so fortunately born, "entire, smooth, and round," that it needs no punctuation, and also (that is the point!) of the most elaborate period, if it be right in its elaboration. Here is the office of ornament: here also the purpose of restraint in ornament. As the exponent of truth, that austerity (the beauty, the function, of which in literature Flaubert understood so well) becomes not the correctness or purism of the mere scholar, but a security against the otiose, a jealous exclusion of what does not really tell towards the pursuit of relief, of life and vigor in the portraiture of one's sense. License again, the making free with rule, if it be indeed, as people fancy, a habit of genius, flinging aside or transforming all that opposes the liberty of beautiful production, will be but faith to one's own meaning. The seeming baldness of *Le Rouge et Le Noir* is nothing in itself; the wild ornament of *Les Misérables*[39] is nothing in itself; and the restraint of Flaubert, amid a real natural opulence, only redoubled beauty—the phrase so large and so precise at the same time, hard as bronze, in service to the more perfect adaptation of words to their matter. Afterthoughts, retouchings, finish, will be of profit only so far as they too really serve to bring out the original, initiative, generative, sense in them.

In this way, according to the well-known saying, "The style is the man," complex or simple, in his individuality, his plenary sense of what he really has to say, his sense of the world; all cautions regarding style arising out of so many natural scruples as to the medium through which alone he can expose that inward sense of things, the purity of this medium, its laws or tricks or refraction: nothing is to be left there which might give conveyance to any matter save that. Style in all its varieties, reserved or opulent, terse, abundant, musical, stimulant, academic, so long as each is really characteristic or expressive, finds thus its justification, the sumptuous good taste of Cicero being as truly the man himself, and not another, justified, yet insured inalienably to him, thereby, as would have been his portrait by Raffaelle,[40] in full consular splendor, on his ivory chair.

A relegation, you may say perhaps—a relegation of style to the subjectivity, the mere caprice, of the individual, which must soon transform it into mannerism. Not so! since there is, under the conditions supposed, for those elements of the man, for every lineament of the vision within, the one word, the one acceptable word, recognizable by the sensitive, by others "who have intelligence" in the matter, as absolutely as ever anything can be in the evanescent and delicate region of human lan-

[38] true truth.

[39] a novel by Victor Hugo (1802-1885).

[40] Italian painter (1483-1520).

guage. The style, the manner, would be the man, not in his unreasoned and really uncharacteristic caprices, involuntary or affected, but in absolutely sincere apprehension of what is most real to him. But let us hear our French guide again.—

"Styles," says Flaubert's commentator, "*Styles,* as so many peculiar molds, each of which bears the mark of a particular writer, who is to pour into it the whole content of his ideas, were no part of his theory. What he believed in was *Style*: that is to say, a certain absolute and unique manner of expressing a thing, in all its intensity and color. For him the *form* was the work itself. As in living creatures, the blood, nourishing the body, determines its very contour and external aspect, just so, to his mind, the *matter*, the basis, in a work of art, imposed necessarily the unique, the just expression, the measure, the rhythm—the *form* in all its characteristics."

If the style be the man, in all the color and intensity of a veritable apprehension, it will be in a real sense "impersonal."

I said, thinking of books like Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, that prose literature was the characteristic art of the nineteenth century, as others, thinking of its triumphs since the youth of Bach, have assigned that place to music. Music and prose literature are, in one sense, the opposite terms of art; the art of literature presenting to the imagination, through the intelligence, a range of interests, as free and various as those which music presents to it through sense. And, certainly the tendency of what has been here said is to bring literature too under those conditions, by conformity to which music takes rank as the typically perfect art. If music be the ideal of all art whatever, precisely because in music it is impossible to distinguish the form from the substance or matter, the subject from the expression, then, literature, by finding its specific excellence in the absolute correspondence of the term to its import, will be but fulfilling the condition of all artistic quality in things everywhere, of all good art.

Good art, but not necessarily great art; the distinction between great art and good art depending immediately, as regards literature at all events, not on its form, but on the matter. Thackeray's *Esmond*, surely, is greater art than *Vanity Fair*, by the greater dignity of its interests. It is on the quality of the matter it informs or controls, its compass, its variety, its alliance to great ends, or the depth of the note of revolt, or the largeness of hope in it, that the greatness of literary art depends, as *The Divine Comedy, Paradise Lost, Les Misérables, The English Bible,* are great art. Given the conditions I have tried to explain as constituting good art;—then, if it be devoted further to the increase of men's happiness, to the redemption of the oppressed, or the enlargement of our sympathies with each other, or to such presentment of new or old truth about ourselves and our relation to the world as may ennoble and fortify us in our sojourn here, or immediately, as with Dante, to the glory of God, it will be also great art; if, over and above those qualities I summed up as mind and soul—that color and mystic perfume, and that reasonable structure, it has something of the soul of humanity in it, and finds its logical, its architectural place, in the great structure of human life. (1888)

Oscar Wilde

(1854-1900)

It is only recently that critics have dared to assign to Oscar Wilde the place among distinguished English authors which is rightfully his. Many histories published in the last few decades, indeed, make no mention of him. Now that the cloud of scandal which has obscured his name has been banished by the kindly breath of time, he is coming once more into his deserved inheritance. During his lifetime he rose like the brightest of meteors to the height of that fame he dearly loved, until catastrophe overtook him and prudery made his very name unmentionable among the sanctimonious.

He was born in Dublin on October 15, 1854, and given a surprising array of names: Oscar O'Flahertie Fingal Wills Wilde. Though he may be deemed fortunate in having as parents a celebrated author as mother and a brilliant physician as father, his fate might have been less disastrous in a more commonplace home. For Lady Wilde was a highly artificial woman who lived in an unwholesome, unbalanced atmosphere, and did nothing to inculcate either fortitude or balanced judgment in her son. He attended Trinity College in his native city for a while; then, in 1874, he entered Magdalen College, Oxford, where he was soon a brilliant student in the classics. In 1878 he won the Newdigate Prize for his poem, *Ravenna.* He became one of the most devoted of disciples to Walter Pater (cf. *above*), whose philosophy of estheticism he decided to propagate and elaborate. At Oxford his essential characteristics were fairly evident. Wilde was a highly social being, loved popularity even if it took the shape of notoriety, and he had already learned that the affectations which he delighted to cultivate were bound to attract notice. He had been gifted, too, with a scintillating wit, and his association with the painter Whistler, a master of impertinent epigram, quickly taught him how to be impudent and shocking with finesse.

After taking his B.A. he went to London, assuming the role of "Professor of Aesthetics," and became associated in the public mind as the leader of the movement which W. S. Gilbert satirized in *Patience* (cf. p. 770). In 1881 he issued a volume of *Poems* elegantly bound, whose contents were largely imitative of various models. But his personal reputation was already so well in the ascendant that he was invited to lecture in the United States the next year. His tour was an enormous triumph, and he returned to England a celebrated wit. In 1884 he married. Four years later appeared his book of fairy tales, *The Happy Prince* (1888). In 1890 he issued his brilliant series of critical essays, *Intentions.* His well-known novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), was the product of his admiration for the French *Décadents,* but is highly original and daring in execution.

He had made several unlucky efforts in the drama when, in 1892, he achieved dazzling success with the "problem" comedy, *Lady Windermere's Fan. Salomé,* of the same year, was written in French and later translated by Lord Alfred Douglas. He followed up his new fame with several plays, the most remarkable of which is *The Importance of Being Earnest* (cf. *below*), which he composed in 1895. To a stage that had long been expiring under the weight of sentimentality and melodrama, Wilde restored the sparkle and banter of the best English tradition. There is no other play between it and Sheridan's dramas worthy of mention in the same breath.

But the year of his greatest triumph proved to be the year of his fall. He was convicted of homosexual immorality in 1895 and imprisoned in Reading Gaol for two years. Prison for a man of his temper was worse than death, even though from his experience there came the material for his best poem, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (cf. *below*), his most intensely sincere creation. He came out of prison full of good purposes, but he was already broken. Hounded everywhere by the self-righteous, he went to Paris, where, to deaden the pain of his recollections, he drank to excess. He died there in November 1900, and lies buried in the cemetery of Père Lachaise. After his death, *De Profundis,* a portion of his autobiography, was published (1905).

Wilde's greatest gift was his incomparable wit, perhaps the best in English letters. Often his seemingly irrelevant paradoxes are the product of sound observation. He had a fine facility in writing, and his style is everywhere light, racy, and graceful. It is likely that he has done more to open up the artistic horizons for the readers of our century than any other man of his times, for his lightness of touch has a universal appeal.

His works have been reprinted in innumerable editions. The completest and most sympathetic account of his career will be found in F. Winwar's *Oscar Wilde and the Yellow Nineties* (1940). F. Harris's biography (1920) is eminently readable but not always dependable. Critical studies will be found in H. Jackson's *The Eighteen Nineties* (1913), A. Symons's *A Study of Oscar Wilde* (1930), and O. Burdett's *The Beardsley Period* (1925).

The Importance of Being Earnest

Characters

JOHN WORTHING, J.P.
ALGERNON MONCRIEFF
REV. CANON CHASUBLE, D.D.
MERRIMAN (*Butler*)
LANE (*Manservant*)
LADY BRACKNELL
HON. GWENDOLEN FAIRFAX
CECILY CARDEW
MISS PRISM (*Governess*)

THE SCENES OF THE PLAY

ACT I. Algernon Moncrieff's Flat in Half-Moon Street, W.
ACT II. The Garden at the Manor House, Woolton.
ACT III. Drawing-room of the Manor House, Woolton.

Time—The Present.
Place—London.

ACT I

SCENE:—*Morning-room in Algernon's flat in Half-Moon Street. The room is luxuriously and artistically furnished. The sound of a piano is heard in the adjoining room.*

LANE *is arranging afternoon tea on the table, and after the music has ceased,* ALGERNON *enters.*

ALGER. Did you hear what I was playing, Lane?

LANE. I didn't think it polite to listen, sir.

ALGER. I'm sorry for that, for your sake. I don't play accurately—anyone can play accurately—but I play with wonderful expression. As far as the piano is concerned, sentiment is my forte. I keep science for Life.

LANE. Yes, sir.

ALGER. And, speaking of the science of Life, have you got the cucumber sandwiches cut for Lady Bracknell?

LANE. Yes, sir. [*Hands them on a salver.*]

ALGER. [*inspects them, takes two, and sits down on the sofa*]. Oh! . . . by the way, Lane, I see from your book that on Thursday night, when Lord Shoreman and Mr. Worthing were dining with me, eight bottles of champagne are entered as having been consumed.

LANE. Yes, sir; eight bottles and a pint.

ALGER. Why is that at a bachelor's establishment the servants invariably drink the champagne? I ask merely for information.

LANE. I attribute it to the superior quality of the wine, sir. I have often observed that in married households the champagne is rarely of a first-rate brand.

ALGER. Good heavens! Is marriage so demoralizing as that?

LANE. I believe it *is* a very pleasant state, sir. I have had very little experience of it myself up to the present. I have only been married once. That was in consequence of a misunderstanding between myself and a young person.

ALGER. [*languidly*]. I don't know that I am much interested in your family life, Lane.

LANE. No, sir; it is not a very interesting subject. I never think of it myself.

ALGER. Very natural, I am sure. That will do, Lane, thank you.

LANE. Thank you, sir. [LANE *goes out.*

ALGER. Lane's views on marriage seem somewhat lax. Really, if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem, as a class, to have absolutely no sense of moral responsibility.

Enter LANE.

LANE. Mr. Ernest Worthing.

Enter JACK. LANE *goes out.*

ALGER. How are you, my dear Ernest? What brings you up to town?

JACK. Oh, pleasure, pleasure! What else should bring one anywhere? Eating as usual, I see, Algy!

ALGER. [*stiffly*]. I believe it is customary in good society to take some slight refreshment at five o'clock. Where have you been since last Thursday?

JACK [*sitting down on the sofa*]. In the country.

ALGER. What on earth do you do there?

JACK [*pulling off his gloves*]. When one is in

town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people. It is excessively boring.

ALGER. And who are the people you amuse?

JACK [*airily*]. Oh, neighbors, neighbors.

ALGER. Got nice neighbors in your part of Shropshire?

JACK. Perfectly horrid! Never speak to one of them.

ALGER. How immensely you must amuse them! [*Goes over and takes sandwich.*] By the way, Shropshire is your county, is it not?

JACK. Eh? Shropshire? Yes, of course. Hallo! Why all these cups? Why cucumber sandwiches? Why such reckless extravagance in one so young? Who is coming to tea?

ALGER. Oh! merely Aunt Augusta and Gwendolen.

JACK. How perfectly delightful!

ALGER. Yes, that is all very well; but I am afraid Aunt Augusta won't quite approve of your being here.

JACK. May I ask why?

ALGER. My dear fellow, the way you flirt with Gwendolen is perfectly disgraceful. It is almost as bad as the way Gwendolen flirts with you.

JACK. I am in love with Gwendolen. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her.

ALGER. I thought you had come up for pleasure? . . . I call that business.

JACK. How utterly unromantic you are!

ALGER. I really don't see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty. If ever I get married, I'll certainly try to forget the fact.

JACK. I have no doubt about that, dear Algy. The Divorce Court was specially invented for people whose memories are so curiously constituted.

ALGER. Oh! there is no use speculating on that subject. Divorces are made in Heaven—[JACK *puts out his hand to take a sandwich.* ALGERNON *at once interferes.*] Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches. They are ordered specially for Aunt Augusta. [*Takes one and eats it.*]

JACK. Well, you have been eating them all the time.

ALGER. That is quite a different matter. She is my aunt. [*Takes plate from below.*] Have some bread and butter. The bread and butter is for Gwendolen. Gwendolen is devoted to bread and butter.

JACK [*advancing to table and helping himself*]. And very good bread and butter it is, too.

ALGER. Well, my dear fellow, you need not eat as if you were going to eat it all. You behave as if you were married to her already. You are not married to her already, and I don't think you ever will be.

JACK. Why on earth do you say that?

ALGER. Well, in the first place girls never marry the men they flirt with. Girls don't think it right.

JACK. Oh, that is nonsense!

ALGER. It isn't. It is a great truth. It accounts for the extraordinary number of bachelors that one sees all over the place. In the second place, I don't give my consent.

JACK. Your consent!

ALGER. My dear fellow, Gwendolen is my first cousin. And before I allow you to marry her, you will have to clear up the whole question of Cecily. [*Rings bell.*]

JACK. Cecily! What on earth do you mean? What do you mean, Algy, by Cecily? I don't know anyone of the name of Cecily.

Enter LANE.

ALGER. Bring me that cigarette case Mr. Worthing left in the smoking-room the last time he dined here.

LANE. Yes, sir. [LANE *goes out.*

JACK. Do you mean to say you have had my cigarette case all this time? I wish to goodness you had let me know. I have been writing frantic letters to Scotland Yard about it. I was very nearly offering a large reward.

ALGER. Well, I wish you would offer one. I happen to be more than usually hard up.

JACK. There is no good offering a large reward now that the thing is found.

Enter LANE *with the cigarette case on a salver.* ALGERNON *takes it at once.* LANE *goes out.*

ALGER. I think that is rather mean of you, Ernest, I must say. [*Opens case and examines it.*] However, it makes no matter, for, now that I look at the inscription, I find that the thing isn't yours after all.

JACK. Of course it's mine. [*Moving to him.*] You have seen me with it a hundred times, and you have no right whatsoever to read what is written inside. It is a very ungentlemanly thing to read a private cigarette case.

ALGER. Oh! it is absurd to have a hard-and-fast rule about what one should read and what one shouldn't. More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read.

JACK. I am quite aware of the fact, and I don't propose to discuss modern culture. It isn't the sort of thing one should talk of in private. I simply want my cigarette case back.

ALGER. Yes; but this isn't your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from someone of the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know anyone by that name.

JACK. Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be my aunt.

ALGER. Your aunt!

JACK. Yes. Charming old lady she is, too. Lives at Tunbridge Wells. Just give it back to me, Algy.

ALGER. [*retreating to back of sofa*]. But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells? [*Reading.*] "From little Cecily with her fondest love."

JACK [*moving to sofa and kneeling upon it*]. My dear fellow, what on earth is there in that? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd! For heaven's sake give me back my cigarette case. [*Follows* ALGY *round the room.*]

ALGER. Yes. But why does your aunt call you her uncle? "From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack." There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out. Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest.

JACK. It isn't Ernest; it's Jack.

ALGER. You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them. [*Taking it from case.*] "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany." I'll keep this as a proof your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to anyone else. [*Puts the card in his pocket.*]

JACK. Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country.

ALGER. Yes, but that does not account for the fact that your small Aunt Cecily, who lives at Tunbridge Wells, calls you her dear uncle. Come, old boy, you had much better have the thing out at once.

JACK. My dear Algy, you talk exactly as if you were a dentist. It is very vulgar to talk like a dentist when one isn't a dentist. It produces a false impression.

ALGER. Well, that is exactly what dentists always do. Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist; and I am quite sure of it now.

JACK. Bunburyist? What on earth do you mean by a Bunburyist?

ALGER. I'll reveal to you the meaning of that incomparable expression as soon as you are kind enough to inform me why you are Ernest in town and Jack in the country.

JACK. Well, produce my cigarette case first.

ALGER. Here it is. [*Hands cigarette case.*] Now produce your explanation, and pray make it improbable. [*Sits on sofa.*]

JACK. My dear fellow, there is nothing improbable about my explanation at all. In fact it's perfectly ordinary. Old Mr. Thomas Cardew, who adopted me when I was a boy, made me in his will guardian to his grand-daughter, Miss Cecily Cardew. Cecily, who addresses me her uncle from motives of respect that you could not possibly appreciate, lives at my place in the country under the charge of her admirable governess, Miss Prism.

ALGER. Where is that place in the country, by the way?

JACK. That is nothing to you, dear boy. You are not going to be invited. . . . I may tell you candidly that the place is not in Shropshire.

ALGER. I suspected that, my dear fellow! I have Bunburyed all over Shropshire on two separate occasions. Now, go on. Why are you Ernest in town and Jack in the country?

JACK. My dear Algy, I don't know whether you will be able to understand my real motives. You are hardly serious enough. When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects. It's one's duty to do so. And as a high moral tone can hardly be said to conduce very much to either one's health or one's happiness, in order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in the Albany, and gets

into the most dreadful scrapes. That, my dear Algy, is the whole truth pure and simple.

ALGER. The truth is rarely pure and never simple. Modern life would be very tedious if it were either, and modern literature a complete impossibility!

JACK. That wouldn't be at all a bad thing.

ALGER. Literary criticism is not your forte, my dear fellow. Don't try it. You should leave that to people who haven't been at a University. They do it so well in the daily papers. What you really are is a Bunburyist. I was quite right in saying you were a Bunburyist. You are one of the most advanced Bunburyists I know.

JACK. What on earth do you mean?

ALGER. You have invented a very useful young brother called Ernest, in order that you may be able to come up to town as often as you like. I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable. If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be able to dine with you at Willis's tonight, for I have been really engaged to Aunt Augusta for more than a week.

JACK. I haven't asked you to dine with me anywhere tonight.

ALGER. I know. You are absurdly careless about sending out invitations. It is very foolish of you. Nothing annoys people so much as not receiving invitations.

JACK. You had much better dine with your Aunt Augusta.

ALGER. I haven't the smallest intention of doing anything of the kind. To begin with, I dined there on Monday, and once a week is quite enough to dine with one's own relations. In the second place, whenever I do dine there I am always treated as a member of the family, and sent down with either no woman at all, or two. In the third place, I know perfectly well whom she will place me next to, tonight. She will place me next Mary Farquhar, who always flirts with her own husband across the dinner-table. That is not very pleasant. Indeed, it is not even decent . . . and that sort of thing is enormously on the increase. The amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous. It looks so bad. It is simply washing one's clean linen in public. Besides, now that I know you to be a confirmed Bunburyist, I naturally want to talk to you about Bunburying. I want to tell you the rules.

JACK. I'm not a Bunburyist at all. If Gwendolen accepts me, I am going to kill my brother, indeed I think I'll kill him in any case. Cecily is a little too much interested in him. It is rather a bore. So I am going to get rid of Ernest. And I strongly advise you to do the same with Mr. . . . with your invalid friend who has the absurd name.

ALGER. Nothing will induce me to part with Bunbury, and if you ever get married, which seems to me extremely problematic, you will be very glad to know Bunbury. A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it.

JACK. That is nonsense. If I marry a charming girl like Gwendolen, and she is the only girl I ever saw in my life that I would marry, I certainly won't want to know Bunbury.

ALGER. Then your wife will. You don't seem to realize, that in married life three is company and two is none.

JACK [*sententiously*]. That, my dear young friend, is the theory that the corrupt French Drama has been propounding for the last fifty years.

ALGER. Yes; and that the happy English home has proved in half the time.

JACK. For heaven's sake, don't try to be cynical. It's perfectly easy to be cynical.

ALGER. My dear fellow, it isn't easy to be anything now-a-days. There's such a lot of beastly competition about. [*The sound of an electric bell is heard.*] Ah! that must be Aunt Augusta. Only relatives, or creditors, ever ring in that Wagnerian manner. Now, if I get her out of the way for ten minutes, so that you can have an opportunity for proposing to Gwendolen, may I dine with you tonight at Willis's?

JACK. I suppose so, if you want to.

ALGER. Yes, but you must be serious about it. I hate people who are not serious about meals. It is so shallow of them.

Enter LANE.

LANE. Lady Bracknell and Miss Fairfax. [ALGERNON *goes forward to meet them. Enter* LADY BRACKNELL *and* GWENDOLEN.]

LADY B. Good afternoon, dear Algernon, I hope you are behaving very well.

ALGER. I'm feeling very well, Aunt Augusta.

LADY B. That's not quite the same thing. In fact the two things rarely go together. [*Sees* JACK *and bows to him with icy coldness.*]

ALGER. [*to* GWENDOLEN]. Dear me, you are smart!

GWEND. I am always smart! Aren't I, Mr. Worthing?

JACK. You're quite perfect, Miss Fairfax.

GWEND. Oh! I hope I am not that. It would leave no room for developments and I intend to develop in *many directions.* [GWENDOLEN *and* JACK *sit down together in the corner.*]

LADY B. I'm sorry if we are a little late, Algernon, but I was obliged to call on dear Lady Harbury. I hadn't been there since her poor husband's death. I never saw a woman so altered; she looks quite twenty years younger. And now I'll have a cup of tea, and one of those nice cucumber sandwiches you promised me.

ALGER. Certainly, Aunt Augusta. [*Goes over to tea-table.*]

LADY B. Won't you come and sit here, Gwendolen?

GWEND. Thanks, mamma, I'm quite comfortable where I am.

ALGER. [*picking up empty plate in horror*]. Good heavens! Lane! Why are there no cucumber sandwiches? I ordered them specially.

LANE [*gravely*]. There were no cucumbers in the market this morning, sir. I went down twice.

ALGER. No cucumbers!

LANE. No, sir. Not even for ready money.

ALGER. That will do, Lane, thank you.

LANE. Thank you, sir. [*Goes out.*

ALGER. I am greatly distressed, Aunt Augusta, about there being no cucumbers, not even for ready money.

LADY B. It really makes no matter, Algernon. I had some crumpets with Lady Harbury, who seems to me to be living entirely for pleasure now.

ALGER. I hear her hair has turned quite gold from grief.

LADY B. It certainly has changed its color. From what cause I, of course, cannot say. [ALGERNON *crosses and hands tea.*] Thank you. I've quite a treat for you tonight, Algernon. I am going to send you down with Mary Farquhar. She is such a nice woman, and so attentive to her husband. It's delightful to watch them.

ALGER. I am afraid, Aunt Augusta, I shall have to give up the pleasure of dining with you tonight after all.

LADY B. [*frowning*]. I hope not, Algernon. It would put my table completely out. Your uncle would have to dine upstairs. Fortunately he is accustomed to that.

ALGER. It is a great bore, and, I need hardly say, a terrible disappointment to me, but the fact is I have just had a telegram to say that my poor friend Bunbury is very ill again. [*Exchanges glances with* JACK.] They seem to think I should be with him.

LADY B. It is very strange. This Mr. Bunbury seems to suffer from curiously bad health.

ALGER. Yes; poor Bunbury is a dreadful invalid.

LADY B. Well, I must say, Algernon, that I think it is high time that Mr. Bunbury made up his mind whether he was going to live or to die. This shilly-shallying with the question is absurd. Nor do I in any way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others. Health is the primary duty of life. I am always telling that to your poor uncle, but he never seems to take much notice . . . as far as any improvement in his ailments goes. I should be obliged if you would ask Mr. Bunbury, from me, to be kind enough not to have a relapse on Saturday, for I rely on you to arrange my music for me. It is my last reception, and one wants something that will encourage conversation, particularly at the end of the season when everyone has practically said whatever they had to say, which, in most cases, was probably not much.

ALGER. I'll speak to Bunbury, Aunt Augusta, if he is still conscious, and I think I can promise you he'll be all right by Saturday. Of course, the music is a great difficulty. You see, if one plays good music, people don't listen, and if one plays bad music, people don't talk. But I'll run over the program I've drawn out, if you will kindly come into the next room for a moment.

LADY B. Thank you, Algernon. It is very thoughtful of you. [*Rising, and following* ALGERNON.] I'm sure the program will be delightful, after a few expurgations. French songs I cannot possibly allow. People always seem to think that they are improper, and either look shocked, which is vulgar, or laugh, which is worse. But German sounds a thoroughly respectable language, and indeed, I believe is so. Gwendolen, you will accompany me.

GWEND. Certainly, mamma. [LADY BRACKNELL *and* ALGERNON *go into the music-room,* GWENDOLEN *remains behind.*]

JACK. Charming day it has been, Miss Fairfax.

GWEND. Pray don't talk to me about the weather, Mr. Worthing. Whenever people talk to me about the weather, I always feel quite certain that they mean something else. And that makes me so nervous.

JACK. I do mean something else.

GWEND. I thought so. In fact, I am never wrong.

JACK. And I would like to be allowed to take advantage of Lady Bracknell's temporary absence. . . .

GWEND. I would certainly advise you to do so. Mamma has a way of coming back suddenly into

a room that I have often had to speak to her about.

JACK [*nervously*]. Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you I have admired you more than any girl . . . I have ever met since . . . I met you.

GWEND. Yes, I am quite aware of the fact. And I often wish that in public, at any rate, you had been more demonstrative. For me you have always had an irresistible fascination. Even before I met you I was far from indifferent to you. [JACK *looks at her in amazement.*] We live, as I hope you know, Mr. Worthing, in an age of ideals. The fact is constantly mentioned in the more expensive monthly magazines, and has reached the provincial pulpits I am told; and my ideal has always been to love someone of the name of Ernest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence. The moment Algernon first mentioned to me that he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I was destined to love you.

JACK. You really love me, Gwendolen?

GWEND. Passionately!

JACK. Darling! You don't know how happy you've made me.

GWEND. My own Ernest!

JACK. But you don't really mean to say that you couldn't love me if my name wasn't Ernest?

GWEND. But your name is Ernest.

JACK. Yes, I know it is. But supposing it was something else? Do you mean to say you couldn't love me, then?

GWEND. [*glibly*]. Ah! that is clearly a metaphysical speculation, and like most metaphysical speculations has very little reference at all to the actual facts of real life, as we know them.

JACK. Personally, darling, to speak quite candidly, I don't much care about the name of Ernest . . . I don't think the name suits me at all.

GWEND. It suits you perfectly. It is a divine name. It has a music of its own. It produces vibrations.

JACK. Well, really, Gwendolen, I must say that I think there are lots of other much nicer names. I think Jack, for instance, a charming name.

GWEND. Jack? . . . No, there is very little music in the name Jack, if any at all, indeed. It does not thrill. It produces absolutely no vibrations . . . I have known several Jacks, and they all, without exception, were more than usually plain. Besides, Jack is a notorious domesticity for John! And I pity any woman who is married to a man called John. She would probably never be allowed to know the entrancing pleasure of a single moment's solitude. The only really safe name is Ernest.

JACK. Gwendolen, I must get christened at once—I mean we must get married at once. There is no time to be lost.

GWEND. Married, Mr. Worthing?

JACK [*astounded*]. Well . . . surely. You know that I love you, and you led me to believe, Miss Fairfax, that you were not absolutely indifferent to me.

GWEND. I adore you. But you haven't proposed to me yet. Nothing has been said at all about marriage. The subject has not even been touched on.

JACK. Well . . . may I propose to you now?

GWEND. I think it would be an admirable opportunity. And to spare you any possible disappointment, Mr. Worthing, I think it only fair to tell you quite frankly beforehand that I am fully determined to accept you.

JACK. Gwendolen!

GWEND. Yes, Mr. Worthing, what have you got to say to me?

JACK. You know what I have got to say to you.

GWEND. Yes, but you don't say it.

JACK. Gwendolen, will you marry me? [*Goes down on his knees.*]

GWEND. Of course, I will, darling. How long you have been about it! I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose.

JACK. My own one, I have never loved anyone in the world but you.

GWEND. Yes, but men often propose for practice. I know my brother Gerald does. All my girl-friends tell me so. What wonderfully blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite, blue. I hope you will always look at me just like that, especially when there are other people present.

Enter LADY BRACKNELL.

LADY B. Mr. Worthing! Rise, sir, from this semi-recumbent posture. It is most indecorous.

GWEND. Mamma! [*He tries to rise; she restrains him.*] I must beg you to retire. This is no place for you. Besides, Mr. Worthing has not quite finished yet.

LADY B. Finished what, may I ask?

GWEND. I am engaged to Mr. Worthing, mamma. [*They rise together.*]

LADY B. Pardon me, you are not engaged to anyone. When you do become engaged to someone, I, or your father, should his health permit him, will inform you of the fact. An engagement should come on a young girl as a surprise; pleasant or un-

pleasant, as the case may be. It is hardly a matter that she could be allowed to arrange for herself. . . . And now I have a few questions to put to you, Mr. Worthing. While I am making these inquiries, you, Gwendolen, will wait for me below in the carriage.

GWEND. [*reproachfully*]. Mamma!

LADY B. In the carriage, Gwendolen! [GWENDOLEN *goes to the door. She and* JACK *blow kisses to each other behind Lady Bracknell's back.* LADY BRACKNELL *looks vaguely about as if she could not understand what the noise was. Finally turns round.*] Gwendolen, the carriage!

GWEND. Yes, mamma. [*Goes out, looking back at* JACK.]

LADY B. [*sitting down*]. You can take a seat, Mr. Worthing. [*Looks in her pocket for note-book and pencil.*]

JACK. Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

LADY B. [*pencil and note-book in hand*]. I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

JACK. Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

LADY B. I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

JACK. Twenty-nine.

LADY B. A very good age to be married at. I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to be married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

JACK [*after some hesitation*]. I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

LADY B. I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square. What is your income?

JACK. Between seven and eight thousand a year.

LADY B. [*makes a note in her book*]. In land, or in *investments*?

JACK. In investments, chiefly.

LADY B. That is satisfactory. What between the duties expected of one during one's life-time, and the duties exacted from one after one's death, land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That's all that can be said about land.

JACK. I have a country house with some land, of course, attached to it, about fifteen hundred acres, I believe; but I don't depend on that for my real income. In fact, as far as I can make out, the poachers are the only people who make anything out of it.

LADY B. A country house! How many bedrooms? Well, that point can be cleared up afterwards. You have a town house, I hope? A girl with a simple, unspoiled nature, like Gwendolen, could hardly be expected to reside in the country.

JACK. Well, I own a house in Belgrave Square, but it is let by the year to Lady Bloxham. Of course, I can get it back whenever I like, at six months' notice.

LADY B. Lady Bloxham? I don't know her.

JACK. Oh, she goes about very little. She is a lady considerably advanced in years.

LADY B. Ah, now-a-days that is no guarantee of respectability of character. What number in Belgrave Square?

JACK. 149.

LADY B. [*shaking her head*]. The unfashionable side. I thought there was something. However, that could easily be altered.

JACK. Do you mean the fashion, or the side?

LADY B. [*sternly*]. Both, if necessary, I presume. What are your politics?

JACK. Well, I am afraid I really have none. I am a Liberal Unionist.

LADY B. Oh, they count as Tories. They dine with us. Or come in the evening, at any rate. Now to minor matters. Are your parents living?

JACK. I have lost both my parents.

LADY B. Both? . . . That seems like carelessness. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?

JACK. I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me. . . . I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was . . . well, I was found.

LADY B. Found!

JACK. The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old

gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

LADY B. Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

JACK [*gravely*]. In a hand-bag.

LADY B. A hand-bag?

JACK [*very seriously*]. Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a hand-bag—a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it—an ordinary hand-bag, in fact.

LADY B. In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?

JACK. In the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.

LADY B. The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

JACK. Yes. The Brighton line.

LADY B. The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate, bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that remind one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the hand-bag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion—has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now—but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognized position in good society.

JACK. May I ask you then what you would advise me to do? I need hardly say I would do anything in the world to insure Gwendolen's happiness.

LADY B. I would strongly advise you, Mr. Worthing, to try and acquire some relations as soon as possible, and to make a definite effort to produce at any rate one parent, of either sex, before the season is quite over.

JACK. Well, I don't see how I could possibly manage to do that. I can produce the hand-bag at any moment. It is in my dressing-room at home. I really think that should satisfy you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY B. Me, sir! What has it to do with me? You can hardly imagine that I and Lord Bracknell would dream of allowing our only daughter—a girl brought up with the utmost of care—to marry into a cloak-room, and form an alliance with a parcel? Good morning, Mr. Worthing! [LADY BRACKNELL *sweeps out in majestic indignation.*]

JACK. Good morning! [ALGERNON, *from the other room, strikes up the Wedding March.* JACK *looks perfectly furious, and goes to the door.*] For heaven's sake don't play that ghastly tune, Algy! How idiotic you are! [*The music stops, and* ALGERNON *enters cheerily.*]

ALGER. Didn't it go off all right, old boy? You don't mean to say Gwendolen refused you? I know it is a way she has. She is always refusing people. I think it is most ill-natured of her.

JACK. Oh, Gwendolen is as right as a trivet. As far as she is concerned, we are engaged. Her mother is perfectly unbearable. Never met such a Gorgon . . . I don't really know what a Gorgon is like, but I am quite sure that Lady Bracknell is one. In any case, she is a monster, without being a myth, which is rather unfair. . . . I beg your pardon, Algy, I suppose I shouldn't talk about your own aunt in that way before you.

ALGER. My dear boy, I love hearing my relations abused. It is the only thing that makes me put up with them at all. Relations are simply a tedious pack of people who haven't got the remotest knowledge of how to live, nor the smallest instinct about when to die.

JACK. Oh, that is nonsense!

ALGER. It isn't!

JACK. Well, I won't argue about the matter. You always want to argue about things.

ALGER. That is exactly what things were originally made for.

JACK. Upon my word, if I thought that, I'd shoot myself. . . . [*A pause.*] You don't think there is any chance of Gwendolen becoming like her mother in about a hundred and fifty years, do you, Algy?

ALGER. All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his.

JACK. Is that clever?

ALGER. It is perfectly phrased! and quite as true as any observation in civilized life should be.

JACK. I am sick to death of cleverness. Everybody is clever now-a-days. You can't go anywhere without meeting clever people. The thing has become an absolute public nuisance. I wish to goodness we had a few fools left.

ALGER. We have.

JACK. I should extremely like to meet them. What do they talk about?

ALGER. The fools? Oh! about the clever people, of course.

JACK. What fools!

ALGER. By the way, did you tell Gwendolen the truth about your being Ernest in town, and Jack in the country?

JACK [*in a very patronizing manner*]. My dear fellow, the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice sweet refined girl. What extraordinary ideas you have about the way to behave to a woman!

ALGER. The only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her, if she is pretty, and to someone else if she is plain.

JACK. Oh, that is nonsense.

ALGER. What about your brother? What about the profligate Ernest?

JACK. Oh, before the end of the week I shall have got rid of him. I'll say he died in Paris of apoplexy. Lots of people die of apoplexy, quite suddenly, don't they?

ALGER. Yes, but it's hereditary, my dear fellow. It's a sort of thing that runs in families. You had much better say a severe chill.

JACK. You are sure a severe chill isn't hereditary, or anything of that kind?

ALGER. Of course it isn't!

JACK. Very well, then. My poor brother Ernest is carried off suddenly in Paris, by a severe chill. That gets rid of him.

ALGER. But I thought you said that . . . Miss Cardew was a little too much interested in your poor brother Ernest? Won't she feel his loss a good deal?

JACK. Oh, that is all right. Cecily is not a silly, romantic girl, I am glad to say. She has a capital appetite, goes for long walks, and pays no attention at all to her lessons.

ALGER. I would rather like to see Cecily.

JACK. I will take very good care you never do. She is excessively pretty, and she is only just eighteen.

ALGER. Have you told Gwendolen yet that you have an excessively pretty ward who is only just eighteen?

JACK. Oh! one doesn't blurt these things out to people. Cecily and Gwendolen are perfectly certain to be extremely great friends. I'll bet you anything you like that half an hour after they have met, they will be calling each other sister.

ALGER. Women only do that when they have called each other a lot of other things first. Now, my dear boy, if we want to get a good table at Willis's, we really must go and dress. Do you know it is nearly seven?

JACK. Oh! it always is nearly seven.

ALGER. Well, I'm hungry.

JACK. I never knew you when you weren't. . . .

ALGER. What shall we do after dinner? Go to a theater?

JACK. Oh, no! I loathe listening.

ALGER. Well, let us go to the Club?

JACK. Oh, no! I hate talking.

ALGER. Well, we might trot round to the Empire at ten?

JACK. Oh, no! I can't bear looking at things. It is so silly.

ALGER. Well, what shall we do?

JACK. Nothing!

ALGER. It is awfully hard work doing nothing. However, I don't mind hard work where there is no definite object of any kind.

Enter LANE.

LANE. Miss Fairfax.

Enter GWENDOLEN. LANE *goes out.*

ALGER. Gwendolen, upon my word!

GWEND. Algy, kindly turn your back. I have something very particular to say to Mr. Worthing.

ALGER. Really, Gwendolen, I don't think I can allow this at all.

GWEND. Algy, you always adopt a strictly immoral attitude towards life. You are not quite old enough to do that. [ALGERNON *retires to the fireplace.*]

JACK. My own darling.

GWEND. Ernest, we may never be married. From the expression on mamma's face I fear we never shall. Few parents now-a-days pay any regard to what their children say to them. The old-fashioned respect for the young is fast dying out. Whatever influence I ever had over mamma, I lost at the age of three. But although she may prevent us from becoming man and wife, and I may marry someone else, and marry often, nothing that she can possibly do can alter my eternal devotion to you.

JACK. Dear Gwendolen!

GWEND. The story of your romantic origin, as related to me by mamma with unpleasing comments, has naturally stirred the deeper fibers of my nature. Your Christian name has an irresistible fascination. The simplicity of your character makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me.

Your town address at the Albany I have. What is your address in the country?

JACK. The Manor House, Woolton, Hertfordshire. [ALGERNON, *who has been carefully listening, smiles to himself, and writes the address on his shirt-cuff. Then picks up the Railway Guide.*]

GWEND. There is a good postal service, I suppose? It may be necessary to do something desperate. That, of course, will require serious consideration. I will communicate with you daily.

JACK. My own one!

GWEND. How long do you remain in town?

JACK. Till Monday.

GWEND. Good! Algy, you may turn round now.

ALGER. Thanks, I've turned round already.

GWEND. You may also ring the bell.

JACK. You will let me see you to your carriage, my own darling?

GWEND. Certainly.

JACK [*to* LANE, *who now enters*]. I will see Miss Fairfax out.

LANE. Yes, sir. [JACK *and* GWENDOLEN *go off.* LANE *presents several letters on a salver to* ALGERNON. *It is to be surmised that they are bills, as* ALGERNON, *after looking at the envelopes, tears them up.*]

ALGER. A glass of sherry, Lane.

LANE. Yes, sir.

ALGER. Tomorrow, Lane, I'm going Bunburying.

LANE. Yes, sir.

ALGER. I shall probably not be back till Monday. You can put up my dress clothes, my smoking jacket and all the Bunbury suits. . . .

LANE. Yes, sir. [*Handing sherry.*]

ALGER. I hope tomorrow will be a fine day, Lane.

LANE. It never is, sir.

ALGER. Lane, you're a perfect pessimist.

LANE. I do my best to give satisfaction, sir.

Enter JACK. LANE *goes off.*

JACK. There's a sensible, intellectual girl! The only girl I ever cared for in my life. [ALGERNON *is laughing immoderately.*] What on earth are you so amused at?

ALGER. Oh, I'm a little anxious about poor Bunbury, that's all.

JACK. If you don't take care, your friend Bunbury will get you into a serious scrape some day.

ALGER. I love scrapes. They are the only things that are never serious.

JACK. Oh, that's nonsense, Algy. You never talk anything but nonsense.

ALGER. Nobody ever does. [JACK *looks indignantly at him, and leaves the room.* ALGERNON *lights a cigarette, reads his shirt-cuff, and smiles.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE:—*Garden at the Manor House. A flight of gray stone steps leads up to the house. The garden, an old-fashioned one, full of roses. Time of year, July. Basket chairs, and a table covered with books, are set under a large yew tree.*

MISS PRISM *discovered seated at the table.* CECILY *is at the back watering flowers.*

PRISM [*calling*]. Cecily, Cecily! Surely such a utilitarian occupation as the watering of flowers is rather Moulton's duty than yours? Especially at a moment when intellectual pleasures await you. Your German grammar is on the table. Pray open it at page fifteen. We will repeat yesterday's lesson.

CECIL. [*coming over very slowly*]. But I don't like German. It isn't at all a becoming language. I know perfectly well that I look quite plain after my German lesson.

PRISM. Child, you know how anxious your guardian is that you should improve yourself in every way. He laid particular stress on your German, as he was leaving for town yesterday. Indeed, he always lays stress on your German when he is leaving for town.

CECIL. Dear Uncle Jack is so very serious! Sometimes he is so serious that I think he cannot be quite well.

PRISM [*drawing herself up*]. Your guardian enjoys the best of health, and his gravity of demeanor is especially to be commended in one so comparatively young as he is. I know no one who has a higher sense of duty and responsibility.

CECIL. I suppose that is why he often looks a little bored when we three are together.

PRISM. Cecily! I am surprised at you. Mr. Worthing has many troubles in his life. Idle merriment and triviality would be out of place in his conversation. You must remember his constant anxiety about that unfortunate young man, his brother.

CECIL. I wish Uncle Jack would allow that unfortunate young man, his brother, to come down here sometimes. We might have a good influence over him, Miss Prism. I am sure you certainly

would. You know German, and geology, and things of that kind influence a man very much. [CECILY *begins to write in her diary.*]

PRISM [*shaking her head*]. I do not think that even I could produce any effect on a character that according to his own brother's admission is irretrievably weak and vacillating. Indeed, I am not sure that I would desire to reclaim him. I am not in favor of this modern mania for turning bad people into good people at a moment's notice. As a man sows so let him reap. You must put away your diary, Cecily. I really don't see why you should keep a diary at all.

CECIL. I keep a diary in order to enter the wonderful secrets of my life. If I didn't write them down I should probably forget all about them.

PRISM. Memory, my dear Cecily, is the diary that we all carry about with us.

CECIL. Yes, but it usually chronicles the things that have never happened, and couldn't possibly have happened. I believe that Memory is responsible for nearly all the three-volume novels that Mudie sends us.

PRISM. Do not speak slightingly of the three-volume novel, Cecily. I wrote one myself in earlier days.

CECIL. Did you really, Miss Prism? How wonderfully clever you are! I hope it did not end happily? I don't like novels that end happily. They depress me so much.

PRISM. The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means.

CECIL. I suppose so. But it seems very unfair. And was your novel ever published?

PRISM. Alas! no. The manuscript unfortunately was abandoned. I use the word in the sense of lost or mislaid. To your work, child, these speculations are profitless.

CECIL. [*smiling*]. But I see dear Dr. Chasuble coming up through the garden.

PRISM [*rising and advancing*]. Dr. Chasuble! This is indeed a pleasure.

Enter CANON CHASUBLE.

CHAS. And how are we this morning? Miss Prism, you are, I trust, well?

CECIL. Miss Prism has just been complaining of a slight headache. I think it would do her so much good to have a short stroll with you in the park, Dr. Chasuble.

PRISM. Cecily, I have not mentioned anything about a headache.

CECIL. No, dear Miss Prism, I know that, but I felt instinctively that you had a headache. Indeed I was thinking about that, and not about my German lesson, when the Rector came in.

CHAS. I hope, Cecily, you are not inattentive.

CECIL. Oh, I am afraid I am.

CHAS. That is strange. Were I fortunate enough to be Miss Prism's pupil, I would hang upon her lips. [MISS PRISM *glares.*] I spoke metaphorically.—My metaphor was drawn from bees. Ahem! Mr. Worthing, I suppose, has not returned from town yet?

PRISM. We do not expect him till Monday afternoon.

CHAS. Ah, yes, he usually likes to spend his Sunday in London. He is not one of those whose sole aim is enjoyment, as, by all accounts, that unfortunate young man his brother seems to be. But I must not disturb Egeria and her pupil any longer.

PRISM. Egeria? My name is Lætitia, Doctor.

CHAS. [*bowing*]. A classical allusion merely, drawn from the Pagan authors. I shall see you both no doubt at Evensong?

PRISM. I think, dear Doctor, I will have a stroll with you. I find I have a headache after all, and a walk might do it good.

CHAS. With pleasure, Miss Prism, with pleasure. We might go as far as the schools and back.

PRISM. That would be delightful. Cecily, you will read your Political Economy in my absence. The chapter on the Fall of the Rupee you may omit. It is somewhat too sensational. Even these metallic problems have their melodramatic side. [*Goes down the garden with* DR. CHASUBLE.]

CECIL. [*picks up books and throws them back on table*]. Horrid Political Economy! Horrid Geography! Horrid, horrid German!

Enter MERRIMAN *with a card on a salver.*

MERRI. Mr. Ernest Worthing has just driven over from the station. He has brought his luggage with him.

CECIL. [*takes the card and reads it*]. "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany, W." Uncle Jack's brother! Did you tell him Mr. Worthing was in town?

MERRI. Yes, Miss. He seemed very much disappointed. I mentioned that you and Miss Prism were in the garden. He said he was anxious to speak to you privately for a moment.

CECIL. Ask Mr. Ernest Worthing to come here.

I suppose you had better talk to the housekeeper about a room for him.

MERRI. Yes, Miss. [MERRIMAN *goes off.*

CECIL. I have never met any really wicked person before. I feel rather frightened. I am so afraid he will look just like everyone else. [*Enter* ALGERNON, *very gay and debonair.*] He does!

ALGER. [*raising his hat*]. You are my little cousin Cecily, I'm sure.

CECIL. You are under some strange mistake. I am not little. In fact, I believe I am more than usually tall for my age. [ALGERNON *is rather taken aback.*] But I am your cousin Cecily. You, I see from your card, are Uncle Jack's brother, my cousin Ernest, my wicked cousin Ernest.

ALGER. Oh! I am not really wicked at all, cousin Cecily. You mustn't think that I am wicked.

CECIL. If you are not, then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner. I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy.

ALGER. [*looks at her in amazement*]. Oh! of course I have been rather reckless.

CECIL. I am glad to hear it.

ALGER. In fact, now you mention the subject, I have been very bad in my own small way.

CECIL. I don't think you should be so proud of that, though I am sure it must have been very pleasant.

ALGER. It is much pleasanter being here with you.

CECIL. I can't understand how you are here at all. Uncle Jack won't be back till Monday afternoon.

ALGER. That is a great disappointment. I am obliged to go up by the first train on Monday morning. I have a business appointment that I am anxious . . . to miss.

CECIL. Couldn't you miss it anywhere but in London?

ALGER. No; the appointment is in London.

CECIL. Well, I know, of course, how important it is not to keep a business engagement, if one wants to retain any sense of the beauty of life, but still I think you had better wait till Uncle Jack arrives. I know he wants to speak to you about your emigrating.

ALGER. About my what?

CECIL. Your emigrating. He has gone up to buy your outfit.

ALGER. I certainly wouldn't let Jack buy my outfit. He has no taste in neckties at all.

CECIL. I don't think you will require neckties. Uncle Jack is sending you to Australia.

ALGER. Australia! I'd sooner die.

CECIL. Well, he said at dinner on Wednesday night, that you would have to choose between this world, the next world, and Australia.

ALGER. Oh, well! The accounts I have received of Australia and the next world are not particularly encouraging. This world is good enough for me, cousin Cecily.

CECIL. Yes, but are you good enough for it?

ALGER. I'm afraid I'm not that. That is why I want you to reform me. You might make that your mission, if you don't mind, cousin Cecily.

CECIL. I'm afraid I've no time, this afternoon.

ALGER. Well, would you mind my reforming myself this afternoon?

CECIL. It is rather Quixotic of you. But I think you should try.

ALGER. I will. I feel better already.

CECIL. You are looking a little worse.

ALGER. That is because I am hungry.

CECIL. How thoughtless of me. I should have remembered that when one is going to lead an entirely new life, one requires regular and wholesome meals. Won't you come in?

ALGER. Thank you. Might I have a button-hole first? I never have any appetite unless I have a button-hole first.

CECIL. A Maréchal Niel? [*Picks up scissors.*]

ALGER. No, I'd sooner have a pink rose.

CECIL. Why? [*Cuts a flower.*]

ALGER. Because you are like a pink rose, cousin Cecily.

CECIL. I don't think it can be right for you to talk to me like that. Miss Prism never says such things to me.

ALGER. Then Miss Prism is a short-sighted old lady. [CECILY *puts the rose in his button-hole.*] You are the prettiest girl I ever saw.

CECIL. Miss Prism says that all good looks are a snare.

ALGER. They are a snare that every sensible man would like to be caught in.

CECIL. Oh! I don't think I would care to catch a sensible man. I shouldn't know what to talk to him about.

They pass into the house. MISS PRISM *and* DR. CHASUBLE *return.*

PRISM. You are too much alone, dear Dr. Chasuble. You should get married. A misanthrope I can understand—a womanthrope, never!

CHAS. [*with a scholar's shudder*]. Believe me, I do not deserve so neologistic a phrase. The precept as well as the practice of the Primitive Church was distinctly against matrimony.

PRISM [*sententiously*]. That is obviously the reason why the Primitive Church has not lasted up to the present day. And you do not seem to realize, dear Doctor, that by persistently remaining single, a man converts himself into a permanent public temptation. Men should be more careful; this very celibacy leads weaker vessels astray.

CHAS. But is a man not equally attractive when married?

PRISM. No married man is ever attractive except to his wife.

CHAS. And often, I've been told, not even to her.

PRISM. That depends on the intellectual sympathies of the woman. Maturity can always be depended on. Ripeness can be trusted. Young women are green. [DR. CHASUBLE *starts.*] I spoke horticulturally. My metaphor was drawn from fruits. But where is Cecily?

CHAS. Perhaps she followed us to the schools.

Enter JACK *slowly from the back of the garden. He is dressed in the deepest mourning, with crape hat-band and black gloves.*

PRISM. Mr. Worthing!

CHAS. Mr. Worthing?

PRISM. This is indeed a surprise. We did not look for you till Monday afternoon.

JACK [*shakes Miss Prism's hand in a tragic manner*]. I have returned sooner than I expected. Dr. Chasuble, I hope you are well?

CHAS. Dear Mr. Worthing, I trust this garb of woe does not betoken some terrible calamity?

JACK. My brother.

PRISM. More shameful debts and extravagance?

CHAS. Still leading his life of pleasure?

JACK [*shaking his head*]. Dead!

CHAS. Your brother Ernest dead?

JACK. Quite dead.

PRISM. What a lesson for him! I trust he will profit by it.

CHAS. Mr. Worthing, I offer you my sincere condolence. You have at least the consolation of knowing that you were always the most generous and forgiving of brothers.

JACK. Poor Ernest! He had many faults, but it is a sad, sad blow.

CHAS. Very sad indeed. Were you with him at the end?

JACK. No. He died abroad; in Paris, in fact. I had a telegram last night from the manager of the Grand Hotel.

CHAS. Was the cause of death mentioned?

JACK. A severe chill, it seems.

PRISM. As a man sows, so shall he reap.

CHAS. [*raising his hand*]. Charity, dear Miss Prism, charity! None of us are perfect. I myself am peculiarly susceptible to draughts. Will the interment take place here?

JACK. No. He seems to have expressed a desire to be buried in Paris.

CHAS. In Paris! [*Shakes his head.*] I fear that hardly points to any very serious state of mind at the last. You would no doubt wish me to make some slight allusion to this tragic domestic affliction next Sunday. [JACK *presses his hand convulsively.*] My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful, or, as in the present case, distressing. [*All sigh.*] I have preached it at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation and festal days. The last time I delivered it was in the Cathedral, as a charity sermon on behalf of the Society for the Prevention of Discontent among the Upper Orders. The Bishop, who was present, was much struck by some of the analogies I drew.

JACK. Ah! that reminds me, you mentioned christenings I think, Dr. Chasuble? I suppose you know how to christen all right? [DR. CHASUBLE *looks astounded.*] I mean, of course, you are continually christening, aren't you?

PRISM. It is, I regret to say, one of the Rector's most constant duties in this parish. I have often spoken to the poorer classes on the subject. But they don't seem to know what thrift is.

CHAS. But is there any particular infant in whom you are interested, Mr. Worthing? Your brother was, I believe, unmarried, was he not?

JACK. Oh, yes.

PRISM [*bitterly*]. People who live entirely for pleasure usually are.

JACK. But it is not for any child, dear Doctor. I am very fond of children. No! the fact is, I would like to be christened myself, this afternoon, if you have nothing better to do.

CHAS. But surely, Mr. Worthing, you have been christened already?

JACK. I don't remember anything about it.

CHAS. But have you any grave doubts on the subject?

JACK. I certainly intend to have. Of course, I

don't know if the thing would bother you in any way, or if you think I am a little too old now.

CHAS. Not at all. The sprinkling, and, indeed, the immersion of adults is a perfectly canonical practice.

JACK. Immersion!

CHAS. You need have no apprehensions. Sprinkling is all that is necessary, or indeed I think advisable. Our weather is so changeable. At what hour would you wish the ceremony performed?

JACK. Oh, I might trot around about five if that would suit you.

CHAS. Perfectly, perfectly! In fact I have two similar ceremonies to perform at that time. A case of twins that occurred recently in one of the outlying cottages on your own estate. Poor Jenkins the carter, a most hard-working man.

JACK. Oh! I don't see much fun in being christened along with other babies. It would be childish. Would half-past five do?

CHAS. Admirably! Admirably! [*Takes out watch.*] And now, dear Mr. Worthing, I will not intrude any longer into a house of sorrow. I would merely beg you not to be too much bowed down by grief. What seem to us bitter trials at the moment are often blessings in disguise.

PRISM. This seems to me a blessing of an extremely obvious kind.

Enter CECILY *from the house.*

CECIL. Uncle Jack! Oh, I am pleased to see you back. But what horrid clothes you have on! Do go and change them.

PRISM. Cecily!

CHAS. My child! my child! [CECILY *goes towards* JACK; *he kisses her brow in a melancholy manner.*]

CECIL. What is the matter, Uncle Jack? Do look happy! You look as if you had a toothache, and I have such a surprise for you. Who do you think is in the dining-room? Your brother!

JACK. Who?

CECIL. Your brother Ernest. He arrived about half an hour ago.

JACK. What nonsense! I haven't got a brother.

CECIL. Oh, don't say that. However badly he may have behaved to you in the past he is still your brother. You couldn't be so heartless as to disown him. I'll tell him to come out. And you will shake hands with him, won't you, Uncle Jack? [*Runs back into the house.*]

CHAS. These are very joyful tidings.

PRISM. After we had all been resigned to his loss, his sudden return seems to me peculiarly distressing.

JACK. My brother is in the dining-room? I don't know what it all means. I think it is perfectly absurd.

Enter ALGERNON *and* CECILY *hand in hand. They come slowly up to* JACK.

JACK. Good heavens! [*Motions* ALGERNON *away.*]

ALGER. Brother John, I have come down from town to tell you that I am very sorry for all the trouble I have given you, and that I intend to lead a better life in the future. [JACK *glares at him and does not take his hand.*]

CECIL. Uncle Jack, you are not going to refuse your own brother's hand?

JACK. Nothing will induce me to take his hand. I think his coming down here disgraceful. He knows perfectly well why.

CECIL. Uncle Jack, do be nice. There is some good in everyone. Ernest has just been telling me about his poor invalid friend, Mr. Bunbury, whom he goes to visit so often. And surely there must be much good in one who is kind to an invalid, and leaves the pleasures of London to sit by a bed of pain.

JACK. Oh, he has been talking about Bunbury, has he?

CECIL. Yes, he has told me all about poor Mr. Bunbury, and his terrible state of health.

JACK. Bunbury! Well, I won't have him talk to you about Bunbury or about anything else. It is enough to drive one perfectly frantic.

ALGER. Of course I admit that the faults were all on my side. But I must say that I think that Brother John's coldness to me is peculiarly painful. I expected a more enthusiastic welcome, especially considering it is the first time I have come here.

CECIL. Uncle Jack, if you don't shake hands with Ernest, I will never forgive you.

JACK. Never forgive me?

CECIL. Never, never, never!

JACK. Well, this is the last time I shall ever do it. [*Shakes hands with* ALGERNON *and glares.*]

CHAS. It's pleasant, is it not, to see so perfect a reconciliation? I think we might leave the two brothers together.

PRISM. Cecily, you will come with us.

CECIL. Certainly, Miss Prism. My little task of reconciliation is over.

CHAS. You have done a beautiful action today, dear child.

PRISM. We must not be premature in our judgments.

CECIL. I feel very happy. [*They all go off.*

JACK. You young scoundrel Algy, you must get out of this place as soon as possible. I don't allow any Bunburying here.

Enter MERRIMAN.

MERRI. I have put Mr. Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir. I suppose that is all right?

JACK. What?

MERRI. Mr. Ernest's luggage, sir. I have unpacked it and put it in the room next to your own.

JACK. His luggage?

MERRI. Yes, sir. Three portmanteaus, a dressing-case, two hat-boxes, and a large luncheon-basket.

ALGER. I am afraid I can't stay more than a week this time.

JACK. Merriman, order the dog-cart at once. Mr. Ernest has been suddenly called back to town.

MERRI. Yes, sir. [*Goes back into the house.*]

ALGER. What a fearful liar you are, Jack. I have not been called back to town at all.

JACK. Yes, you have.

ALGER. I haven't heard anyone call me.

JACK. Your duty as a gentleman calls you back.

ALGER. My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasures in the smallest degree.

JACK. I can quite understand that.

ALGER. Well, Cecily is a darling.

JACK. You are not to talk of Miss Cardew like that. I don't like it.

ALGER. Well, I don't like your clothes. You look perfectly ridiculous in them. Why on earth don't you go up and change? It is perfectly childish to be in deep mourning for a man who is actually staying for a whole week with you in your house as a guest. I call it grotesque.

JACK. You are certainly not staying with me for a whole week as a guest or anything else. You have got to leave . . . by the four-five train.

ALGER. I certainly won't leave you so long as you are in mourning. It would be most unfriendly. If I were in mourning you would stay with me, I suppose. I should think it very unkind if you didn't.

JACK. Well, will you go if I change my clothes?

ALGER. Yes, if you are not too long. I never saw anybody take so long to dress, and with such little result.

JACK. Well, at any rate, that is better than being always over-dressed as you are.

ALGER. If I am occasionally a little over-dressed, I make up for it by being always immensely over-educated.

JACK. Your vanity is ridiculous, your conduct an outrage, and your presence in my garden utterly absurd. However, you have got to catch the four-five, and I hope you will have a pleasant journey back to town. This Bunburying, as you call it, has not been a great success for you. [*Goes into the house.*]

ALGER. I think it has been a great success. I'm in love with Cecily and that is everything. [*Enter* CECILY *at the back of the garden. She picks up the can and begins to water the flowers.*] But I must see her before I go, and make arrangements for another Bunbury. Ah, there she is.

CECIL. Oh, I merely came back to water the roses. I thought you were with Uncle Jack.

ALGER. He's gone to order the dog-cart for me.

CECIL. Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?

ALGER. He's going to send me away.

CECIL. Then we have got to part?

ALGER. I am afraid so. It's a very painful parting.

CECIL. It is always painful to part from people whom one has known for a very brief space of time. The absence of old friends one can endure with equanimity. But even a momentary separation from anyone to whom one has just been introduced is almost unbearable.

ALGER. Thank you.

Enter MERRIMAN.

MERRI. The dog-cart is at the door, sir. [ALGERNON *looks appealingly at* CECILY.]

CECIL. It can wait, Merriman . . . for . . . five minutes.

MERRI. Yes, miss. [*Exit* MERRIMAN.

ALGER. I hope, Cecily, I shall not offend you if I state quite frankly and openly that you seem to me to be in every way the visible personification of absolute perfection.

CECIL. I think your frankness does you great credit, Ernest. If you will allow me I will copy your remarks into my diary. [*Goes over to table and begins writing in diary.*]

ALGER. Do you really keep a diary? I'd give anything to look at it. May I?

CECIL. Oh no. [*Puts her hand over it.*] You see, it is simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impressions, and consequently meant for publication. When it appears in volume form

I hope you will order a copy. But pray, Ernest, don't stop. I delight in taking down from dictation. I have reached "absolute perfection." You can go on. I am quite ready for more.

ALGER. [*somewhat taken aback.*] Ahem! Ahem!

CECIL. Oh, don't cough, Ernest. When one is dictating one should speak fluently and not cough. Besides, I don't know how to spell a cough. [*Writes as* ALGERNON *speaks.*]

ALGER. [*speaking very rapidly.*] Cecily, ever since I first looked upon your wonderful and incomparable beauty, I have dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly.

CECIL. I don't think that you should tell me that you love me wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly. Hopelessly doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?

ALGER. Cecily!

Enter MERRIMAN.

MERRI. The dog-cart is waiting, sir.

ALGER. Tell it to come round next week, at the same hour.

MERRI. [*looks at* CECILY, *who makes no sign*]. Yes, sir. [MERRIMAN *retires.*

CECIL. Uncle Jack would be very much annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week, at the same hour.

ALGER. Oh, I don't care about Jack. I don't care for anybody in the whole world but you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you?

CECIL. You silly you! Of course. Why, we have been engaged for the last three months.

ALGER. For the last three months?

CECIL. Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday.

ALGER. But how did we become engaged?

CECIL. Well, ever since dear Uncle Jack first confessed to us that he had a younger brother who was very wicked and bad, you of course have formed the chief topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him after all. I daresay it was foolish of me, but I fell in love with you, Ernest.

ALGER. Darling! And when was the engagement actually settled?

CECIL. On the 14th of February last. Worn out by your entire ignorance of my existence, I determined to end the matter one way or the other and after a long struggle with myself I accepted you under this dear old tree here. The next day I bought this little ring in your name, and this is the little bangle with the true lovers' knot I promised you always to wear.

ALGER. Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

CECIL. Yes, you've wonderfully good taste, Ernest. It's the excuse I've always given for your leading such a bad life. And this is the box in which I keep all your dear letters. [*Kneels at table, opens box, and produces letters tied up with blue ribbon.*]

ALGER. My letters! But my own sweet Cecily, I have never written you any letters.

CECIL. You need hardly remind me of that, Ernest. I remember only too well that I was forced to write your letters for you. I always wrote three times a week, and sometimes oftener.

ALGER. Oh, do let me read them, Cecily.

CECIL. Oh, I couldn't possibly. They would make you far too conceited. [*Replaces box.*] The three you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelled, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little.

ALGER. But was our engagement ever broken off?

CECIL. Of course it was. On the 22nd of last March. You can see the entry if you like. [*Shows diary.*] "Today I broke off my engagement with Ernest. I feel it is better to do so. The weather still continues charming."

ALGER. But why on earth did you break it off? What had I done? I had done nothing at all. Cecily, I am very much hurt indeed to hear you broke it off. Particularly when the weather was so charming.

CECIL. It would hardly have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you before the week was out.

ALGER. [*crossing to her, and kneeling*]. What a perfect angel you are, Cecily.

CECIL. You dear romantic boy. [*He kisses her, she puts her fingers through his hair.*] I hope your hair curls naturally, does it?

ALGER. Yes, darling, with a little help from others.

CECIL. I am so glad.

ALGER. You'll never break off our engagement again, Cecily?

CECIL. I don't think I could break it off now that I have actually met you. Besides, of course, there is the question of your name.

ALGER. Yes, of course. [*Nervously.*]

CECIL. You must not laugh at me, darling, but it

had always been a girlish dream of mine to love someone whose name was Ernest. [ALGERNON *rises,* CECILY *also.*] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest.

ALGER. But, my dear child, do you mean to say you could not love me if I had some other name?

CECIL. But what name?

ALGER. Oh, any name you like—Algernon—for instance. . . .

CECIL. But I don't like the name of Algernon.

ALGER. Well, my own dear, sweet, loving little darling, I really can't see why you should object to the name of Algernon. It is not at all a bad name. In fact, it is rather an aristocratic name. Half of the chaps who get into the Bankruptcy Court are called Algernon. But seriously, Cecily . . . [*Moving to her.*] . . . if my name was Algy, couldn't you love me?

CECIL. [*rising*]. I might respect you, Ernest, I might admire your character, but I fear that I should not be able to give you my undivided attention.

ALGER. Ahem! Cecily! [*Picking up hat.*] Your Rector here is, I suppose, thoroughly experienced in the practice of all the rites and ceremonials of the church?

CECIL. Oh, yes, Dr. Chasuble is a most learned man. He has never written a single book, so you can imagine how much he knows.

ALGER. I must see him at once on a most important christening—I mean on most important business.

CECIL. Oh!

ALGER. I sha'n't be away more than half an hour.

CECIL. Considering that we have been engaged since February the 14th, and that I only met you today for the first time, I think it is rather hard that you should leave me for so long a period as half an hour. Couldn't you make it twenty minutes?

ALGER. I'll be back in no time. [*Kisses her and rushes down the garden.*]

CECIL. What an impetuous boy he is! I like his hair so much. I must enter his proposal in my diary.

Enter MERRIMAN.

MERRI. A Miss Fairfax has just called to see Mr. Worthing. On very important business, Miss Fairfax states.

CECIL. Isn't Mr. Worthing in his library?

MERRI. Mr. Worthing went over in the direction of the Rectory some time ago.

CECIL. Pray ask the lady to come out here; Mr. Worthing is sure to be back soon. And you can bring tea.

MERRI. Yes, miss. [*Goes out.*

CECIL. Miss Fairfax! I suppose one of the many good elderly woman who are associated with Uncle Jack in some of his philanthropic work in London. I don't quite like women who are interested in philanthropic work. I think it is so forward of them.

Enter MERRIMAN.

MERRI. Miss Fairfax.

Enter GWENDOLEN.

[*Exit* MERRIMAN.

CECIL. [*advancing to meet her*]. Pray let me introduce myself to you. My name is Cecily Cardew.

GWEND. Cecily Cardew? [*Moving to her and shaking hands.*] What a very sweet name! Something tells me that we are going to be great friends. I like you already more than I can say. My first impressions of people are never wrong.

CECIL. How nice of you to like me so much after we have known each other such a comparatively short time. Pray sit down.

GWEND. [*still standing up*]. I may call you Cecily, may I not?

CECIL. With pleasure!

GWEND. And you will always call me Gwendolen, won't you?

CECIL. If you wish.

GWEND. Then that is all quite settled, is it not?

CECIL. I hope so. [*A pause. They both sit down together.*]

GWEND. Perhaps this might be a favorable opportunity for my mentioning who I am. My father is Lord Bracknell. You have never heard of papa, I suppose?

CECIL. I don't think so.

GWEND. Outside the family circle, papa, I am glad to say, is entirely unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be the proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive. Cecily, mamma, whose views on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely

short-sighted; it is part of her system; so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?

CECIL. Oh! not at all, Gwendolen. I am very fond of being looked at.

GWEND. [*after examining* CECILY *carefully through a lorgnette*]. You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

CECIL. Oh no, I live here.

GWEND. [*severely*]. Really? Your mother, no doubt, or some female relative of advanced years, resides here also?

CECIL. Oh, no. I have no mother, nor in fact, any relations.

GWEND. Indeed?

CECIL. My dear guardian, with the assistance of Miss Prism, has the arduous task of looking after me.

GWEND. Your guardian?

CECIL. Yes, I am Mr. Worthing's ward.

GWEND. Oh! It is strange he never mentioned to me that he had a ward. How secretive of him! He grows more interesting hourly. I am not sure, however, that the news inspires me with feelings of unmixed delight. [*Rising and going to her.*] I am very fond of you, Cecily; I have liked you ever since I met you! But I am bound to state that now that I know that you are Mr. Worthing's ward, I cannot help expressing a wish you were—well, just a little older than you seem to be—and not quite so very alluring in appearance. In fact, if I may speak candidly—

CECIL. Pray do! I think that whenever one has anything unpleasant to say, one should always be quite candid.

GWEND. Well, to speak with perfect candor, Cecily, I wish that you were fully forty-two, and more than usually plain for your age. Ernest has a strong upright nature. He is the very soul of truth and honor. Disloyalty would be as impossible to him as deception. But even men of the noblest possible moral character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others. Modern, no less than Ancient History, supplies us with many most painful examples of what I refer to. If it were not so, indeed, History would be quite unreadable.

CECIL. I beg your pardon, Gwendolen, did you say Ernest?

GWEND. Yes.

CECIL. Oh, but it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is my guardian. It is his brother—his elder brother.

GWEND. [*sitting down again*]. Ernest never mentioned to me that he had a brother.

CECIL. I am sorry to say they have not been on good terms for a long time.

GWEND. Ah! that accounts for it. And now that I think of it I have never heard any man mention his brother. The subject seems distasteful to most men. Cecily, you have lifted a load from my mind. I was growing almost anxious. It would have been terrible if any cloud had come across a friendship like ours, would it not? Of course you are quite, quite sure that it is not Mr. Ernest Worthing who is your guardian?

CECIL. Quite sure. [*A pause.*] In fact, I am going to be his.

GWEND. [*enquiringly*]. I beg your pardon?

CECIL. [*rather shy and confidingly*]. Dearest Gwendolen, there is no reason why I should make a secret of it to you. Our little county newspaper is sure to chronicle the fact next week. Mr. Ernest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

GWEND. [*quite politely, rising*]. My darling Cecily, I think there must be some slight error. Mr. Ernest Worthing is engaged to me. The announcement will appear in the *Morning Post* on Saturday at the latest.

CECIL. [*very politely, rising*]. I am afraid you must be under some misconception. Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago. [*Shows diary.*]

GWEND. [*examines diary through lorgnette carefully*]. It is certainly very curious, for he asked me to be his wife yesterday afternoon at 5:30. If you would care to verify the incident, pray do so. [*Produces diary of her own.*] I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train. I am so sorry, dear Cecily, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid *I* have the prior claim.

CECIL. It would distress me more than I can tell you, dear Gwendolen, if it caused you any mental or physical anguish, but I feel bound to point out that since Ernest proposed to you he clearly has changed his mind.

GWEND. [*meditatively*]. If the poor fellow has been entrapped into any foolish promise I shall consider it my duty to rescue him at once, and with a firm hand.

CECIL. [*thoughtfully and sadly*]. Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into, I will never reproach him with it after we are married.

GWEND. Do you allude to me, Miss Cardew, as an entanglement? You are presumptuous. On an occasion of this kind it becomes more than a moral

duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure.

CECIL. Do you suggest, Miss Fairfax, that I entrapped Ernest into an engagement? How dare you? This is no time for wearing the shallow mask of manners. When I see a spade I call it a spade.

GWEND. [*satirically*]. I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious that our social spheres have been widely different.

Enter MERRIMAN *followed by the footman. He carries a salver, tablecloth, and plate-stand.* CECILY *is about to retort. The presence of the servants exercises a restraining influence, under which both girls chafe.*

MERRI. Shall I lay tea here as usual, miss?

CECIL. [*sternly, in a calm voice*]. Yes, as usual. [MERRIMAN *begins to clear table and lay cloth. A long pause,* CECILY *and* GWENDOLEN *glare at each other.*]

GWEND. Are there many interesting walks in the vicinity, Miss Cardew?

CECIL. Oh, yes, a great many. From the top of one of the hills quite close one can see five counties.

GWEND. Five counties! I don't think I should like that. I hate crowds.

CECIL. [*sweetly*]. I suppose that is why you live in town? [GWENDOLEN *bites her lip, and beats her foot nervously with her parasol.*]

GWEND. [*looking around*]. Quite a well-kept garden this is, Miss Cardew.

CECIL. So glad you like it, Miss Fairfax.

GWEND. I had no idea there were any flowers in the country.

CECIL. Oh, flowers are as common here, Miss Fairfax, as people are in London.

GWEND. Personally I cannot understand how anybody manages to exist in the country, if anybody who is anybody does. The country always bores me to death.

CECIL. Ah! This is what the newspapers call agricultural depression, is it not? I believe the aristocracy are suffering very much from it just at present. It is almost an epidemic amongst them, I have been told. May I offer you some tea, Miss Fairfax?

GWEND. [*with elaborate politeness*]. Thank you. [*Aside.*] Detestable girl! But I require tea!

CECIL. [*sweetly*]. Sugar?

GWEND. [*superciliously*]. No, thank you. Sugar is not fashionable any more. [CECILY *looks angrily at her, takes up the tongs and puts four lumps of sugar into the cup.*]

CECIL. [*severely*]. Cake or bread and butter?

GWEND. [*in a bored manner*]. Bread and butter, please. Cake is rarely seen at the best houses nowa-days.

CECIL. [*cuts a very large slice of cake, and puts it on the tray*]. Hand that to Miss Fairfax. [MERRIMAN *does so, and goes out with footman.* GWENDOLEN *drinks the tea and makes a grimace. Puts down cup at once, reaches out her hand to the bread and butter, looks at it, and finds it is cake. Rises in indignation.*]

GWEND. You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar and though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you have given me cake. I am known for the gentleness of my disposition, and the extraordinary sweetness of my nature, but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far.

CECIL. [*rising*]. To save my poor, innocent, trusting boy from the machinations of any other girl there are no lengths to which I would not go.

GWEND. From the moment I saw you I distrusted you. I felt that you were false and deceitful. I am never deceived in such matters. My first impressions of people are invariably right.

CECIL. It seems to me, Miss Fairfax, that I am trespassing on your valuable time. No doubt you have many other calls of a similar character to make in the neighborhood.

Enter JACK.

GWEND. [*catching sight of him*] Ernest! My own Ernest!

JACK. Gwendolen! Darling! [*Offers to kiss her.*]

GWEND. [*drawing back*]. A moment! May I ask if you are engaged to be married to this young lady? [*Points to* CECILY.]

JACK [*laughing*]. To dear little Cecily! Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

GWEND. Thank you. You may. [*Offers her cheek.*]

CECIL. [*very sweetly*]. I knew there must be some misunderstanding, Miss Fairfax. The gentleman whose arm is at present around your waist is my dear guardian, Mr. John Worthing.

GWEND. I beg your pardon?

CECIL. This is Uncle Jack.

GWEND. [*receding*]. Jack! Oh!

Enter ALGERNON.

CECIL. Here is Ernest.

ALGER. [*goes straight over to* CECILY *without noticing anyone else*]. My own love! [*Offers to kiss her.*]

CECIL. [*drawing back*]. A moment, Ernest! May I ask you—are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

ALGER. [*looking around*]. To what young lady? Good heavens! Gwendolen!

CECIL. Yes! to good heavens, Gwendolen, I mean to Gwendolen.

ALGER. [*laughing*]. Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

CECIL. Thank you. [*Presenting her cheek to be kissed.*] You may. [ALGERNON *kisses her.*]

GWEND. I felt there was some slight error, Miss Cardew. The gentleman who is now embracing you is my cousin, Mr. Algernon Moncrieff.

CECIL. [*breaking away from* ALGERNON]. Algernon Moncrieff! Oh! [*The two girls move towards each other and put their arms round each other's waists as if for protection.*]

CECIL. Are you called Algernon?

ALGER. I cannot deny it.

CECIL. Oh!

GWEND. Is your name really John?

JACK [*standing rather proudly*]. I could deny it if I liked. I could deny anything if I liked. But my name certainly is John. It has been John for years.

CECIL. [*to* GWENDOLEN]. A gross deception has been practiced on both of us.

GWEND. My poor wounded Cecily!

CECIL. My sweet wronged Gwendolen!

GWEND. [*slowly and seriously*]. You will call me sister, will you not? [*They embrace.* JACK *and* ALGERNON *groan and walk up and down.*]

CECIL. [*rather brightly*]. There is just one question I would like to be allowed to ask my guardian.

GWEND. An admirable idea! Mr. Worthing, there is just one question I would like to be permitted to put to you. Where is your brother Ernest? We are both engaged to be married to your brother Ernest, so it is a matter of some importance to us to know where your brother Ernest is at present.

JACK [*slowly and hesitatingly*]. Gwendolen—Cecily—it is very painful for me to be forced to speak the truth. It is the first time in my life that I have ever been reduced to such a painful position, and I am really quite inexperienced in doing anything of the kind. However I will tell you quite frankly that I have no brother Ernest. I have no brother at all. I never had a brother in my life, and I certainly have not the smallest intention of ever having one in the future.

CECIL. [*surprised*]. No brother at all?

JACK [*cheerily*]. None!

GWEND. [*severely*]. Had you never a brother of any kind?

JACK [*pleasantly*]. Never. Not even of any kind.

GWEND. I am afraid it is quite clear, Cecily, that neither of us is engaged to be married to anyone.

CECIL. It is not a very pleasant position for a young girl suddenly to find herself in. Is it?

GWEND. Let us go into the house. They will hardly venture to come after us there.

CECIL. No, men are so cowardly, aren't they?

[*They retire into the house with scornful looks.*

JACK. This ghastly state of things is what you call Bunburying, I suppose?

ALGER. Yes, and a perfectly wonderful Bunbury it is. The most wonderful Bunbury I have ever had in my life.

JACK. Well, you've no right whatsoever to Bunbury here.

ALGER. That is absurd. One has a right to Bunbury anywhere one chooses. Every serious Bunburyist knows that.

JACK. Serious Bunburyist! Good heavens!

ALGER. Well, one must be serious about something, if one wants to have any amusement in life. I happen to be serious about Bunburying. What on earth you are serious about I haven't the romotest idea. About everything, I should fancy. You have such an absolutely trivial nature.

JACK. Well, the only small satisfaction I have in the whole of this wretched business is that your friend Bunbury is quite exploded. You won't be able to run down to the country quite so often as you used to do, dear Algy. And a very good thing, too.

ALGER. Your brother is a little off color, isn't he, dear Jack? You won't be able to disappear to London quite so frequently as your wicked custom was. And not a bad thing, either.

JACK. As for your conduct towards Miss Cardew, I must say that your taking in a sweet, simple, innocent girl like that is quite inexcusable. To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward.

ALGER. I can see no possible defense at all for your deceiving a brilliant, clever, thoroughly experienced young lady like Miss Fairfax. To say nothing of the fact that she is my cousin.

JACK. I wanted to be engaged to Gwendolen, that is all. I love her.

ALGER. Well, I simply wanted to be engaged to Cecily. I adore her.

JACK. There is certainly no chance of your marrying Miss Cardew.

ALGER. I don't think there is much likelihood, Jack, of you and Miss Fairfax being united.

JACK. Well, that is no business of yours.

ALGER. If it was my business, I wouldn't talk about it. [*Begins to eat muffins.*] It is very vulgar to talk about one's business. Only people like stockbrokers do that, and then merely at dinner parties.

JACK. How you can sit there, calmly eating muffins, when we are in this horrible trouble, I can't make out. You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.

ALGER. Well, I can't eat muffins in an agitated manner. The butter would probably get on my cuffs. One should always eat muffins quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them.

JACK. I say it's perfectly heartless your eating muffins at all, under the circumstances.

ALGER. When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. Indeed, when I am in really great trouble, as anyone who knows me intimately will tell you, I refuse everything except food and drink. At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy. Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins. [*Rising.*]

JACK [*rising*]. Well, that is no reason why you should eat them all in that greedy way. [*Takes muffins from* ALGERNON.]

ALGER. [*offering tea-cake*]. I wish you would have tea-cake instead. I don't like tea-cake.

JACK. Good heavens! I suppose a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden.

ALGER. But you have just said it was perfectly heartless to eat muffins.

JACK. I said it was perfectly heartless of you, under the circumstances. That is a very different thing.

ALGER. That may be. But the muffins are the same. [*He seizes the muffin-dish from* JACK.]

JACK. Algy, I wish to goodness you would go.

ALGER. You can't possibly ask me to go without having some dinner. It's absurd. I never go without my dinner. No one ever does, except vegetarians and people like that. Besides I have just made arrangements with Dr. Chasuble to be christened at a quarter to six under the name of Ernest.

JACK. My dear fellow, the sooner you give up that nonsense the better. I made arrangements this morning with Dr. Chasuble to be christened myself at 5:30, and I naturally will take the name of Ernest. Gwendolen would wish it. We can't both be christened Ernest. It's absurd. Besides, I have a perfect right to be christened if I like. There is no evidence at all that I ever have been christened by anybody. I should think it extremely probable I never was, and so does Dr. Chasuble. It is entirely different in your case. You have been christened already.

ALGER. Yes, but I have not been christened for years.

JACK. Yes, but you have been christened. That is the important thing.

ALGER. Quite so. So I know my constitution can stand it. If you are not quite sure about your ever having been christened, I must say I think it rather dangerous your venturing on it now. It might make you very unwell. You can hardly have forgotten that someone very closely connected with you was very nearly carried off this week in Paris by a severe chill.

JACK. Yes, but you said yourself that a severe chill was not hereditary.

ALGER. It usedn't to be, I know—but I daresay it is now. Science is always making wonderful improvements in things.

JACK. [*picking up the muffin-dish*]. Oh, that is nonsense; you are always talking nonsense.

ALGER. Jack, you are at the muffins again! I wish you wouldn't. There are only two left. [*Takes them.*] I told you I was particularly fond of muffins.

JACK. But I hate tea-cake.

ALGER. Why on earth then do you allow tea-cake to be served up for your guests? What ideas you have of hospitality!

JACK. Algernon! I have already told you to go. I don't want you here. Why don't you go?

ALGER. I haven't quite finished my tea yet, and there is still one muffin left. [JACK *groans, and sinks into a chair.* ALGERNON *still continues eating.*]

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE:—*Morning-room at the Manor House.*

GWENDOLEN *and* CECILY *are at the window, looking out into the garden.*

GWEND. The fact that they did not follow us at once into the house, as anyone else would have

done, seems to me to show that they have some sense of shame left.

CECIL. They have been eating muffins. That looks like repentance.

GWEND. [*after a pause*]. They don't seem to notice us at all. Couldn't you cough?

CECIL. But I haven't got a cough.

GWEND. They're looking at us. What effrontery!

CECIL. They're approaching. That's very forward of them.

GWEND. Let us preserve a dignified silence.

CECIL. Certainly. It's the only thing to do now.

Enter JACK, *followed by* ALGERNON. *They whistle some dreadful popular air from a British opera.*

GWEND. This dignified silence seems to produce an unpleasant effect.

CECIL. A most distasteful one.

GWEND. But we will not be the first to speak.

CECIL. Certainly not.

GWEND. Mr. Worthing, I have something very particular to ask you. Much depends on your reply.

CECIL. Gwendolen, your common sense is invaluable. Mr. Moncrieff, kindly answer me the following question. Why did you pretend to be my guardian's brother?

ALGER. In order that I might have an opportunity of meeting you.

CECIL. [*to* GWENDOLEN]. That certainly seems a satisfactory explanation, does it not?

GWEND. Yes, dear, if you can believe him.

CECIL. I don't. But that does not affect the wonderful beauty of his answer.

GWEND. True. In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing. Mr. Worthing, what explanation can you offer to me for pretending to have a brother? Was it in order that you might have an opportunity of coming up to town to see me as often as possible?

JACK. Can you doubt it, Miss Fairfax?

GWEND. I have the gravest doubts upon the subject. But I intend to crush them. This is not the moment for German skepticism. [*Moving to* CECILY]. Their explanations appear to be quite satisfactory, especially Mr. Worthing's. That seems to me to have the stamp of truth upon it.

CECIL. I am more than content with what Mr. Moncrieff said. His voice alone inspires one with absolute credulity.

GWEND. Then you think we should forgive them?

CECIL. Yes. I mean no.

GWEND. True! I had forgotten. There are principles at stake that one cannot surrender. Which of us should tell them? The task is not a pleasant one.

CECIL. Could we not both speak at the same time?

GWEND. An excellent idea! I nearly always speak at the same time as other people. Will you take the time from me?

CECIL. Certainly. [GWENDOLEN *beats time with uplifted finger.*]

GWEND. *and* CECIL. [*speaking together*]. Your Christian names are still an insuperable barrier. That is all!

JACK *and* ALGER. [*speaking together*]. Our Christian names! Is that all? But we are going to be christened this afternoon.

GWEND. [*to* JACK]. For my sake you are prepared to do this terrible thing?

JACK. I am.

CECIL. [*to* ALGERNON]. To please me you are ready to face this fearful ordeal?

ALGER. I am.

GWEND. How absurd to talk of the equality of the sexes! Where questions of self-sacrifice are concerned, men are infinitely beyond us.

JACK. We are. [*Clasps hands with* ALGERNON.]

CECIL. They have moments of physical courage of which we women know absolutely nothing.

GWEND. [*to* JACK]. Darling!

ALGER. [*to* CECILY]. Darling! [*They fall into each other's arms.*]

Enter MERRIMAN. *When he enters he coughs loudly, seeing the situation.*

MERRI. Ahem! Ahem! Lady Bracknell!

JACK. Good heavens!

Enter LADY BRACKNELL. *The couples separate in alarm. Exit* MERRIMAN.

LADY B. Gwendolen! What does this mean?

GWEND. Merely that I am engaged to be married to Mr. Worthing, Mamma.

LADY B. Come here. Sit down immediately. Hesitation of any kind is a sign of mental decay in the young, of physical weakness in the old. [*Turns to* JACK.] Apprised, sir, of my daughter's sudden flight by her trusty maid, whose confidence I purchased by means of a small coin, I followed her at once by a luggage train. Her unhappy father is, I am glad to say, under the im-

pression that she is attending a more than usually lengthy lecture by the University Extension Scheme on the Influence of a Permanent Income on Thought. I do not propose to undeceive him. Indeed I have never undeceived him on any question. I would consider it wrong. But of course, you will clearly understand that all communication between yourself and my daughter must cease immediately from this moment. On this point, as indeed on all points, I am firm.

JACK. I am engaged to be married to Gwendolen, Lady Bracknell!

LADY B. You are nothing of the kind, sir. And now, as regards Algernon! . . . Algernon!

ALGER. Yes, Aunt Augusta.

LADY B. May I ask if it is in this house that your invalid friend Mr. Bunbury resides?

ALGER. [*stammering*]. Oh, no! Bunbury doesn't live here. Bunbury is somewhere else at present. In fact, Bunbury is dead.

LADY B. Dead! When did Mr. Bunbury die? His death must have been extremely sudden.

ALGER. [*airily*]. Oh, I killed Bunbury this afternoon. I mean poor Bunbury died this afternoon.

LADY B. What did he die of?

ALGER. Bunbury? Oh, he was quite exploded.

LADY B. Exploded! Was he the victim of a revolutionary outrage? I was not aware that Mr. Bunbury was interested in social legislation. If so, he is well punished for his morbidity.

ALGER. My dear Aunt Augusta, I mean he was found out! The doctors found out that Bunbury could not live, that is what I mean—so Bunbury died.

LADY B. He seems to have had great confidence in the opinion of his physicians. I am glad, however, that he made up his mind at the last to some definite course of action, and acted under proper medical advice. And now that we have finally got rid of this Mr. Bunbury may I ask, Mr. Worthing, who is that young person whose hand my nephew Algernon is now holding in what seems to me a peculiarly unnecessary manner?

JACK. That lady is Miss Cecily Cardew, my ward. [LADY BRACKNELL *bows coldly to* CECILY.]

ALGER. I am engaged to be married to Cecily, Aunt Augusta.

LADY B. I beg your pardon?

CECIL. Mr. Moncrieff and I are engaged to be married, Lady Bracknell.

LADY B. [*with a shiver, crossing to the sofa and sitting down*]. I do not know whether there is anything peculiarly exciting in the air of this particular part of Hertfordshire, but the number of engagements that go on seems to me considerably above the proper average that statistics have laid down for our guidance. I think some preliminary enquiry on my part would not be out of place. Mr. Worthing, is Miss Cardew at all connected with any of the larger railway stations in London? I merely desire information. Until yesterday I had no idea that there were any families or persons whose origin was a Terminus. [JACK *looks perfectly furious, but restrains himself.*]

JACK [*in a clear, cold voice*]. Miss Cardew is the granddaughter of the late Mr. Thomas Cardew of 149, Belgrave Square, S.W.; Gervase Park, Dorking, Surrey; and the Sporran, Fifeshire, N.B.

LADY B. That sounds not unsatisfactory. Three addresses always inspire confidence, even in tradesmen. But what proof have I of their authenticity?

JACK. I have carefully preserved the Court Guide of the period. They are open to your inspection, Lady Bracknell.

LADY B. [*grimly*]. I have known strange errors in that publication.

JACK. Miss Cardew's family solicitors are Messrs. Markby, Markby, and Markby.

LADY B. Markby, Markby, and Markby? A firm of the very highest position in their profession. Indeed I am told that one of the Mr. Markbys is occasionally to be seen at dinner parties. So far I am satisfied.

JACK [*very irritably*]. How extremely kind of you, Lady Bracknell! I have also in my possession, you will be pleased to hear, certificates of Miss Cardew's birth, baptism, whooping cough, registration, vaccination, confirmation, and the measles; both the German and English variety.

LADY B. Ah! A life crowded with incident, I see; though perhaps somewhat too exciting for a young girl. I am not myself in favor of premature experiences. [*Rises, looks at her watch*]. Gwendolen! the time approaches for our departure. We have not a moment to lose. As a matter of form, Mr. Worthing, I had better ask you if Miss Cardew has any little fortune?

JACK. Oh, about a hundred and thirty thousand pounds in the Funds. That is all. Good-by, Lady Bracknell. So pleased to have seen you.

LADY B. [*sitting down again*]. A moment, Mr. Worthing. A hundred and thirty thousand pounds! And in the Funds! Miss Cardew seems to me a most attractive young lady, now that I look at her. Few girls of the present day have any really solid qualities, any of the qualities that last, and improve

with time. We live, I regret to say, in an age of surfaces. [*To* CECILY]. Come over here, dear. [CECILY *goes across.*] Pretty child! your dress is sadly simple, and your hair seems almost as Nature might have left it. But we can soon alter all that. A thoroughly experienced French maid produces a really marvelous result in a very brief space of time. I remember recommending one to young Lady Lancing, and after three months her husband did not know her.

JACK [*aside*]. And after six months nobody knew her.

LADY B. [*glares at* JACK *for a few moments. Then bends, with a practiced smile, to* CECILY.] Kindly turn round, sweet child. [CECILY *turns completely round.*] No, the side view is what I want. [CECILY *presents her profile.*] Yes, quite as I expected. There are distinct social possibilities in your profile. The two weak points in our age are its want of principle and its want of profile. The chin a little higher, dear. Style largely depends on the way the chin is worn. They are worn very high, just at present. Algernon!

ALGER. Yes, Aunt Augusta!

LADY B. There are distinct social possibilities in Miss Cardew's profile.

ALGER. Cecily is the sweetest, dearest, prettiest girl in the whole world. And I don't care twopence about social possibilities.

LADY B. Never speak disrespectfully of Society, Algernon. Only people who can't get into it do that. [*To* CECILY.] Dear child, of course you know that Algernon has nothing but his debts to depend upon. But I do not approve of mercenary marriages. When I married Lord Bracknell I had no fortune of any kind. But I never dreamed for a moment of allowing that to stand in my way. Well, I suppose I must give my consent.

ALGER. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY B. Cecily, you may kiss me!

CECIL. [*kisses her*]. Thank you, Lady Bracknell.

LADY B. You may also address me as Aunt Augusta for the future.

CECIL. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY B. The marriage, I think, had better take place quite soon.

ALGER. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

CECIL. Thank you, Aunt Augusta.

LADY B. To speak frankly, I am not in favor of long engagements. They give people the opportunity of finding out each other's character before marriage, which I think is never advisable.

JACK. I beg your pardon for interrupting you, Lady Bracknell, but this engagement is quite out of the question. I am Miss Cardew's guardian, and she cannot marry without my consent until she comes of age. That consent I absolutely decline to give.

LADY B. Upon what grounds, may I ask? Algernon is an extremely, I may almost say an ostentatiously, eligible young man. He has nothing, but he looks everything. What more can one desire?

JACK. It pains me very much to have to speak frankly to you, Lady Bracknell, about your nephew, but the fact is that I do not approve at all of his moral character. I suspect him of being untruthful. [ALGERNON *and* CECILY *look at him in indignant amazement.*]

LADY B. Untruthful! My nephew Algernon? Impossible! He is an Oxonian.

JACK. I fear there can be no possible doubt about the matter. This afternoon during my temporary absence in London on an important question of romance, he obtained admission to my house by means of the false pretense of being my brother. Under an assumed name he drank, I've just been informed by my butler, an entire pint bottle of my Perrier-Jouet, Brut, '89; a wine I was specially reserving for myself. Continuing his disgraceful deception, he succeeded in the course of the afternoon in alienating the affections of my only ward. He subsequently stayed to tea, and devoured every single muffin. And what makes his conduct all the more heartless is that he was perfectly well aware from the first that I have no brother, that I never had a brother, and that I don't intend to have a brother, not even of any kind. I distinctly told him so myself yesterday afternoon.

LADY B. Ahem! Mr. Worthing, after careful consideration I have decided entirely to overlook my nephew's conduct to you.

JACK. That is very generous of you, Lady Bracknell. My own decision, however, is unalterable. I decline to give my consent.

LADY B. [*to* CECILY]. Come here, sweet child. [CECILY *goes over.*] How old are you, dear?

CECIL. Well, I am really only eighteen, but I always admit to twenty when I go to evening parties.

LADY B. You are perfectly right in making some slight alteration. Indeed no woman should ever be quite accurate about her age. It looks so calculating. . . . [*In meditative manner.*] Eighteen, but admitting to twenty at evening parties. Well, it will not be very long before you are of age and free from the restraints of tutelage. So I don't think

your guardian's consent is, after all, a matter of any importance.

JACK. Pray excuse me, Lady Bracknell, for interrupting you again, but it is only fair to tell you that according to the terms of her grandfather's will Miss Cardew does not come legally of age till she is thirty-five.

LADY B. That does not seem to me to be a grave objection. Thirty-five is a very attractive age. London society is full of women of the very highest birth who have, of their own free choice, remained thirty-five for years. Lady Dumbleton is an instance in point. To my own knowledge she has been thirty-five ever since she arrived at the age of forty, which was many years ago now. I see no reason why our dear Cecily should not be even still more attractive at the age you mention than she is at present. There will be a large accumulation of property.

CECIL. Algy, could you wait for me till I was thirty-five?

ALGER. Of course I could, Cecily. You know I could.

CECIL. Yes, I felt it instinctively, but I couldn't wait all that time. I hate waiting even five minutes for anybody. It always makes me rather cross. I am not punctual myself, I know, but I do like punctuality in others, and waiting, even to be married, is quite out of the question.

ALGER. Then what is to be done, Cecily?

CECIL. I don't know, Mr. Moncrieff.

LADY B. My dear Mr. Worthing, as Miss Cardew states positively that she cannot wait till she is thirty-five—a remark which I am bound to say seems to me to show a somewhat impatient nature—I would beg of you to reconsider your decision.

JACK. But, my dear Lady Bracknell, the matter is entirely in your own hands. The moment you consent to my marriage with Gwendolen, I will most gladly allow your nephew to form an alliance with my ward.

LADY B. [*rising and drawing herself up*]. You must be quite aware that what you propose is out of the question.

JACK. Then a passionate celibacy is all that any of us can look forward to.

LADY B. That is not the destiny I propose for Gwendolen. Algernon, of course, can choose for himself. [*Pulls out her watch.*] Come, dear; [GWENDOLEN *rises*] we have already missed five, if not six, trains. To miss any more might expose us to comment on the platform.

Enter DR. CHASUBLE.

CHAS. Everything is quite ready for the christenings.

LADY B. The christenings, sir! Is not that somewhat premature?

CHAS. [*looking rather puzzled, and pointing to* JACK *and* ALGERNON]. Both these gentlemen have expressed a desire for immediate baptism.

LADY B. At their age? The idea is grotesque and irreligious! Algernon, I forbid you to be baptized. I will not hear of such excesses. Lord Bracknell would be highly displeased if he learned that that was the way in which you wasted your time and money.

CHAS. Am I to understand then that there are to be no christenings at all this afternoon?

JACK. I don't think that as things are now, it would be of much practical value to either of us, Dr. Chasuble.

CHAS. I am grieved to hear such sentiments from you, Mr. Worthing. They savor of the heretical views of the Anabaptists, views that I have completely refuted in four of my unpublished sermons. However, as your present mood seems to be one peculiarly secular, I will return to the church at once. Indeed, I have just been informed by the pew-opener that for the last hour and a half Miss Prism has been waiting for me in the vestry.

LADY B. [*starting*]. Miss Prism! Did I hear you mention a Miss Prism?

CHAS. Yes, Lady Bracknell, I am on my way to join her.

LADY B. Pray allow me to detain you for a moment. This matter may prove to be one of vital importance to Lord Bracknell and myself. Is this Miss Prism a female of repellent aspect, remotely connected with education?

CHAS. [*somewhat indignantly*]. She is the most cultivated of ladies, and the very picture of respectability.

LADY B. It is obviously the same person. May I ask what position she holds in your household?

CHAS. [*severely*]. I am a celibate, madam.

JACK [*interposing*]. Miss Prism, Lady Bracknell, has been for the last three years Miss Cardew's esteemed governess and valued companion.

LADY B. In spite of what I hear of her, I must see her at once. Let her be sent for.

CHAS. [*looking off*]. She approaches; she is nigh.

Enter MISS PRISM *hurriedly.*

PRISM. I was told you expected me in the vestry, dear Canon. I have been waiting for you there for an hour and three-quarters. [*Catches sight of* LADY BRACKNELL, *who has fixed her with a stony glare.* MISS PRISM *grows pale and quails. She looks anxiously round as if desirous to escape.*]

LADY B. [*in a severe, judicial voice*]. Prism! [MISS PRISM *bows her head in shame.*] Come here, Prism! [MISS PRISM *approaches in a humble manner.*] Prism! Where is that baby? [*General consternation. The Canon starts back in horror.* ALGERNON *and* JACK *pretend to be anxious to shield* CECILY *and* GWENDOLEN *from hearing the details of a terrible public scandal.*] Twenty-eight years ago, Prism, you left Lord Bracknell's house, Number 104, Upper Grosvenor Street, in charge of a perambulator that contained a baby, of the male sex. You never returned. A few weeks later, through the elaborate investigations of the Metropolitan police, the perambulator was discovered at midnight, standing by itself in a remote corner of Bayswater. It contained the manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usually revolting sentimentality. [MISS PRISM *starts in involuntary indignation.*] But the baby was not there! [*Everyone looks at* MISS PRISM.] Prism, where is that baby? [*A pause.*]

PRISM. Lady Bracknell, I admit with shame that I do not know. I only wish I did. The plain facts of the case are these. On the morning of the day you mention, a day that is forever branded on my memory, I prepared as usual to take the baby out in its perambulator. I had also with me a somewhat old, but capacious hand-bag, in which I had intended to place the manuscript of a work of fiction that I had written during my few unoccupied hours. In a moment of mental abstraction, for which I never can forgive myself, I deposited the manuscript in the bassinette, and placed the baby in the hand-bag.

JACK [*who has been listening attentively*]. But where did you deposit the hand-bag?

PRISM. Do not ask me, Mr. Worthing.

JACK. Miss Prism, this is a matter of no small importance to me. I insist on knowing where you deposited the hand-bag that contained that infant.

PRISM. I left it in the cloak-room of one of the larger railway stations in London.

JACK. What railway station?

PRISM [*quite crushed*]. Victoria. The Brighton line. [*Sinks into a chair.*]

JACK. I must retire to my room for a moment. Gwendolen, wait here for me.

GWEND. If you are not too long, I will wait here for you all my life.

[*Exit* JACK *in great excitement.*

CHAS. What do you think this means, Lady Bracknell?

LADY B. I dare not even suspect, Dr. Chasuble. I need hardly tell you that in families of high position strange coincidences are not supposed to occur. They are hardly considered the thing. [*Noises heard overhead as if someone was throwing trunks about. Everybody looks up.*]

CECIL. Uncle Jack seems strangely agitated.

CHAS. Your guardian has a very emotional nature.

LADY B. This noise is extremely unpleasant. It sounds as if he was having an argument. I dislike arguments of any kind. They are always vulgar, and often convincing.

CHAS. [*looking up*]. It has stopped now. [*The noise is redoubled.*]

LADY B. I wish he would arrive at some conclusion.

GWEND. This suspense is terrible. I hope it will last.

Enter JACK *with a hand-bag of black leather in his hand.*

JACK [*rushing over to* MISS PRISM]. Is this the hand-bag, Miss Prism? Examine it carefully before you speak. The happiness of more than one life depends on your answer.

PRISM [*calmly*]. It seems to be mine. Yes, here is the injury it received through the upsetting of a Gower Street omnibus in younger and happier days. Here is the stain on the lining caused by the explosion of a temperance beverage, an incident that occurred at Leamington. And here, on the lock, are my initials. I had forgotten that in an extravagant mood I had had them placed there. The bag is undoubtedly mine. I am delighted to have it so unexpectedly restored to me. It has been a great inconvenience being without it all these years.

JACK [*in a pathetic voice*]. Miss Prism, more is restored to you than this hand-bag. I was the baby you placed in it.

PRISM [*amazed*]. You?

JACK [*embracing her*]. Yes . . . Mother!

PRISM [*recoiling in indignant astonishment*]. Mr. Worthing! I am unmarried!

JACK. Unmarried! I do not deny that is a serious blow. But after all, who has the right to cast a

stone against one who has suffered? Cannot repentance wipe out an act of folly? Why should there be one law for men and another for women? Mother, I forgive you. [*Tries to embrace her again.*]

PRISM [*still more indignant*]. Mr. Worthing, there is some error. [*Pointing to* LADY BRACKNELL.] There is the lady who can tell you who you really are.

JACK [*after a pause*]. Lady Bracknell, I hate to seem inquisitive, but would you kindly inform me who I am?

LADY B. I am afraid that the news I have to give you will not altogether please you. You are the son of my poor sister, Mrs. Moncrieff, and consequently Algernon's elder brother.

JACK. Algy's elder brother! Then I have a brother after all. I knew I had a brother! I always said I had a brother! Cecily, how could you have ever doubted that I had a brother? [*Seizes hold of* ALGERNON.] Dr. Chasuble, my unfortunate brother; Miss Prism, my unfortunate brother. Gwendolen, my unfortunate brother. Algy, you young scoundrel, you will have to treat me with more respect in the future. You have never behaved to me like a brother in all your life.

ALGER. Well, not till today, old boy, I admit. I did my best, however, though I was out of practice. [*Shakes hands.*]

GWEND. [*to* JACK]. My own! But what own are you? What is your Christian name, now that you have become someone else?

JACK. Good heavens! . . . I had quite forgotten that point. Your decision on the subject of my name is irrevocable, I suppose?

GWEND. I never change, except in my affections.

CECIL. What a noble nature you have, Gwendolen!

JACK. Then the question had better be cleared up at once. Aunt Augusta, a moment. At the time when Miss Prism left me in the hand-bag, had I been christened already?

LADY B. Every luxury that money could buy, including christening, had been lavished on you by your fond and doting parents.

JACK. Then I was christened! That is settled. Now, what name was I given? Let me know the worst.

LADY B. Being the eldest son you were naturally christened after your father.

JACK [*irritably*]. Yes, but what was my father's Christian name?

LADY B. [*meditatively*]. I cannot at the present moment recall what the General's Christian name was. But I have no doubt he had one. He was eccentric, I admit, but only in later years. And that was the result of the Indian climate, and marriage, and indigestion, and other things of that kind.

JACK. Algy! Can't you recollect what our father's Christian name was?

ALGER. My dear boy, we were never even on speaking terms. He died before I was a year old.

JACK. His name would appear in the Army Lists of the period, I suppose, Aunt Augusta?

LADY B. The General was essentially a man of peace except in his domestic life. But I have no doubt his name would appear in any military directory.

JACK. The Army Lists of the last forty years are here. These delightful records should have been my constant study. [*Rushes to bookcase and tears the books out.*] M. Generals . . . Mallam, Maxbohm, Magley, what ghastly names they have—Markby, Migsby, Mobbs, Moncrieff! Lieutenant 1840, Captain, Lieutenant-Colonel, Colonel, General 1869, Christian names, Ernest John. [*Puts book very quietly down and speaks quite calmly.*] I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Ernest, didn't I? Well, it is Ernest after all. I mean it naturally is Ernest.

LADY B. Yes, I remember that the General was called Ernest. I knew I had some particular reason for disliking the name.

GWEND. Ernest! My own Ernest. I felt from the first that you could have no other name!

JACK. Gwendolen, it is a terrible thing for a man to find out suddenly that all his life he has been speaking nothing but the truth. Can you forgive me?

GWEND. I can. For I feel that you are sure to change.

JACK. My own one!

CHAS. [*to* MISS PRISM]. Lætitia! [*Embraces her.*]

PRISM [*enthusiastically*]. Frederick! At last!

ALGER. Cecily! [*Embraces her.*] At last!

JACK. Gwendolen! [*Embraces her.*] At last!

LADY B. My nephew, you seem to be displaying signs of triviality.

JACK. On the contrary, Aunt Augusta, I've now realized for the first time in my life the vital Importance of Being Earnest.

TABLEAU

CURTAIN

The Ballad of Reading Gaol

IN MEMORIAM C. T. W.

SOMETIME TROOPER OF THE ROYAL HORSE GUARDS
OBIIT[1] H. M.[2] PRISON, READING, BERKSHIRE

JULY 7, 1896

I

He did not wear his scarlet coat,
For blood and wine are red,
And blood and wine were on his hands
When they found him with the dead,
The poor dead woman whom he loved,
And murdered in her bed.

He walked amongst the Trial Men
In a suit of shabby grey;
A cricket cap was on his head,
And his step seemed light and gay;
But I never saw a man who looked
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And at every drifting cloud that went
With sails of silver by.

I walked, with other souls in pain,
Within another ring,
And was wondering if the man had done
A great or little thing,
When a voice behind me whispered low,
'That fellow's got to swing.'

Dear Christ! the very prison walls
Suddenly seemed to reel,
And the sky above my head became
Like a casque of scorching steel;
And, though I was a soul in pain,
My pain I could not feel.

I only knew what hunted thought
Quickened his step, and why
He looked upon the garish day
With such a wistful eye;

[1] Died. [2] His Majesty's.

The man had killed the thing he loved,
And so he had to die.

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!

Some kill their love when they are young,
And some when they are old;
Some strangle with the hands of Lust,
Some with the hands of Gold:
The kindest use a knife, because
The dead so soon grow cold.

Some love too little, some too long,
Some sell, and others buy;
Some do the deed with many tears,
And some without a sigh:
For each man kills the thing he loves,
Yet each man does not die.

He does not die a death of shame
On a day of dark disgrace,
Nor have a noose about his neck,
Nor a cloth upon his face,
Nor drop feet foremost through the floor
Into an empty space.

He does not sit with silent men
Who watch him night and day;
Who watch him when he tries to weep,
And when he tries to pray;
Who watch him lest himself should rob
The prison of its prey.

He does not wake at dawn to see
Dread figures throng his room,
The shivering Chaplain robed in white,
The Sheriff stern with gloom,
And the Governor all in shiny black,
With the yellow face of Doom.

He does not rise in piteous haste
To put on convict-clothes,
While some coarse-mouthed Doctor gloats, and notes
Each new and nerve-twitched pose,

Fingering a watch whose little ticks
Are like horrible hammer-blows.

He does not know that sickening thirst
That sands one's throat, before
The hangman with his gardener's gloves
Slips through the padded door,
And binds one with three leathern thongs,
That the throat may thirst no more.

He does not bend his head to hear
The Burial Office read,
Nor, while the terror of his soul
Tells him he is not dead,
Cross his own coffin, as he moves
Into the hideous shed.

He does not stare upon the air
Through a little roof of glass:
He does not pray with lips of clay
For his agony to pass;
Nor feel upon his shuddering cheek
The kiss of Caiaphas.[8]

II

Six weeks our guardsman walked the yard,
In the suit of shabby grey:
His cricket cap was on his head,
And his step seemed light and gay,
But I never saw a man who looked
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And at every wandering cloud that trailed
Its ravelled fleeces by.

He did not wring his hands, as do
Those witless men who dare
To try to rear the changeling Hope
In the cave of black Despair:
He only looked upon the sun,
And drank the morning air.

He did not wring his hands nor weep,
Nor did he peek or pine,
But he drank the air as though it held
Some healthful anodyne;
With open mouth he drank the sun
As though it had been wine!

[8] the high priest who tried Jesus.

And I and all the souls in pain,
Who tramped the other ring,
Forgot if we ourselves had done
A great or little thing,
And watched with gaze of dull amaze
The man who had to swing.

And strange it was to see him pass
With a step so light and gay,
And strange it was to see him look
So wistfully at the day,
And strange it was to think that he
Had such a debt to pay.

For oak and elm have pleasant leaves
That in the spring-time shoot:
But grim to see is the gallows-tree,
With its adder-bitten root,
And, green or dry, a man must die
Before it bears its fruit!

The loftiest place is that seat of grace
For which all worldlings try:
But who would stand in hempen band
Upon a scaffold high,
And through a murderer's collar take
His last look at the sky?

It is sweet to dance to violins
When Love and Life are fair:
To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes
Is delicate and rare:
But it is not sweet with nimble feet
To dance upon the air!

So with curious eyes and sick surmise
We watched him day by day,
And wondered if each one of us
Would end the self-same way,
For none can tell to what red Hell
His sightless soul may stray.

At last the dead man walked no more
Amongst the Trial Men,
And I knew that he was standing up
In the black dock's dreadful pen,
And that never would I see his face
In God's sweet world again.

Like two doomed ships that pass in storm
We had crossed each other's way:
But we made no sign, we said no word,
We had no word to say;

For we did not meet in the holy night,
But in the shameful day.

A prison wall was round us both,
Two outcast men we were:
The world had thrust us from its heart,
And God from out His care:
And the iron gin that waits for Sin
Had caught us in its snare.

III

In Debtors' Yard the stones are hard,
And the dripping wall is high,
So it was there he took the air
Beneath the leaden sky,
And by each side a Warder walked,
For fear the man might die.

Or else he sat with those he watched
His anguish night and day;
Who watched him when he rose to weep,
And when he crouched to pray;
Who watched him lest himself should rob
Their scaffold of its prey.

The Governor was strong upon
The Regulations Act:
The Doctor said that Death was but
A scientific fact:
And twice a day the Chaplain called,
And left a little tract.

And twice a day he smoked his pipe,
And drank his quart of beer:
His soul was resolute, and held
No hiding-place for fear;
He often said that he was glad
The hangman's hands were near.

But why he said so strange a thing
No Warder dared to ask:
For he to whom a watcher's doom
Is given as his task,
Must set a lock upon his lips,
And make his face a mask.

Or else he might be moved, and try
To comfort or console:
And what should Human Pity do
Pent up in Murderers' Hole?
What word of grace in such a place
Could help a brother's soul?

With slouch and swing around the ring
We trod the Fools' Parade!
We did not care: we knew we were
The Devil's Own Brigade:
And shaven head and feet of lead
Make a merry masquerade.

We tore the tarry rope to shreds
With blunt and bleeding nails;
We rubbed the doors, and scrubbed the floors,
And cleaned the shining rails:
And, rank by rank, we soaped the plank,
And clattered with the pails.

We sewed the sacks, we broke the stones,
We turned the dusty drill:
We banged the tins, and bawled the hymns,
And sweated on the mill:
But in the heart of every man
Terror was lying still.

So still it lay that every day
Crawled like a weed-clogged wave:
And we forgot the bitter lot
That waits for fool and knave,
Till once, as we tramped in from work,
We passed an open grave.

With yawning mouth the yellow hole
Gaped for a living thing;
The very mud cried out for blood
To the thirsty asphalt ring:
And we knew that ere one dawn grew fair
Some prisoner had to swing.

Right in we went, with soul intent
On Death and Dread and Doom:
The hangman with his little bag,
Went shuffling through the gloom:
And each man trembled as he crept
Into his numbered tomb.

That night the empty corridors
Were full of forms of Fear,
And up and down the iron town
Stole feet we could not hear,
And through the bars that hid the stars
White faces seemed to peer.

He lay as one who lies and dreams
In a pleasant meadow-land,
The watchers watched him as he slept,
And could not understand

How one could sleep so sweet a sleep
With a hangman close at hand,

But there is no sleep when men must weep
Who never yet have wept:
So we—the fool, the fraud, the knave—
That endless vigil kept,
And through each brain on hands of pain
Another's terror crept.

Alas! it is a fearful thing
To feel another's guilt!
For, right within, the sword of Sin
Pierced to its poisoned hilt,
And as molten lead were the tears we shed
For the blood we had not spilt.

The Warders with their shoes of felt
Crept by each padlocked door,
And peeped and saw, with eyes of awe,
Grey figures on the floor,
And wondered why men knelt to pray
Who never prayed before.

All through the night we knelt and prayed,
Mad mourners of a corse!
The troubled plumes of midnight were
The plumes upon a hearse;
And bitter wine upon a sponge
Was the savor of Remorse.

The grey cock crew, the red cock crew,
But never came the day:
And crooked shapes of Terror crouched,
In the corners where we lay:
And each evil sprite that walks the night
Before us seemed to play.

They glided past, they glided fast
Like travellers through a mist:
They mocked the moon in a rigadoon[4]
Of delicate turn and twist,
And with formal pace and loathsome grace
The phantoms kept their tryst.

With mop and mow, we saw them go,
Slim shadows hand in hand:
About, about, in ghostly rout
They trod a saraband:
And the damned grotesques made arabesques,
Like the wind upon the sand!

[4] an old-fashioned dance.

With the pirouettes of marionettes,
They tripped on pointed tread:
But with flutes of Fear they filled the ear,
As their grisly masque they led,
And loud they sang, and long they sang,
For they sang to wake the dead.

'Oho!' they cried, 'The world is wide,
But fettered limbs go lame!
And once, or twice, to throw the dice
Is a gentlemanly game,
But he does not win who plays with Sin
In the secret House of Shame.'

No things of air these antics were,
That frolicked with such glee:
To men whose lives were held in gyves,
And whose feet might not go free,
Ah! wounds of Christ! they were living things,
Most terrible to see.

Around, around, they waltzed and wound;
Some wheeled in smirking pairs;
With the mincing step of a demirep
Some sidled up the stairs:
And with subtle sneer, and fawning leer,
Each helped us at our prayers.

The morning wind began to moan,
But still the night went on:
Through its giant loom the web of gloom
Crept till each thread was spun:
And, as we prayed, we grew afraid
Of the Justice of the Sun.

The moaning wind went wandering round
The weeping prison wall:
Till like a wheel of turning steel
We felt the minutes crawl:
O moaning wind! what had we done
To have such a seneschal?

At last I saw the shadowed bars,
Like a lattice wrought in lead,
Move across the whitewashed wall
That faced my three-plank bed,
And I knew that somewhere in the world
God's dreadful dawn was red.

At six o'clock we cleaned our cells,
At seven all was still,
But the sough and swing of a mighty wing
The prison seemed to fill,

For the Lord of Death with icy breath
Had entered in to kill.

He did not pass in purple pomp,
Nor ride a moon-white steed,
Three yards of cord and a sliding board
Are all the gallows' need:
So with a rope of shame the Herald came
To do the secret deed.

We were as men who through a fen
Of filthy darkness grope:
We did not dare to breathe a prayer,
Or to give our anguish scope:
Something was dead in each of us,
And what was dead was Hope.

For Man's grim Justice goes its way,
And will not swerve aside:
It slays the weak, it slays the strong,
It has a deadly stride:
With iron heel it slays the strong,
The monstrous parricide!

We waited for the stroke of eight:
Each tongue was thick with thirst:
For the stroke of eight is the stroke of Fate
That makes a man accursed,
And Fate will use a running noose
For the best man and the worst.

We had no other thing to do,
Save to wait for the sign to come:
So, like things of stone in a valley lone,
Quiet we sat and dumb:
But each man's heart beat thick and quick,
Like a madman on a drum!

With sudden shock the prison-clock
Smote on the shivering air,
And from all the gaol rose up a wail
Of impotent despair,
Like the sound the frightened marshes hear
From some leper in his lair.

And as one sees most fearful things
In the crystal of a dream,
We saw the greasy hempen rope
Hooked to the blackened beam,
And heard the prayer the hangman's snare
Strangled into a scream.

And all the woe that moved him so
That he gave that bitter cry,
And the wild regrets, and the bloody sweats,
None knew so well as I:
For he who lives more lives than one
More deaths than one must die.

IV

There is no chapel on the day
On which they hang a man:
The Chaplain's heart is far too sick,
Or his face is far too wan,
Or there is that written in his eyes
Which none should look upon.

So they kept us close till nigh on noon,
And then they rang the bell,
And the Warders with their jingling keys
Opened each listening cell,
And down the iron stair we tramped,
Each from his separate Hell.

Out into God's sweet air we went,
But not in wonted way,
For this man's face was white with fear,
And that man's face was grey,
And I never saw sad men who looked
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw sad men who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
We prisoners called the sky,
And at every careless cloud that passed
In happy freedom by.

But there were those amongst us all
Who walked with downcast head,
And knew that, had each got his due,
They should have died instead:
He had but killed a thing that lived,
Whilst they had killed the dead.

For he who sins a second time
Wakes a dead soul to pain,
And draws it from its spotted shroud,
And makes it bleed again,
And makes it bleed great gouts of blood,
And makes it bleed in vain!

Like ape or clown, in monstrous garb
With crooked arrows starred,
Silently we went round and round
The slippery asphalt yard;

Silently we went round and round,
And no man spoke a word.

Silently we went round and round,
And through each hollow mind
The Memory of dreadful things
Rushed like a dreadful wind,
And Horror stalked before each man,
And Terror crept behind.

The Warders strutted up and down,
And kept their herd of brutes,
Their uniforms were spick and span,
And they wore their Sunday suits,
But we knew the work they had been at,
By the quicklime on their boots.

For where a grave had opened wide,
There was no grave at all:
Only a stretch of mud and sand
By the hideous prison-wall,
And a little heap of burning lime,
That the man should have his pall.

For he has a pall, this wretched man,
Such as few men can claim:
Deep down below a prison-yard,
Naked for greater shame,
He lies, with fetters on each foot,
Wrapt in a sheet of flame!

And all the while the burning lime
Eats flesh and bone away,
It eats the brittle bone by night,
And the soft flesh by day,
It eats the flesh and bone by turns,
But it eats the heart alway.

For three long years they will not sow
Or root or seedling there:
For three long years the unblessed spot
Will sterile be and bare,
And look upon the wondering sky
With unreproachful stare.

They think a murderer's heart would taint
Each simple seed they sow.
It is not true! God's kindly earth
Is kindlier than men know,
And the red rose would but blow more red,
The white rose whiter blow.

Out of his mouth a red, red rose!
Out of his heart a white!

For who can say by what strange way,
Christ brings His will to light,
Since the barren staff the pilgrim bore
Bloomed in the great Pope's sight?[5]

But neither milk-white rose nor red
May bloom in prison air;
The shard, the pebble, and the flint,
Are what they give us there:
For flowers have been known to heal
A common man's despair.

So never will wine-red rose or white,
Petal by petal, fall
On that stretch of mud and sand that lies
By the hideous prison-wall,
To tell the men who tramp the yard
That God's Son died for all.

Yet though the hideous prison-wall
Still hems him round and round,
And a spirit may not walk by night
That is with fetters bound,
And a spirit may but weep that lies
In such unholy ground,

He is at peace—this wretched man—
At peace, or will be soon:
There is no thing to make him mad,
Nor does Terror walk at noon,
For the lampless Earth in which he lies
Has neither Sun nor Moon.

They hanged him as a beast is hanged:
They did not even toll
A requiem that might have brought
Rest to his startled soul,
But hurriedly they took him out,
And hid him in a hole.

They stripped him of his canvas clothes,
And gave him to the flies:
They mocked the swollen purple throat,
And the stark and staring eyes:
And with laughter loud they heaped the shroud
In which their convict lies.

The Chaplain would not kneel to pray
By his dishonored grave:

[5] Tannhäuser, having asked absolution for his long sojourn with Venus in the Venusberg, is told by the pope that he will not receive God's forgiveness until the staff in the pope's hand shall bloom. Shortly after Tannhäuser's departure, the staff blooms.

Nor mark it with that blessed Cross
That Christ for sinners gave,
Because the man was one of those
Whom Christ came down to save.

Yet all is well; he has but passed
To Life's appointed bourne:
And alien tears will fill for him
Pity's long-broken urn,
For his mourners will be outcast men,
And outcasts always mourn.

V

I know not whether Laws be right,
Or whether Laws be wrong;
All that we know who lie in gaol
Is that the wall is strong;
And that each day is like a year,
A year whose days are long.

But this I know, that every Law
That men have made for Man,
Since first Man took his brother's life,
And the sad world began,
But straws the wheat and saves the chaff
With a most evil fan.

This too I know—and wise it were
If each could know the same—
That every prison that men build
Is built with bricks of shame,
And bound with bars lest Christ should see
How men their brothers maim.

With bars they blur the gracious moon,
And blind the goodly sun:
And they do well to hide their Hell,
For in it things are done
That Son of God nor son of Man
Ever should look upon!

The vilest deeds like poison weeds,
Bloom well in prison-air;
It is only what is good in Man
That wastes and withers there:
Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,
And the Warder is Despair.

For they starve the little frightened child
Till it weeps both night and day:
And they scourge the weak, and flog the fool,
And gibe the old and grey,
And some grow mad, and all grow bad,
And none a word may say.

Each narrow cell in which we dwell
Is a foul and dark latrine,
And the fetid breath of living Death
Chokes up each grated screen,
And all, but Lust, is turned to dust
In Humanity's machine.

The brackish water that we drink
Creeps with a loathsome slime,
And the bitter bread they weigh in scales
Is full of chalk and lime,
And Sleep will not lie down, but walks
Wild-eyed, and cries to Time.

But though lean Hunger and green Thirst
Like asp with adder fight,
We have little care of prison fare,
For what chills and kills outright
Is that every stone one lifts by day
Becomes one's heart by night.

With midnight always in one's heart,
And twilight in one's cell,
We turn the crank, or tear the rope,
Each in his separate Hell,
And the silence is more awful far
Than the sound of a brazen bell.

And never a human voice comes near
To speak a gentle word:
And the eye that watches through the door
Is pitiless and hard:
And by all forgot, we rot and rot,
With soul and body marred.

And thus we rust Life's iron chain
Degraded and alone:
And some men curse, and some men weep,
And some men make no moan:
But God's eternal Laws are kind
And break the heart of stone.

And every human heart that breaks,
In prison-cell or yard,
Is as that broken box that gave
Its treasure to the Lord,
And filled the unclean leper's house
With the scent of costliest nard.

Ah! happy they whose hearts can break
And peace of pardon win!
How else may man make straight his plan
And cleanse his soul from Sin?
How else but through a broken heart
May Lord Christ enter in?

And he of the swollen purple throat,
And the stark and staring eyes,
Waits for the holy hands that took
The Thief to Paradise;
And a broken and a contrite heart
The Lord will not despise.

The man in red who reads the Law
Gave him three weeks of life,
Three little weeks in which to heal
His soul of his soul's strife,
And cleanse from every blot of blood
The hand that held the knife.

And with tears of blood he cleansed the hand,
The hand that held the steel:
For only blood can wipe out blood,
And only tears can heal:

And the crimson stain that was of Cain
Became Christ's snow-white seal.

VI

In Reading gaol by Reading town
There is a pit of shame,
And in it lies a wretched man
Eaten by teeth of flame,
In a burning winding-sheet he lies,
And his grave has got no name.

And there, till Christ call forth the dead,
In silence let him lie:
No need to waste the foolish tear,
Or heave the windy sigh:
The man had killed the thing he loved,
And so he had to die.

And all men kill the thing they love,
By all let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword! (1896)

Robert Louis Stevenson

(1850-1894)

Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh on November 13, 1850. Both his grandfather and his father were distinguished engineers who had much to do with the establishment of the system of lighthouses on the Scottish coasts. Stevenson, an only child, received the best educational opportunities available in Edinburgh. But from the beginning he was very delicate, so that his formal schooling was necessarily irregular. Early in his childhood he manifested interest in reading and was especially influenced by such imaginative works as the *Arabian Nights* (cf. Vol. I, p. 728). It was not long before he was wishing that he also might write something that others would desire to read.

He has told us the way in which he set himself to learn the art of writing. With his notebook continually at hand, he described everything of interest which he saw and felt. He would read and absorb the style of a great English writer and would then imitate it until he had at least partially mastered it. Thus he passed through many different styles, always broadening his own powers, until he was ready to abandon all outside help and find his own manner. As a result, his prose was developed with extraordinary care and contains the excellences of a number of the best English writers.

Stevenson trained himself for the profession associated with his family, and went so far as to write technical papers about lighthouse engineering. But his heart was not in the work and he abandoned it to study law. After taking his degree and being admitted

to the bar, he also gave up this career. Most of the rest of his life he spent in pursuit of health, for he was already doomed to a long fight with tuberculosis.

Even before the completion of his legal studies, Stevenson had attracted the attention of several important literary men. Sidney Colvin was to be a lifelong friend and leading interpreter of Stevenson to the world. Sir Leslie Stephen was the editor of the *Cornhill Magazine* which was to publish a large number of his works. Through Stephen he met Henley (cf. p. 757, *above*) while the latter was recovering from his operation in the hospital in Edinburgh. The new friendship thus formed was to be important to both men, and later they were to collaborate on three plays. During the years beginning with 1873, his friendships were to include most of the important literary men of his day. Stevenson was one of the most lovable of men and found in these friends a constant source of contentment.

From his twenty-fifth year Stevenson was almost continually traveling, and it is natural that his earliest literary essays should be accounts of his travels, *An Inland Voyage* (1878) and *Travels with a Donkey* (1879). Beside these, he published extensively in magazines, writing short stories, essays, and fantasies.

In 1876 he had met Mrs. Osborne, to whom he had become engaged before her return to her home in California. After some two years he became alarmed about her health and hurried across to see her. He was short of funds and made the trip in the cheapest fashion possible, so that he was very ill on reaching his destination. The experiences of the journey, however, gave him much material for his writing. After a considerable sojourn at Monterey and a period of real financial distress, he was married, and the Stevensons spent their honeymoon at an abandoned mining camp north of San Francisco. This experience is responsible for his *Silverado Squatters* (1883).

After their return to Scotland, where his wife immediately took a strong hold on the affections of his family, the Stevensons spent most of the years from 1880 to 1887 in a vain search for health in various parts of Europe. Meantime some of his most important books were appearing: in 1881 his notable collection of essays, *Virginibus Puerisque* (including *An Apology for Idlers*, cf. *below*), and in 1882 *Familiar Studies of Men and Books* and the *New Arabian Nights*. More important for his practical future was the appearance in 1883 of *Treasure Island*, which brought him fame and an adequate financial return. This was followed in 1885 by his novels *Prince Otto* and *The Dynamiter*, and by his inimitable collection of children's poems, *A Child's Garden of Verse*. In 1886 he issued two popular novels, *Kidnapped*, and the sensational psychological study, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. He also brought together in *The Merry Men* (1887) a collection of the short stories which had been appearing through the years, and in *Memories and Portraits* (1887) a similar collection of essays. Among these latter was *A Gossip on Romance* (cf. *below*), which he had first published in 1882.

With 1887 Stevenson's life in Europe came to a close. His health made a complete break with the Old World necessary. During a winter at Saranac Lake in northern New York he regained considerable strength and wrote several of his important essays, among them *Pulvis et Umbra* (cf. *below*). Stevenson's reception in America had been most enthusiastic, and he found American publishers eager to pay well for his writings. But after several attempts at finding a place suitable to his health he decided to go to the South Seas. For this purpose he chartered a yacht at San Francisco and started on a long and leisurely cruise in which he spent more than a year, mostly in Polynesia. Eventually he made a home in Samoa, where he was to end his days.

In the Islands he recovered a considerable degree of vigor and thus secured about four years of almost normal literary activity. He took an acute interest in the life about him and won the affection of many of the natives. These years are especially filled with lengthy and interesting letters to his friends back home. He finished many works which he had already begun and was in the middle of one of his most promising books, *Weir of Hermiston*, at the time of his death, December 3, 1894.

Stevenson belongs to that small group of writers who have succeeded in gaining the love as well as the admiration of his readers. He impressed all who came in contact with him, so that association with him became one of the memorable experiences of his friends' lives. His long valetudinarian journeys, illuminated as they are by his travel essays, his letters, and the reminiscences of his friends, have constituted a modern Odyssey, not less important for the purpose of evaluating him than his own essays, poems, short stories, and novels.

And yet judged purely as an author he showed remarkable versatility. The only field he attempted with mediocre success was the drama. Wherever else he touched, he produced at least one work whose immortality seems secure. *The Merry Men, Will of the Mill,* and *The Sire de Maletroit's Door* belong in nearly every anthology of the short story. *Treasure Island, The Master of Ballantrae, Kidnapped,* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* retain their vitality, and the three former are now received as masterpieces of romantic fiction. In his poetry, Stevenson was not so significant, for he seems to have taken it as a recreation and not to have devoted to it the serious workmanship he gave to his prose. Nevertheless, he produced one of the most successful collections of children's verse in the language.

Many of Stevenson's readers will agree that his ability appears most unmistakable in his essays. His apprenticeship had been long and the development of his prose style fully conscious. Hence, when he actually came to write his essays he had already overcome the preliminary problems of structure and wrote with a charm that could come only from the free use of his medium. The result is a seeming simplicity, but we know from trustworthy accounts that many passages were written ten or fifteen times before they satisfied his rigorous taste. In spite of the fact that some critics feel that Stevenson was overpurposeful and sometimes artificial in stylistic effect, it may fairly be said that at least two generations of readers have responded to the charm of *An Apology for Idlers*, have gained an insight at first hand into the essentials of the romantic novel through his *A Gossip on Romance*, and have been swept forward by that eloquent and breathtaking view of the sciences and of man's place and duty, *Pulvis et Umbra.*

Stevenson's works have appeared in several important editions: the Edinburgh (27 vols., 1894-97), the Pentland (20 vols., 1906-7), the Swanston (25 vols., 1911-12), and the Biographical (31 vols., 1911-12). In addition, a supplementary volume of his poems was issued in 1916. Several volumes of his letters have appeared, notably *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson* (1911), and *Vailima Letters, to Sidney Colvin* (1895). A series of biographies has appeared, among the most important being those of Graham Balfour (1901), Isobel Strong (1911), Roseline O. Masson (1922), J. A. Steuart (1924), G. S. Hellman (1925), and G. K. Chesterton (1927). Helpful studies of his work are by Frank Swinnerton (1923) and R. A. Rice (1916).

An Apology for Idlers

This essay, republished in *Virginibus Puerisque* (1881), was first printed in the *Cornhill Magazine* for July 1877. Here we find a happy instance of that sweet lucidity with which Stevenson wrote.

"BOSWELL: We grow weary when idle."

"JOHNSON: That is, sir, because others being busy, we want company; but if we were all idle, there would be no growing weary; we should all entertain one another."

Just now, when every one is bound, under pain of a decree in absence convicting them of *lèse*-respectability,[1] to enter on some lucrative profession, and labor therein with something not far short of enthusiasm, a cry from the opposite party who are content when they have enough, and like to look

[1] A pun on the term *lèse-majesté*, a crime against the king. Here, of course, it means a crime against respectability.

on and enjoy in the meanwhile, savors a little of bravado and gasconade. And yet this should not be. Idleness so called, which does not consist in doing nothing, but in doing a great deal not recognized in the dogmatic formularies of the ruling class, has as good a right to state its position as industry itself. It is admitted that the presence of people who refuse to enter in the great handicap race for sixpenny pieces, is at once an insult and a disenchantment for those who do. A fine fellow (as we see so many) takes his determination, votes for the sixpences, and in the emphatic Americanism, "goes for" them. And while such an one is plowing distressfully up the road, it is not hard to understand his resentment, when he perceives cool persons in the meadows by the wayside, lying with a handkerchief over their ears and a glass at their elbow. Alexander is touched in a very delicate place by the disregard of Diogenes. Where was the glory of having taken Rome for these tumultuous barbarians, who poured into the Senate house, and found the Fathers sitting silent and unmoved by their success? It is a sore thing to have labored along and scaled the arduous hilltops, and when all is done, find humanity indifferent to your achievement. Hence physicists condemn the unphysical; financiers have only a superficial toleration for those who know little of stocks; literary persons despise the unlettered; and people of all pursuits combine to disparage those who have none.

But though this is one difficulty of the subject, it is not the greatest. You could not be put in prison for speaking against industry, but you can be sent to Coventry for speaking like a fool. The greatest difficulty with most subjects is to do them well; therefore, please to remember this is an apology. It is certain that much may be judiciously argued in favor of diligence; only there is something to be said against it, and that is what, on the present occasion, I have to say. To state one argument is not necessarily to be deaf to all others, and that a man has written a book of travels in Montenegro, is no reason why he should never have been to Richmond.[2]

It is surely beyond a doubt that people should be a good deal idle in youth. For though here and there a Lord Macaulay[3] may escape from school honors with all his wits about him, most boys pay so dear for their medals that they never afterward have a shot in their locker, and begin the world bankrupt. And the same holds true during all the time a lad is educating himself, or suffering others to educate him. It must have been a very foolish old gentleman who addressed Johnson at Oxford in these words: "Young man, ply your book diligently now, and acquire a stock of knowledge; for when years come upon you, you will find that poring upon books will be but an irksome task." The old gentleman seems to have been unaware that many other things besides reading grow irksome, and not a few become impossible, by the time a man has to use spectacles and cannot walk without a stick. Books are good enough in their own way, but they are a mighty bloodless substitute for life. It seems a pity to sit, like the Lady of Shalott, peering into a mirror, with your back turned on all the bustle and glamor of reality. And if a man reads very hard, as the old anecdote reminds us, he will have little time for thoughts.

If you look back on your own education, I am sure it will not be the full, vivid, instructive hours of truantry that you regret; you would rather cancel some lack-luster periods between sleep and waking in the class. For my own part, I have attended a good many lectures in my time. I still remember that the spinning of a top is a case of Kinetic Stability. I still remember that Emphyteusis is not a disease, nor Stillicide a crime. But though I would not willingly part with such scraps of science, I do not set the same store by them as by certain other odds and ends that I came by in the open street while I was playing truant. This is not the moment to dilate on that mighty place of education, which was the favorite school of Dickens[4] and of Balzac[5] and turns out yearly many inglorious masters in the Science of the Aspects of Life. Suffice it to say this: if a lad does not learn in the streets, it is because he has no faculty of learning. Nor is the truant always in the streets, for if he prefers, he may go out by the gardened suburbs into the country. He may pitch on some tuft of lilacs over a burn, and smoke innumerable pipes to the tune of the water on the stones. A bird will sing in the thicket. And there he may fall into a vein of kindly thought, and see things in a new perspective. Why, if this be not education, what is? We may conceive Mr. Worldly Wiseman accosting such a one, and the conversation that should thereupon ensue:

"How, now, young fellow, what dost thou here?"

"Truly, sir, I take mine ease."

[2] A suburb southwest of London.

[3] Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859), English historian and parliamentarian, was noted for his precocious learning.

[4] English novelist (1812-70).

[5] French novelist (1799-1850).

"Is this not the hour of the class? and should'st thou not be plying thy book with diligence, to the end thou mayest obtain knowledge?"

"Nay, but thus also I follow after learning, by your leave."

"Learning, quotha! After what fashion, I pray thee? Is it mathematics?"

"No, to be sure."

"Is it metaphysics?"

"Nor that."

"Is it some language?"

"Nay, it is no language."

"Is it a trade?"

"Nor a trade neither."

"Why, then, what is't?"

"Indeed, sir, as a time may come soon for me to go upon pilgrimage, I am desirous to note what is commonly done by persons in my case, and where are the ugliest sloughs and thickets on the road; as also, what manner of staff is of the best service. Moreover, I lie here, by this water, to learn by root-of-heart a lesson which my master teaches me to call peace, or contentment."

Hereupon Mr. Worldly Wiseman was much commoved with passion, and shaking his cane with a very threatful countenance, broke forth upon this wise: "Learning, quotha!" said he; "I would have all such rogues scourged by the hangman!"

And so he would go his way, ruffling out his cravat with a crackle of starch, like a turkey when it spreads its feathers.

Now this, of Mr. Wiseman's, is the common opinion. A fact is not called a fact, but a piece of gossip, if it does not fall into one of your scholastic categories. An inquiry must be in some acknowledged direction, with a name to go by; or else you are not inquiring at all, only lounging; and the workhouse is too good for you. It is supposed that all knowledge is at the bottom of a well, or the far end of a telescope. Sainte-Beuve,[6] as he grew older, came to regard all experience as a single great book, in which to study for a few years ere we go hence; and it seemed all one to him whether you should read in Chapter xx, which is the differential calculus, or in Chapter xxxix, which is hearing the band play in the gardens. As a matter of fact, an intelligent person, looking out of his eyes and hearkening in his ears, with a smile on his face all the time, will get more true education than many another in a life of heroic vigils. There is certainly some chill and arid knowledge to be found upon the summits of formal and laborious science; but it is all round about you, and for the trouble of looking, that you will acquire the warm and palpitating facts of life. While others are filling their memory with a lumber of words, one-half of which they will forget before the week be out, your truant may learn some really useful art: to play the fiddle, to know a good cigar, or to speak with ease and opportunity to all varieties of men. Many who have "plied their book diligently," and know all about some one branch or another of accepted lore, come out of the study with an ancient and owl-like demeanor, and prove dry, stockish, and dyspeptic in all the better and brighter parts of life. Many make a large fortune, who remain underbred and pathetically stupid to the last. And meantime there goes the idler, who began life along with them—by your leave, a different picture. He has had time to take care of his health and his spirits; he has been a great deal in the open air, which is the most salutary of all things for both body and mind; and if he has never read the great Book in very recondite places, he has dipped into it and skimmed it over to excellent purpose. Might not the student afford some Hebrew roots, and the business man some of his half-crowns, for a share of the idler's knowledge of life at large, and Art of Living? Nay, and the idler has another and more important quality than these. I mean his wisdom. He who has much looked on at the childish satisfaction of other people in their hobbies, will regard his own with only a very ironical indulgence. He will not be heard among the dogmatists. He will have a great and cool allowance for all sorts of people and opinions. If he finds no out-of-the-way truths, he will identify himself with no very burning falsehood. His way takes him along a by-road, not much frequented, but very even and pleasant, which is called Commonplace Lane, and leads to the Belvedere[7] of Commonsense. Thence he shall command an agreeable, if no very noble prospect; and while others behold the East and West, the Devil and the sunrise, he will be contentedly aware of a sort of morning hour upon all sublunary things, with an army of shadows running speedily and in many different directions into the great daylight of eternity. The shadows and the generations, the shrill doctors and the plangent wars, go by into ultimate silence and emptiness; but underneath all this, a man may see, out of the Belvedere windows, much green and peaceful landscape; many firelit parlors;

[6] French critic (1804-1869).

[7] A building commanding a fine prospect.

good people laughing, drinking, and making love as they did before the Flood or the French Revolution; and the old shepherd telling his tale under the hawthorn.

Extreme *busyness,* whether at school or college, kirk or market, is a symptom of deficient vitality; and a faculty for idleness implies a catholic appetite and a strong sense of personal identity. There is a sort of dead-alive, hackneyed people about, who are scarcely conscious of living except in the exercise of some conventional occupation. Bring these fellows into the country, or set them aboard ship, and you will see how they pine for their desk or their study. They have no curiosity; they cannot give themselves over to random provocations; they do not take pleasure in the exercise of their faculties for its own sake; and unless necessity lays about them with a stick, they will even stand still. It is no good speaking to such folk: they *cannot* be idle, their nature is not generous enough; and they pass those hours in a sort of coma, which are not dedicated to furious moiling in the gold-mill. When they do not require to go to the office, when they are not hungry and have no mind to drink, the whole breathing world is a blank to them. If they have to wait an hour or so for a train, they fall into a stupid trance with their eyes open. To see them, you would suppose there was nothing to look at and no one to speak with; you would imagine they were paralyzed or alienated; and yet very possibly they are hard workers in their own way, and have good eyesight for a flaw in a deed or a turn of the market. They have been to school and college, but all the time they had their eye on the medal; they have gone about in the world and mixed with clever people, but all the time they were thinking of their own affairs. As if a man's soul were not too small to begin with, they have dwarfed and narrowed theirs by a life of all work and no play; until here they are at forty, with a listless attention, a mind vacant of all material of amusement, and not one thought to rub against another while they wait for the train. Before he was breeched, he might have clambered on the boxes; when he was twenty, he would have stared at the girls; but now the pipe is smoked out, the snuffbox empty, and my gentleman sits bolt upright upon a bench, with lamentable eyes. This does not appeal to me as being Success in Life.

But it is not only the person himself who suffers from his busy habits, but his wife and children, his friends and relations, and down to the very people he sits with in a railway carriage or an omnibus. Perpetual devotion to what a man calls his business is only to be sustained by perpetual neglect of many other things. And it is not by any means certain that a man's business is the most important thing he has to do. To an impartial estimate it will seem clear that many of the wisest, most virtuous, and most beneficent parts that are to be played upon the theater of life are filled by gratuitous performers, and pass, among the world at large, as phases of idleness. For in that theater, not only the walking gentlemen, singing chambermaids, and diligent fiddlers in the orchestra, but those who look on and clap their hands from the benches, do really play a part and fulfil important offices towards the general result. You are no doubt very dependent on the care of your lawyer and stockbroker, of the guards and signalmen who convey you rapidly from place to place, and the policemen who walk the streets for your protection; but is there not a thought of gratitude in your heart for certain other benefactors who set you smiling when they fall in your way, or season your dinner with good company? Colonel Newcome helped to lose his friend's money; Fred Bayham had an ugly trick of borrowing shirts; and yet they were better people to fall among than Mr. Barnes.[8] And though Falstaff was neither sober nor very honest, I think I could name one or two long-faced Barabbases whom the world could better have done without. Hazlitt[9] mentions that he was more sensible of obligation to Northcote, who had never done him anything he could call a service, than to his whole circle of ostentatious friends; for he thought a good companion emphatically the greatest benefactor. I know there are people in the world who cannot feel grateful unless the favor has been done them at the cost of pain and difficulty. But this is a churlish disposition. A man may send you six sheets of letter-paper covered with the most entertaining gossip, or you may pass half an hour pleasantly, perhaps profitably, over an article of his; do you think the service would be greater, if he had made the manuscript in his heart's blood, like a compact with the devil? Do you really fancy you should be more beholden to your correspondent, if he had been damning you all the while for your importunity? Pleasures are more beneficial than duties because, like the quality of mercy, they are not strained, and they are twice blest. There must always be

[8] Persons in Thackeray's *The Newcomes.*

[9] See Vol. II, p. 404.

two to a kiss, and there may be a score in a jest; but wherever there is an element of sacrifice, the favor is conferred with pain, and, among generous people, received with confusion. There is no duty we so much underrate as the duty of being happy. By being happy, we sow anonymous benefits upon the world, which remain unknown even to ourselves, or when they are disclosed, surprise nobody so much as the benefactor. The other day, a ragged, barefoot boy ran down the street after a marble, with so jolly an air that he set every one he passed into a good-humor; one of these persons, who had been delivered from more than usually black thoughts, stopped the little fellow and gave him some money with his remark: "You see what sometimes comes of looking pleased." If he had looked pleased before, he had now to look both pleased and mystified. For my part, I justify this encouragement of smiling rather than tearful children; I do not wish to pay for tears anywhere but upon the stage; but I am prepared to deal largely in the opposite commodity. A happy man or woman is a better thing to find than a five-pound note. He or she is a radiating focus of good-will; and their entrance into a room is as though another candle had been lighted. We need not care whether they could prove the forty-seventh proposition; they do a better thing than that, they practically demonstrate the great theorem of the Livableness of Life. Consequently, if a person cannot be happy without remaining idle, idle he should remain. It is a revolutionary precept; but thanks to hunger and the workhouse, one not easily to be abused; and within practical limits, it is one of the most incontestable truths in the whole Body of Morality. Look at one of your industrious fellows for a moment, I beseech you. He sows hurry and reaps indigestion; he puts a vast deal of activity out to interest, and receives a large measure of nervous derangement in return. Either he absents himself entirely from all fellowship, and lives a recluse in a garret, with carpet slippers and a leaden inkpot; or he comes among people swiftly and bitterly, in a contraction of his whole nervous system, to discharge some temper before he returns to work. I do not care how much or how well he works, this fellow is an evil feature in other people's lives. They would be happier if he were dead. They could easier do without his services in the Circumlocution Office,[10] than they can tolerate his fractious spirits. He poisons life at the well-head. It is better to be beggared out of hand by a scapegrace nephew, than daily hag-ridden by a peevish uncle.

And what, in God's name, is all this pother about? For what cause do they embitter their own and other people's lives? That a man should publish three or thirty articles a year, that he should finish or not finish his great allegorical picture, are questions of little interest to the world. The ranks of life are full; and although a thousand fall, there are always some to go into the breach. When they told Joan of Arc she should be at home minding women's work, she answered there were plenty to spin and wash. And so, even with your own rare gifts! When nature is "so careless of the single life," why should we coddle ourselves into the fancy that our own is of exceptional importance? Suppose Shakespeare had been knocked on the head some dark night in Sir Thomas Lucy's preserves,[11] the world would have wagged on better or worse, the pitcher gone to the well, the scythe to the corn, and the student to his books; and no one been any the wiser of the loss. There are not many works extant, if you look the alternative all over, which are worth the price of a pound of tobacco to a man of limited means. This is a sobering reflection for the proudest of our earthly vanities. Even a tobacconist may, upon consideration, find no great cause for personal vainglory in the phrase; for although tobacco is an admirable sedative, the qualities necessary for retailing it are neither rare nor precious in themselves. Alas and alas! you may take it how you will, but the services of no single individual are indispensable. Atlas[12] was just a gentleman with a protracted nightmare! And yet you see merchants who go and labor themselves into a great fortune and thence into the bankruptcy court; scribblers who keep scribbling at little articles until their temper is a cross to all who come about them, as though Pharaoh should set the Israelites to make a pin instead of a pyramid; and fine young men who work themselves into a decline, and are driven off in a hearse with white plumes upon it. Would you not suppose these persons had been whispered, by the Master of the Ceremonies, the promise of some momentous destiny? and that this lukewarm bullet on which they play their farces was the bull's-eye and centerpoint of all the universe? And yet it is

[10] Government offices delayed by red tape. See Dickens's *Little Dorrit*.

[11] Reference to the legend that Shakespeare was found stealing deer from the deer park of Sir Thomas Lucy.

[12] The god who carried the earth on his shoulders.

not so. The ends for which they gave away their priceless youth, for all they know, may be chimerical or hurtful; the glory and riches they expect may never come, or may find them indifferent; and they and the world they inhabit are so inconsiderable that the mind freezes at the thought. (1877)

A Gossip on Romance

The satisfaction of his successful handling of the romantic materials of *Treasure Island* (1882) must still have been fresh within him when Stevenson wrote this essay, a public "defense" of the kind of writing he had chosen to master. Appearing first in *Longman's Magazine*, November 1882, *A Gossip on Romance* was later included in *Memories and Portraits* (1887). Stevenson returned to the theme in *The Lantern-Bearers*.

In anything fit to be called by the name of reading, the process itself should be absorbing and voluptuous; we should gloat over a book, be rapt clean out of ourselves, and rise from the perusal, our mind filled with the busiest kaleidoscopic dance of images, incapable of sleep or of continuous thought. The words, if the book be eloquent, should run thenceforward in our ears like the noise of breakers, and the story—if it be a story—repeat itself in a thousand colored pictures to the eye. It was for this last pleasure that we read so closely, and loved our books so dearly, in the bright, troubled period of boyhood. Eloquence and thought, character and conversation, were but obstacles to brush aside as we dug blithely after a certain sort of incident, like a pig for truffles. For my part, I liked a story to begin with an old wayside inn where, "towards the close of the year 17—," several gentlemen in three-cocked hats were playing bowls. A friend of mine preferred the Malabar coast in a storm, with a ship beating to westward, and a scowling fellow of herculean proportions striding along the beach; he, to be sure, was a pirate. This was further afield than my home-keeping fancy loved to travel, and designed altogether for a larger canvas than the tales that I affected. Give me a highwayman and I was full to the brim; a Jacobite[1] would do, but the highwayman was my favorite dish. I can still hear that merry clatter of the hoofs along the moonlit lane; night and the coming of day are still related in my mind with the doings of John Rann or Jerry Abershaw;[2] and the words "postchaise," the "great North road," "ostler," and "nag," still sound in my ears like poetry. One and all, at least, and each with his particular fancy, we read story-books in childhood, not for eloquence or character or thought, but for some quality of the brute incident. That quality was not mere bloodshed or wonder. Although each of these was welcome in its place, the charm for the sake of which we read depended on something different from either. My elders used to read novels aloud; and I can still remember four different passages which I heard, before I was ten, with the same keen and lasting pleasure. One I discovered long afterwards to be the admirable opening of *What will he Do with It?*[3] It was no wonder that I was pleased with that. The other three still remain unidentified. One is a little vague; it was about a dark, tall house at night, and people groping on the stairs by the light that escaped from the open door of a sickroom. In another, a lover left a ball, and went walking in a cool, dewy park, whence he could watch the lighted windows and the figures of the dancers as they moved. This was the most sentimental impression I think I had yet received, for a child is somewhat deaf to the sentimental. In the last, a poet, who had been tragically wrangling with his wife, walked forth on the sea-beach on a tempestuous night and witnessed the horrors of a wreck.[4] Different as they are, all these early favorites have a common note—they have all a touch of the romantic.

Drama is the poetry of conduct, romance the poetry of circumstance. The pleasure that we take in life is of two sorts—the active and the passive. Now we are conscious of a great command over our destiny; anon we are lifted up by circumstance, as by a breaking wave, and dashed we know not how into the future. Now we are pleased by our conduct, anon merely pleased by our surroundings.

[1] an adherent of the Stuart pretenders to the English throne in the eighteenth century.

[2] famous highwaymen.

[3] a novel by Bulwer-Lytton (1801-1872).

[4] from Kingsley's novel *Two Years Ago*.

It would be hard to say which of these modes of satisfaction is the more effective, but the latter is surely the more constant. Conduct is three parts of life, they say; but I think they put it high. There is a vast deal in life and letters both which is not immoral, but simply a-moral; which either does not regard the human will at all, or deals with it in obvious and healthy relations; where the interest turns, not upon what a man shall choose to do, but on how he manages to do it; not on the passionate slips and hesitations of the conscience, but on the problems of the body and of the practical intelligence, in clean, open-air adventure, the shock of arms or the diplomacy of life. With such material as this it is impossible to build a play, for the serious theatre exists solely on moral grounds, and is a standing proof of the dissemination of the human conscience. But it is possible to build upon this ground the most joyous of verses, and the most lively, beautiful, and buoyant tales.

One thing in life calls for another; there is a fitness in events and places. The sight of a pleasant arbor puts it in our mind to sit there. One place suggests work, another idleness, a third early rising and long rambles in the dew. The effect of night, of any flowing water, of lighted cities, of the peep of day, of ships, of the open ocean, calls up in the mind an army of anonymous desires and pleasures. Something, we feel, should happen; we know not what, yet we proceed in quest of it. And many of the happiest hours of life fleet by us in this vain attendance on the genius of the place and moment. It is thus that tracts of young fir, and low rocks that reach into deep soundings, particularly torture and delight me. Something must have happened in such places, and perhaps ages back, to members of my race; and when I was a child I tried in vain to invent appropriate games for them, as I still try, just as vainly, to fit them with the proper story. Some places speak distinctly. Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck. Other spots again seem to abide their destiny, suggestive and impenetrable, "miching mallecho."[5] The inn at Burford Bridge, with its arbors and green garden and silent, eddying river—though it is known already as the place where Keats wrote some of his *Endymion* and Nelson[6] parted from his Emma—still seems to wait the coming of the appropriate legend. Within these ivied walls, behind these old green shutters, some further business smolders, waiting for its hour. The old Hawes Inn at the Queen's Ferry makes a similar call upon my fancy. There it stands, apart from the town, beside the pier, in a climate of its own, half inland, half marine—in front, the ferry bubbling with the tide and the guardship swinging to her anchor; behind, the old garden with the trees. Americans seek it already for the sake of Lovel and Oldbuck, who dined there at the beginning of *The Antiquary*.[7] But you need not tell me—that is not all; there is some story, unrecorded or not yet complete, which must express the meaning of that inn more fully. So it is with names and faces; so it is with incidents that are idle and inconclusive in themselves, and yet seem like the beginning of some quaint romance, which the all-careless author leaves untold. How many of these romances have we not seen determined at their birth; how many people have met us with a look of meaning in their eye, and sunk at once into trivial acquaintances; to how many places have we not drawn near, with express intimations—"here my destiny awaits me"—and we have but dined there and passed on! I have lived both at the Hawes and Burford in a perpetual flutter, on the heels, as it seemed, of some adventure that should justify the place; but though the feeling had me to bed at night and called me again at morning in one unbroken round of pleasure and suspense, nothing befell me in either worth remark. The man of the hour had not yet come; but some day, I think, a boat shall put off from the Queen's Ferry, fraught with a dear cargo, and some frosty night a horseman, on a tragic errand, rattle with his whip upon the green shutters of the inn at Burford.

Now this is one of the natural appetites with which any lively literature has to count. The desire for knowledge, I had almost added the desire for meat, is not more deeply seated than this demand for fit and striking incident. The dullest of clowns tells, or tries to tell, himself a story, as the feeblest of children uses invention in his play; and even as the imaginative grown person, joining in the game, at once enriches it with many delightful circumstances, the great creative writer shows us the realization and the apotheosis of the day-dreams of common men. His stories may be nourished with the realities of life, but their true mark is to satisfy the nameless longings of the reader, and to obey the ideal laws of the day-dream. The right

[5] sneaking mischief (*Hamlet:* III, ii, 147).

[6] Admiral Horatio Nelson and Emma, Lady Hamilton, whom he loved.

[7] a novel by Scott.

kind of thing should fall out in the right kind of place; the right kind of thing should follow; and not only the characters talk aptly and think naturally, but all the circumstances in a tale answer one to another like notes in music. The threads of a story come from time to time together, and make a picture in the web; the characters fall from time to time into some attitude to each other or to nature, which stamps the story home like an illustration. Crusoe recoiling from the footprint, Achilles shouting over against the Trojans, Ulysses bending the great bow, Christian running with his fingers in his ears[8]—these are each culminating moments in the legend, and each has been printed on the mind's eye forever. Other things we may forget; we may forget the words, although they are beautiful; we may forget the author's comment, although perhaps it was ingenious and true; but these epoch-making scenes, which put the last mark of truth upon a story and fill up at one blow our capacity for sympathetic pleasure, we so adopt into the very bosom of our mind that neither time nor tide can efface or weaken the impression. This, then, is the plastic part of literature: to embody character, thought, or emotion in some act or attitude that shall be remarkably striking to the mind's eye. This is the highest and hardest thing to do in words; the thing which, once accomplished, equally delights the schoolboy and the sage, and makes, in its own right, the quality of epics. Compared with this, all other purposes in literature, except the purely lyrical or the purely philosophic, are bastard in nature, facile of execution, and feeble in result. It is one thing to write about the inn at Burford, or to describe scenery with the word-painters; it is quite another to seize on the heart of the suggestion and make a country famous with a legend. It is one thing to remark and to dissect, with the most cutting logic, the complications of life and of the human spirit; it is quite another to give them body and blood in the story of Ajax or of Hamlet. The first is literature, but the second is something besides, for it is likewise art.

English people of the present day are apt, I know not why, to look somewhat down on incident, and reserve their admiration for the clink of teaspoons and the accents of the curate. It is thought clever to write a novel with no story at all, or at least with a very dull one. Reduced even to the lowest terms, a certain interest can be communicated by the art of narrative, a sense of human kinship stirred; and a kind of monotonous fitness, comparable to the words and air of "Sandy's Mull," preserved among the infinitesimal occurrences recorded. Some people work in this manner, with even a strong touch. Mr. Trollope's[9] inimitable clergymen arise to the mind in this connection. But even Mr. Trollope does not confine himself to chronicling small beer. Mr. Crawley's collision with the bishop's wife, Mr. Melnotte dallying in the deserted banquet-room,[10] are typical incidents, epically conceived, fitly embodying a crisis. Or again look at Thackeray. If Rawdon Crawley's blow were not delivered, *Vanity Fair* would cease to be a work of art. That scene is the chief ganglion of the tale; and the discharge of energy from Rawdon's fist is the reward and consolation of the reader. The end of *Esmond*[11] is a yet wider excursion from the author's customary fields; the scene at Castlewood is pure Dumas; the great and wily English borrower has here borrowed from the great unblushing French thief; as usual, he has borrowed admirably well, and the breaking of the sword rounds off the best of all his books with a manly, martial note. But perhaps nothing can more strongly illustrate the necessity for marking incident than to compare the living fame of *Robinson Crusoe* with the discredit of *Clarissa Harlowe*.[12] *Clarissa* is a book of a far more startling import, worked out, on a great canvas, with inimitable courage and unflagging art. It contains wit, character, passion, plot, conversations full of spirit and insight, letters sparkling with unstrained humanity; and if the death of the heroine be somewhat frigid and artificial, the last days of the hero strike the only note of what we now call Byronism, between the Elizabethans and Byron himself. And yet a little story of a shipwrecked sailor, with not a tenth part of the style nor a thousandth part of the wisdom, exploring none of the arcana of humanity and deprived of the perennial interest of love, goes on from edition to edition, while *Clarissa* lies upon the shelves unread. A friend of mine, a Welsh blacksmith, was twenty-five years old and could neither read nor write, when he heard a chapter of *Robinson* read aloud in a farm kitchen. Up to that moment he had sat content, huddled in his ignorance, but he left that farm another man. There were day-dreams, it appeared, divine day-dreams, written and printed and bound, and

[8] These references are to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe, The Iliad, The Odyssey,* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress.*

[9] Anthony Trollope (1815-1882).

[10] Reference is to chapter 62 of *The Way We Live Now.*

[11] Thackeray's *Henry Esmond.*

[12] Richardson's *Clarissa.*

to be bought for money and enjoyed at pleasure. Down he sat that day, painfully learned to read Welsh, and returned to borrow the book. It had been lost, nor could he find another copy but one that was in English. Down he sat once more, learned English, and at length, and with entire delight, read *Robinson*. It is like the story of a love-chase. If he had heard a letter from *Clarissa*, would he have been fired with the same chivalrous ardor? I wonder. Yet *Clarissa* has every quality that can be shown in prose, one alone excepted—pictorial or picture-making romance. While *Robinson* depends, for the most part and with the overwhelming majority of its readers, on the charm of circumstance.

In the highest achievements of the art of words, the dramatic and the pictorial, the moral and romantic interest, rise and fall together by a common and organic law. Situation is animated with passion, passion clothed upon with situation. Neither exists for itself, but each inheres indissolubly with the other. This is high art; and not only the highest art possible in words, but the highest art of all, since it combines the greatest mass and diversity of the elements of truth and pleasure. Such are epics, and the few prose tales that have the epic weight. But as from a school of works, aping the creative, incident and romance are ruthlessly discarded, so may character and drama be omitted or subordinated to romance. There is one book, for example, more generally loved than Shakespeare, that captivates in childhood, and still delights in age—I mean the *Arabian Nights*—where you shall look in vain for moral or for intellectual interest. No human face or voice greets us among that wooden crowd of kings and genies, sorcerers and beggarmen. Adventure, in the most naked terms, furnishes forth the entertainment, and is found enough. Dumas approaches perhaps nearest of any modern to these Arabian authors, in the purely material charm of some of his romances. The early part of *Monte Cristo*, down to the finding of the treasure, is a piece of perfect story-telling; the man never breathed who shared these moving incidents without a tremor; and yet Faria is a thing of packthread and Dantès little more than a name. The sequel is one long-drawn error, gloomy, bloody, unnatural and dull; but as for these early chapters, I do not believe there is another volume extant where you can breathe the same unmingled atmosphere of romance. It is very thin and light, to be sure, as on a high mountain; but it is brisk and clear and sunny in proportion. I saw the other day, with envy, an old and very clever lady setting forth on a second or third voyage into *Monte Cristo*. Here are stories which powerfully affect the reader, which can be reperused at any age, and where the characters are no more than puppets. The bony fist of the showman visibly propels them; their springs are an open secret; their faces are of wood; their bellies filled with bran; and yet we thrillingly partake of their adventures. And the point may be illustrated still further. The last interview between Lucy and Richard Feverel is pure drama; more than that, it is the strongest scene, since Shakespeare, in the English tongue. Their first meeting by the river, on the other hand, is pure romance; it has nothing to do with character; it might happen to any other boy and maiden, and be none the less delightful for the change. And yet I think he would be a bold man who should choose between these passages. Thus in the same book we may have two scenes, each capital in its order: in the one, human passion, deep calling unto deep, shall utter its genuine voice; in the second, according circumstances, like instruments in tune, shall build up a trivial but desirable incident, such as we love to prefigure for ourselves; and in the end, in spite of the critics, we may hesitate to give the preference to either. The one may ask more genius—I do not say it does; but at least the other dwells as clearly in the memory.

True romantic art, again, makes a romance of all things. It reaches into the highest abstraction of the ideal; it does not refuse the most pedestrian realism. *Robinson Crusoe* is as realistic as it is romantic; both qualities are pushed to an extreme, and neither suffers. Nor does romance depend upon the material importance of the incidents. To deal with strong and deadly elements, banditti, pirates, war and murder, is to conjure with great names, and, in the event of failure, to double the disgrace. The arrival of Haydn and Consuelo at the Canon's villa[13] is a very trifling incident; yet we may read a dozen boisterous stories from beginning to end, and not receive so fresh and stirring an impression of adventure. It was the scene of Crusoe at the wreck, if I remember rightly, that so bewitched my blacksmith. Nor is the fact surprising. Every single article the castaway recovers from the hulk is "a joy for ever" to the man who reads of them. They are the things that should be found, and bare enumeration stirs the blood. I found a glimmer of the same interest the other day in a new

[13] George Sand's *Consuelo*.

book, *The Sailor's Sweetheart,* by Mr. Clark Russell. The whole business of the brig *Morning Star* is very rightly felt and spiritedly written; but the clothes, the books, and the money satisfy the reader's mind like things to eat. We are dealing here with the old cut-and-dry, legitimate interest of treasure trove. But even treasure trove can be made dull. There are few people who have not groaned under the plethora of goods that fell to the lot of the Swiss Family Robinson, that dreary family. They found article after article, from milk kine to pieces of ordnance, a whole consignment; but no informing taste had presided over the selection,—there was no smack or relish in the invoice, and these riches left the fancy cold. The box of goods in Verne's *Mysterious Island* is another case in point: there was no gusto and no glamor about that; it might have come from a shop. But the two hundred and seventy-eight Australian sovereigns on board the *Morning Star* fell upon me like a surprise that I had expected; whole vistas of secondary stories, besides the one in hand, radiated forth from that discovery, as they radiate from a striking particular in life; and I was made for the moment as happy as a reader has a right to be.

To come at all at the nature of this quality of romance, we must bear in mind the peculiarity of our attitude to any art. No art produces illusion; in the theatre we never forget that we are in the theatre; and while we read a story, we sit wavering between two minds, now merely clapping our hands at the merit of the performance, now condescending to take an active part in fancy with the characters. This last is the triumph of romantic story-telling: when the reader consciously plays at being the hero, the scene is a good scene. Now in character studies the pleasure that we take is critical; we watch, we approve, we smile at incongruities, we are moved to sudden heats of sympathy for courage, suffering, or virtue. But the characters are still themselves, they are not us; the more clearly they are depicted, the more widely do they stand away from us, the more imperiously do they thrust us back into our place as a spectator. I cannot identify myself with Rawdon Crawley or with Eugène de Rastignac,[14] for I have scarce a hope or fear in common with them. It is not character but incident that woos us out of our reserve. Something happens as we desire to have it happen to ourselves; some situation, that we have long dallied with in fancy, is realized in the story with enticing and appropriate details. Then we forget the characters; then we push the hero aside; then we plunge into the tale in our own person and bathe in fresh experience; and then, and then only, do we say we have been reading a romance. It is not only pleasurable things that we imagine in our day-dreams; there are lights in which we are willing to contemplate even the idea of our own death,—ways in which it seems as if it would amuse us to be cheated, wounded, or calumniated. It is thus possible to construct a story, even of tragic import, in which every incident, detail, and trick of circumstance shall be welcome to the reader's thoughts. Fiction is to the grown man what play is to the child; it is there that he changes the atmosphere and tenor of his life; and when the game so chimes with his fancy that he can join in it with all his heart, when it pleases him at every turn, when he loves to recall it and dwells upon its recollection with entire delight, fiction is called romance.

Walter Scott is out and away the king of the romantics. *The Lady of the Lake* has no indisputable claim to be a poem beyond the inherent fitness and desirability of the tale. It is just such a story as a man would make up for himself, walking, in the best health and temper, through just such scenes as it is laid in. Hence it is that a charm dwells undefinable among these slovenly verses, as the unseen cuckoo fills the mountains with his note; hence, even after we have flung the book aside, the scenery and adventures remain present to the mind, a new and green possession, not unworthy of that beautiful name, *The Lady of the Lake,* or that direct, romantic opening—one of the most spirited and poetical in literature—"The stag at eve had drunk his fill." The same strength and the same weaknesses adorn and disfigure the novels. In that ill-written, ragged book, *The Pirate,* the figure of Cleveland—cast up by the sea on the resounding foreland of Dunrossness—moving, with the blood on his hands and the Spanish words on his tongue, among the simple islanders—singing a serenade under the window of his Shetland mistress—is conceived in the very highest manner of romantic invention. The words of his song, "Through groves of palm," sung in such a scene and by such a lover, clench, as in a nutshell, the emphatic contrast upon which the tale is built. In *Guy Mannering,* again, every incident is delightful to the imagination; and the scene when Harry Bertram lands at Ellangowan is a model instance of romantic method.

"'I remember the tune well,' he says, 'though I

[14] in Balzac's *Père Goriot.*

cannot guess what should at present so strongly recall it to my memory.' He took his flageolet from his pocket and played a simple melody. Apparently the tune awoke the corresponding associations of a damsel. . . . She immediately took up the song—

> "'Are these the links of Forth,' she said;
> 'Or are they the crooks of Dee,
> Or the bonny woods of Warroch Head
> That I so fain would see?'

"'By heaven!' said Bertram, 'it is the very ballad.'"

On this quotation two remarks fall to be made. First, as an instance of modern feeling for romance, this famous touch of the flageolet and the old song is selected by Miss Braddon for omission. Miss Braddon's idea of a story, like Mrs. Todgers's idea of a wooden leg, were something strange to have expounded. As a matter of personal experience, Meg's appearance to old Mr. Bertram on the road, the ruins of Derncleugh, the scene of the flageolet, and the Dominie's recognition of Harry, are the four strong notes that continue to ring in the mind after the book is laid aside. The second point is still more curious. The reader will observe a mark of excision in the passage as quoted by me. Well, here is how it runs in the original: "A damsel who, close behind a fine spring about half-way down the descent, and which had once supplied the castle with water, was engaged in bleaching linen." A man who gave in such copy would be discharged from the staff of a daily paper. Scott has forgotten to prepare the reader for the presence of the "damsel"; he has forgotten to mention the spring and its relation to the ruin; and now, face to face with his omission, instead of trying back and starting fair, crams all this matter, tail foremost, into a single shambling sentence. It is not merely bad English, or bad style; it is abominably bad narrative besides.

Certainly the contrast is remarkable; and it is one that throws a strong light upon the subject of this paper. For here we have a man of the finest creative instinct touching with perfect certainty and charm the romantic junctures of his story; and we find him utterly careless, almost, it would seem, incapable, in the technical matter of style, and not only frequently weak, but frequently wrong in points of drama. In character parts, indeed, and particularly in the Scotch, he was delicate, strong, and truthful; but the trite, obliterated features of too many of his heroes have already wearied two generations of readers. At times his characters will speak with something far beyond propriety with a true heroic note; but on the next page they will be wading wearily forward with an ungrammatical and undramatic rigmarole of words. The man who could conceive and write the character of Elspeth of the Craigburnfoot,[15] as Scott has conceived and written it, had not only splendid romantic, but splendid tragic gifts. How comes it, then, that he could so often fob us off with languid, inarticulate twaddle?

It seems to me that the explanation is to be found in the very quality of his surprising merits. As his books are play to the reader, so were they play to him. He conjured up the romantic with delight, but he had hardly patience to describe it. He was a great day-dreamer, a seer of fit and beautiful and humorous visions, but hardly a great artist; hardly, in the manful sense, an artist at all. He pleased himself, and so he pleases us. Of the pleasures of his art he tasted fully; but of its toils and vigils and distresses never man knew less. A great romantic—an idle child. (1882)

Pulvis et Umbra[1]

We look for some reward of our endeavors and are disappointed; not success, not happiness, not even peace of conscience, crowns our ineffectual efforts to do well. Our frailties are invincible, our virtues barren; the battle goes sore against us to the going down of the sun. The canting moralist tells us of right and wrong; and we look abroad, even on the face of our small earth, and find them change with every climate, and no country where some action is not honored for a virtue and none where it is not branded for a vice; and we look in our experience, and find no vital congruity in the wisest rules, but at the best a municipal fitness. It is not strange if we are tempted to despair of good. We ask too much. Our religions and moralities

[1] The title is taken from Horace's *Carmen Seculare*: pulvis et umbra sumus (we are dust and shade).

[15] in Scott's *The Antiquary*.

have been trimmed to flatter us, till they are all emasculate and sentimentalized, and only please and weaken. Truth is of a rougher strain. In the harsh face of life, faith can read a bracing gospel. The human race is a thing more ancient than the Ten Commandments; and the bones and revolutions of the Kosmos, in whose joints we are but moss and fungus, more ancient still.

I

Of the Kosmos in the last resort, science reports many doubtful things and all of them appalling. There seems no substance to this solid globe on which we stamp: nothing but symbols and ratios.[2] Symbols and ratios carry us and bring us forth and beat us down; gravity that swings the incommensurable suns and worlds through space, is but a figment varying inversely as the squares of distances; and the suns and worlds themselves, imponderable figures of abstraction, NH_3 and H_2O.[3] Consideration dares not dwell upon this view; that way madness lies; science carries us into zones of speculation, where there is no habitable city for the mind of man.

But take the Kosmos with a grosser faith, as our senses give it us. We behold space sown with rotatory islands, suns and worlds and the shards and wrecks of systems: some, like the sun, still blazing; some rotting, like the earth; others, like the moon, stable in desolation. All of these we take to be made of something we call matter: a thing which no analysis can help us to conceive; to whose incredible properties no familiarities can reconcile our minds. This stuff, when not purified by the lustration of fire, rots uncleanly into something we call life; seized through all its atoms with a pediculous[4] malady; swelling in tumors that become independent, sometimes even (by an abhorrent prodigy) locomotory; one splitting into millions, millions cohering into one, as the malady proceeds through varying stages. This vital putrescence of the dust, used as we are to it, yet strikes us with occasional disgust, and the profusion of worms in a piece of ancient turf, or the air of a marsh darkened with insects, will sometimes check our breathing so that we aspire for cleaner places. But none is clean: the moving sand is infected with lice; the pure spring, where it bursts out of the mountain, is a mere issue of worms; even in the hard rock the crystal is forming.

In two main shapes this eruption covers the countenance of the earth: the animal and the vegetable: one in some degree the inversion of the other: the second rooted to the spot; the first coming detached out of its natal mud, and scurrying abroad with the myriad feet of insects or towering into the heavens on the wings of birds: a thing so incomprehensible that, if it be well considered, the heart stops. To what passes with the anchored vermin,[5] we have little clue: doubtless they have their joys and sorrows, their delights and killing agonies: it appears not how. But of the locomotory, to which we ourselves belong, we can tell more. These share with us a thousand miracles: the miracles of sight, of hearing, of the projection of sound, things that bridge space; the miracles of memory and reason, by which the present is conceived, and when it is gone, its image kept living in the brains of man and brute; the miracle of reproduction, with its imperious desires and staggering consequences. And to put the last touch upon this mountain mass of the revolting and the inconceivable, all these prey upon each other, lives tearing other lives in pieces, cramming them inside themselves, and by that summary process, growing fat: the vegetarian, the whale, perhaps the tree, not less than the lion of the desert; for the vegetarian is only the eater of the dumb.

Meanwhile our rotatory island loaded with predatory life, and more drenched with blood, both animal and vegetable, than ever mutinied ship, scuds through space with unimaginable speed, and turns alternate cheeks to the reverberation of a blazing world, ninety million miles away.

II

What a monstrous specter is this man, the disease of the agglutinated dust, lifting alternate feet or lying drugged with slumber; killing, feeding, growing, bringing forth small copies of himself; grown upon with hair like grass, fitted with eyes that move and glitter in his face; a thing to set children screaming;—and yet looked at nearlier, known as his fellows know him, how surprising are his attributes! Poor soul, here for so little, cast among so many hardships, filled with desires so incommensurate and so inconsistent, savagely surrounded, savagely descended, irremediably condemned to prey upon his fellow lives: who should have blamed

[2] when the universe is considered from the mathematical or chemical point of view.

[3] the chemical formulas for ammonia and water.

[4] louse-like.

[5] the vegetable world.

him had he been of a piece with his destiny and a being merely barbarous? And we look and behold him instead filled with imperfect virtues: infinitely childish, often admirably valiant, often touchingly kind; sitting down, amidst his momentary life, to debate of right and wrong and the attributes of the deity; rising up to do battle for an egg or die for an idea; singling out his friends and his mate with cordial affection; bringing forth in pain, rearing with long-suffering solicitude, his young. To touch the heart of his mystery, we find in him one thought, strange to the point of lunacy: the thought of duty; the thought of something owing to himself, to his neighbor, to his God; an ideal of decency, to which he would rise if it were possible; a limit of shame below which, if it be possible, he will not stoop. The design in most men is one of conformity; here and there, in picked natures, it transcends itself and soars on the other side, arming martyrs with independence; but in all, in their degrees, it is a bosom thought:—Not in man alone, for we trace it in dogs and cats whom we know fairly well, and doubtless some similar point of honor sways the elephant, the oyster, and the louse, of whom we know so little:—But in man, at least, it sways with so complete an empire that merely selfish things come second, even with the selfish: that appetites are starved, fears are conquered, pains supported; that almost the dullest shrinks from the reproof of a glance, although it were a child's; and all but the most cowardly stand amid the risks of war; and the more noble, having strongly conceived an act as due to their ideal, affront and embrace death. Strange enough if, with their singular origin and perverted practice, they think they are to be rewarded in some future life: stranger still, if they are persuaded of the contrary, and think this blow, which they solicit, will strike them senseless for eternity. I shall be reminded what a tragedy of misconception and misconduct man at large presents: of organized injustice, cowardly violence, and treacherous crime; and of the damning imperfections of the best. They cannot be too darkly drawn. Man is indeed marked for failure in his efforts to do right. But where the best consistently miscarry, how tenfold more remarkable that all should continue to strive; and surely we should find it both touching and inspiriting, that in a field from which success is banished, our race should not cease to labor.

If the first view of this creature, stalking in his rotatory isle, be a thing to shake the courage of the stoutest, on this nearer sight, he startles us with an admiring wonder. It matters not where we look, under what climate we observe him, in what stage of society, in what depth of ignorance, burthened with what erroneous morality; by camp-fires in Assiniboia,[5] the snow powdering his shoulders, the wind plucking his blanket, as he sits, passing the ceremonial calumet and uttering his grave opinions like a Roman senator; in ships at sea, a man inured to hardship and vile pleasures, his brightest hope a fiddle in a tavern and a bedizened trull who sells herself to rob him, and he for all that simple, innocent, cheerful, kindly like a child, constant to toil, brave to drown, for others; in the slums of cities, moving among indifferent millions to mechanical employments, without hope of change in the future, with scarce a pleasure in the present, and yet true to his virtues, honest up to his lights, kind to his neighbors, tempted perhaps in vain by the bright gin-palace, perhaps long-suffering with the drunken wife that ruins him; in India (a woman this time) kneeling with broken cries and streaming tears, as she drowns her child in the sacred river; in the brothel, the discard of society, living mainly on strong drink, fed with affronts, a fool, a thief, the comrade of thieves, and even here keeping the point of honor and the touch of pity, often repaying the world's scorn with service, often standing firm upon a scruple, and at a certain cost, rejecting riches:—everywhere some virtue cherished or affected, everywhere some decency of thought and carriage, everywhere the ensign of man's ineffectual goodness:—ah! if I could show you this! If I could show you these men and women, all the world over, in every stage of history, under every abuse of error, under every circumstance of failure, without hope, without help, without thanks, still obscurely fighting the lost fight of virtue, still clinging, in the brothel or on the scaffold, to some rag of honor, the poor jewel of their souls! They may seek to escape, and yet they cannot; it is not alone their privilege and glory, but their doom; they are condemned to some nobility; all their lives long, the desire of good is at their heels, the implacable hunter.

Of all earth's meteors, here at least is the most strange and consoling: that this ennobled lemur, this hair-crowned bubble of the dust, this inheritor of a few years and sorrows, should yet deny himself his rare delights, and add to his frequent pains, and live for an ideal, however misconceived. Nor can we stop with man. A new doctrine,[6] received

[5] a former province in northern Canada.

[6] evolution, expounded in Darwin's *Origin of Species.*

with screams a little while ago by canting moralists, and still not properly worked into the body of our thoughts, lights us a step farther into the heart of this rough but noble universe. For nowadays the pride of man denies in vain his kinship with the original dust. He stands no longer like a thing apart. Close at his heels we see the dog, prince of another genus: and in him too, we see dumbly testified the same cultus of an unattainable ideal, the same constancy in failure. Does it stop with the dog? We look at our feet where the ground is blackened with the swarming ant: a creature so small, so far from us in the hierarchy of brutes, that we can scarce trace and scarce comprehend his doings; and here also, in his ordered polities and rigorous justice, we see confessed the law of duty and the fact of individual sin. Does it stop, then, with the ant? Rather this desire of well-doing and this doom of frailty run through all the grades of life: rather is this earth, from the frosty top of Everest to the next margin of the internal fire, one stage of ineffectual virtues and one temple of pious tears and perseverance. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth together. It is the common and the god-like law of life. The browsers, the biters, the barkers, the hairy coats of field and forest, the squirrel in the oak, the thousand-footed creeper in the dust, as they share with us the gift of life, share with us the love of an ideal: strive like us—like us are tempted to grow weary of the struggle—to do well; like us receive at times unmerited refreshment, visitings of support, returns of courage; and are condemned like us to be crucified between that double law of the members and the will. Are they like us, I wonder, in the timid hope of some reward, some sugar with the drug? do they, too, stand aghast at unrewarded virtues, at the sufferings of those whom, in our partiality, we take to be just, and the prosperity of such as, in our blindness, we call wicked? It may be, and yet God knows what they should look for. Even while they look, even while they repent, the foot of man treads them by thousands in the dust, the yelping hounds burst upon their trail, the bullet speeds, the knives are heating in the den of the vivisectionist; or the dew falls, and the generation of a day is blotted out. For these are creatures, compared with whom our weakness is strength, our ignorance wisdom, our brief span eternity.

And as we dwell, we living things, in our isle of terror and under the imminent hand of death, God forbid it should be man the erected, the reasoner, the wise in his own eyes—God forbid it should be man that wearies in well-doing, that despairs of unrewarded effort, or utters the language of complaint. Let it be enough for faith, that the whole creation groans in mortal frailty, strives with unconquerable constancy: surely not all in vain. (1888)

Thomas Hardy

(1840-1928)

The great literary landscapist of Wessex was born at Dorchester in the center of this district on June 2, 1840. The land of his birth and the profession of architecture for which he was trained were both to play leading roles in his novels and poems. Especially in his novels the varying countryside of the southern English counties, and the forces of nature which find play there, seem almost as important agents as any of the human characters.

Until he was nearly sixty he wrote novels, filled with a fatalism and deeply-grounded pessimism that at once shocked his readers and impelled their interest. Of these novels perhaps the best are *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874), *The Return of the Native* (1878), *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1885), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1896). The two latter display an ever-increasing pessimism and explore Hardy's tragic powers to their greatest depths.

The unfavorable reception given to *Jude* caused Hardy to abandon the novel and resume the writing of poetry. Thus at an advanced age he began a new career extremely

productive not only in quantity but also in originality and high poetic worth. In 1904 he published the first part of *The Dynasts,* a gigantic drama of the Napoleonic wars extending through three books, nineteen acts, and a hundred and thirty scenes. Thereafter he wrote voluminously in verse until the end of his life, and with increased rather than diminished powers. He died in his eighty-eighth year on January 11, 1928.

It would be a mistake to try to characterize Hardy's literary work by the use of any one simple formula. There is a great variety in his production. When he wishes he is able to write lyrics of the greatest beauty. At other times when he desires to present a realistic picture, of disagreeable people or of tragic conflict, he bends his verse to fit the needs of the situation. He is able, whether in his cameo-like *Satires of Circumstances* or in the fuller canvas of his longer narratives, to tell a tale in a manner seldom equaled by the novelist.

Hardy's readers have always been struck by his pessimism and, though he himself denied that he was a pessimist, there is no doubt that even when he was trying to look at men and women with unbiased eyes, he saw them only as helpless pawns in a losing game. How much the work of Schopenhauer (cf. *above,* p. 752) may have actually affected Hardy's view of life it is impossible to state; the fatalism and hopelessness that that philosopher had expressed to the generation of Hardy's childhood had, certainly, become a part of the intellectual atmosphere in which the novelist lived and wrote, and must be considered a factor in the latter's work.

Hardy's collected novels were published beginning in 1897. He issued his *Collected Poems* in 1919. Three further volumes were published in his last decade: *Late Lyrics and Earlier* (1922), *Human Shows: Far Fantasies, Songs and Trifles* (1925), and *Winter Words in Various Moods and Metres* (1928). Noteworthy studies of Hardy are by Lionel Johnson (1894), Lascelles Abercrombie (1912), H. C. Duffin (1916), Ernst Brennecke (1925), S. C. Chew (1928), and A. S. McDowell (1931). His definitive biography is by Florence E. Hardy in two volumes (1928, 1930). Works on the Hardy country are by W. Sherren (1902), Bertram C. A. Windle (1902), C. G. Harper (1904), and H. Lea (1906, 1913). Hardy's works are published by The Macmillan Company, by arrangement with whom the following poems are reprinted.

Rome

AT THE PYRAMID OF CESTIUS NEAR THE GRAVES OF SHELLEY AND KEATS

Who, then, was Cestius,
And what is he to me?—
Amid thick thoughts and memories multitudinous
One thought alone brings he.

I can recall no word
Of anything he did;
For me he is a man who died and was interred
To leave a pyramid

Whose purpose was exprest
Not with its first design,
Nor till, far down in Time, beside it found their rest
Two countrymen of mine.

Cestius in life, maybe,
Slew, breathed out threatening;
I know not. This I know: in death all silently
He does a finer thing,

In beckoning pilgrim feet
With marble finger high
To where, by shadowy wall and history-haunted street,
Those matchless singers lie. . . .

—Say, then, he lived and died
That stones which bear his name
Should mark, through Time, where two immortal Shades abide;
It is an ample fame. (1887)

A Christmas Ghost-Story

South of the Line, inland from far Durban,
A moldering soldier lies—your countryman.
Awry and doubled up are his gray bones,
And on the breeze his puzzled phantom moans
Nightly to clear Canopus: "I would know
By whom and when the All-Earth-gladdening Law
Of Peace, brought in by that Man Crucified,
Was ruled to be inept, and set aside?
And what of logic or of truth appears
In tacking 'Anno Domini' to the years?
Near twenty-hundred liveried thus have hied,
But tarries yet the Cause for which He died."

(Christmas Eve, 1899)

Ah, Are You Digging on My Grave?

"Ah, are you digging on my grave
My loved one?—planting rue?"
—"No: yesterday he went to wed
One of the brightest wealth has bred.
'It cannot hurt her now,' he said,
'That I should not be true.'"

"Then who is digging on my grave?
My nearest dearest kin?"
—"Ah, no: they sit and think, 'What use!
What good will planting flowers produce?
No tendance of her mound can loose
Her spirit from Death's gin.'"

"But some one digs upon my grave?
My enemy?—prodding sly?"
—"Nay: when she heard you had passed the Gate
That shuts on all flesh soon or late,
She thought you no more worth her hate,
And cares not where you lie."

"Then, who is digging on my grave?
Say—since I have not guessed!"
—"O it is I, my mistress dear,
Your little dog, who still lives near,
And much I hope my movements here
Have not disturbed your rest?"

"Ah, yes! *You* dig upon my grave . . .
Why flashed it not on me
That one true heart was left behind!
What feeling do we ever find
To equal among human kind
A dog's fidelity!"

"Mistress, I dug upon your grave
To bury a bone, in case
I should be hungry near this spot
When passing on my daily trot.
I am sorry, but I quite forgot
It was your resting-place."

(1914)

Rudyard Kipling

(1865-1936)

At the end of the nineteenth century no English writer approached Rudyard Kipling in popularity. Born in Bombay December 30, 1865, he was educated in England. At the age of seventeen, in India as sub-editor of the Lahore *Civil and Military Gazette*, he capably filled the role of interpreter of the life of India to other parts of the British Empire and to the world. By his twenty-first year he had published *Departmental Ditties*, which contained one or two poems giving promise of his future success. It was not, however, in poetry that he was first to become famous. In 1887 he published his *Plain Tales from the Hills* and during the next two years wrote six of his best short stories. These were everywhere acclaimed, and Kipling was the sensation of the day. He traveled around the world and published fascinating accounts of his journeys. In 1891 he made secure his position as the leading short story writer in English by the publication of a new collection called *Life's Handicaps*.

Throughout his career Kipling continued the writing of short stories. He also wrote *The Light that Failed* and *Kim*, but was not altogether successful as a novelist. In his *Jungle Book* and *Second Jungle Book* (1894-95) he showed that when he wished he could tell some of the most engaging stories for young people that have been produced in English.

Kipling's success as a writer of prose in all its forms would be enough to establish him as an im-

portant literary figure, but to his generation he was above all things a poet. It is fitting that his introduction in this role to the British public should have come through the pages of Henley's *National Observer*. With his dislike of the esthetic and effeminate poems produced by the imitators of the Victorians and the Pre-Raphaelites, Henley gloried in the masculinity of Kipling's *Barrack-Room Ballads*, and he was joined by millions of readers everywhere. At last there was a poet whom full-blooded men without artistic training could read and understand. *Mandalay* and *Gunga Din* were recited everywhere and soon were being sung by baritones and imitated by young poets.

In many ways Kipling was the first poet of the British Empire, for his view was by no means limited to England. He writes of Australia, Canada, and the far-flung outposts of British imperialism. A whole series of his poems concerns the war in South Africa. In all these there is no hint of doubt about the righteousness of England's ambitions in extending her sway. There is much talk of the white man's burden and not a little of plain British jingoism. In only one poem does he seem to realize the virtue of national humility, and for this reason it comes near to being his most permanent contribution. *Recessional* will probably be admired when all those poems in which, as Arthur Guiterman says, he

bellowed double bass
For the glory of the race

have become mere curiosities illustrating the war fever of a generation we can hardly understand.

Kipling's decline in public favor was almost as rapid and complete as his success. In 1900 his poems were cabled abroad and published on the front pages of our newspapers. In 1910 we were already speaking of him as of the past. Yet Kipling was to live on and continue writing for another quarter-century until his death January 18, 1936.

As we reread his poems, we see some of the reasons for his ultimate failure. Seldom has he not written at twice the necessary length. Not all his zest for life, the strong drum-beat of his measures, can quite overcome the tedium of many of those poems highly praised in their generation. But it is well to remember that their generation did praise them, that they came as a new revelation to a world that had grown a little weary of its ladylike poets and found in Kipling the singer who expressed their thoughts and gave voice to their emotions.

Kipling's works have been collected and published in several editions. His poems have been frequently issued and brought up to date. Good bibliographies of his work are by E. W. Martindell (1923) and F. V. Livingston (1927). There have been several biographies, notably those by R. T. Hopkins (1915, 1921) and Anice P. Cooper (1926). His autobiography, entitled *Something of Myself*, appeared in 1937. Good criticisms are those of R. T. Hopkins, *Rudyard Kipling, a Literary Appreciation* (1915), and W. M. Hart, *Kipling, the Story Writer* (1918).

Mandalay, (from *Departmental Ditties and Barrack Room Ballads*, copyright 1892, 1927) and *Recessional* (from *The Five Nations*, copyright 1903, 1931) are reprinted by permission of Mrs. Kipling and Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc.

Mandalay

By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin' eastward to the sea,
There's a Burma girl a-settin', an' I know she thinks o' me;
For the wind is in the palm-trees, an' the temple-bells they say:
"Come you back, you British soldier; come you back to Mandalay!"
Come you back to Mandalay,
Where the old Flotilla lay:
Can't you 'ear their paddles chunkin' from Rangoon to Mandalay?
On the road to Mandalay,
Where the flyin'-fishes play,
An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer China 'crost the Bay!

'Er petticut was yeller an' 'er little cap was green,
An' 'er name was Supi-yaw-lat[1]—jes' the same as Theebaw's Queen;
An' I seed her fust a-smokin' of a whackin' white cheroot,
An' a-wastin' Christian kisses on an 'eathen idol's foot:
Bloomin' idol made o' mud—
Wot they called the Great Gawd Budd—
Plucky lot she cared for idols when I kissed 'er where she stud!
On the road to Mandalay—

When the mist was on the rice-fields an' the sun was droppin' slow,
She'd git 'er little banjo an' she'd sing *"Kulla-lo-lo!"*

[1] queen of Theebaw, last king of Burma (1876-1885), noted for her cruelty.

With 'er arm upon my shoulder an' her cheek
agin my cheek
We useter watch the steamers an' the *hathis*[2] pilin'
teak.[3]
Elephints a-pilin' teak
In the sludgy, squdgy creek,
Where the silence 'ung that 'eavy you was
'arf afraid to speak!
On the road to Mandalay—

But that's all shove be'ind me—long ago an' fur
away,
An' there ain't no 'buses runnin' from the Benk
to Mandalay;
An' I'm learnin' 'ere in London what the tenyear
sodger tells:
"If you've 'eard the East a-callin', why, you won't
'eed nothin' else."
No! you won't 'eed nothin' else
But them spicy garlic smells
An' the sunshine an' the palm-trees an' the
tinkly temple bells!
On the road to Mandalay—

I am sick o' wastin' leather on these gritty pavin'-
stones,
An' the blasted Henglish drizzle wakes the fever
in my bones;
Tho' I walks with fifty 'ousemaids outer Chelsea
to the Strand,
An' they talks a lot o' lovin', but wot do they un-
derstand?
Beefy face an' grubby 'and—
Law! wot *do* they understand?
I've a neater, sweeter maiden in a cleaner,
greener land!
On the road to Mandalay—

Ship me somewheres east of Suez where the best
is like the worst,
Where there aren't no Ten Commandments, an'
a man can raise a thirst;
For the temple-bells are callin', an' it's there that
I would be—
By the old Moulmein Pagoda, lookin' lazy at the
sea—
On the road to Mandalay,
Where the old Flotilla lay,
With our sick beneath the awnings when we
went to Mandalay!
Oh, the road to Mandalay,
Where the flying-fishes play,
An' the dawn comes up like thunder outer
China 'crost the Bay!

(1890)

[2] elephants.
[3] teak-wood.

Recessional

"Reverence is the master-key of knowledge."

God of our fathers, known of old—
Lord of our far-flung battle-line—
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies—
The captains and the kings depart—
Still stands Thine ancient Sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called our navies melt away—
On dune and headland sinks the fire—
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe—
Such boasting as the Gentiles use
Or lesser breeds without the Law—
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard—
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding calls not Thee to guard—
For frantic boast and foolish word,
Thy mercy on Thy People, Lord!
Amen.

(1897)

Alfred Edward Housman

(1859-1936)

Nothing would perhaps have more surprised the reader of 1896, if he could have looked forward forty years, than the fact that the most important poetic production of that year was not the work of Rudyard Kipling but that of a quiet professor of Latin at University College, London. *A Shropshire Lad* brought no attention to the author, who did not even take the trouble to secure copyright on his work. But year by year this group of short lyrics has risen in critical esteem while the vast majority of poems written at the same time have long been forgotten.

A. E. Housman was born March 26, 1859. After taking his Master's degree at Oxford, he held a position in the British Patent Office until 1892. After this he became Professor of Latin, first at University College, London, and later (after 1911) at Cambridge. In the classics he was an outstanding scholar. In all its outward aspects, his life was almost altogether uneventful. He died May 2, 1936.

After the appearance of *A Shropshire Lad* in 1896 he issued no poetry for twenty-six years. In 1922 appeared his *Last Poems*, of which he said: "I publish these poems, few though they are, because it is not likely that I shall ever be impelled to write much more. I can no longer expect to be revisited by the continuous excitement under which in the early months of 1895 I wrote the greater part of my other book, nor indeed could I well sustain it if it came." There is remarkable similarity between the poems of the later collection and those of its predecessor. After his death his brother issued a final volume, though it is generally agreed that the standard is not so high as in either of the previous ones. Perhaps many of these poems represent attempts which Housman's meticulous taste had discarded.

As a writer of pure lyrics, Housman has seldom been surpassed. His understanding of the capacities of the English language to produce desired sound effects has made him able to write with what seems the utmost ease, so that his readers are deceived by the simplicity of his verse. But under their surface beauty lurks a profound pessimism. Life is short. Even the youth of twenty remembers that he has only fifty springs left. It is useless to try to deceive oneself, whether with fair words or with ale. Though one may hope for good, he must prepare for ill. Golden boys and rose-lipped girls have all gone to death. The beauty of the idle hill of summer is disturbed by the tramp of soldiers marching off to die—"lovely lads, and dead, and rotten." In such a world nothing goes quicker than love. The great comforter of all men is death.

And yet this extreme pessimism is not the pessimism of defeat. Housman looks the world in the face and reports what he sees. Knowing that life is struggle, he urges us to enter it with knowledge of all the odds. If we inoculate ourselves with all the poisons of Mithridates, we shall be able like him to survive all the poison that appears in our cup.

The three volumes of poems already mentioned represent Housman's entire output in verse. At Cambridge, in May 1933, he delivered a lecture which he later issued under the title *The Name and Nature of Poetry* (1933). A .F. Gow's *Life* contains a bibliography. .

Reveille

Wake: the silver dusk returning
  Up the beach of darkness brims,
And the ship of sunrise burning
  Strands upon the eastern rims.

Wake: the vaulted shadow shatters,
  Trampled to the floor it spanned,
And the tent of night in tatters
  Straws the sky-pavilioned land.

Up, lad, up, 'tis late for lying:
  Hear the drums of morning play;
Hark, the empty highways crying
  "Who'll beyond the hills away?"

Towns and countries woo together,
  Forelands beacon, belfries call;
Never lad that trod on leather
  Lived to feast his heart with all.

Up, lad: thews that lie and cumber
  Sunlit pallets never thrive;
Morns abed and daylight slumber
  Were not meant for man alive.

Clay lies still, but blood's a rover;
  Breath's a ware that will not keep.
Up, lad: when the journey's over
  There'll be time enough to sleep.

(1896)

Oh, See How Thick the Goldcup Flowers

Oh, see how thick the goldcup flowers
  Are lying in field and lane,
With dandelions to tell the hours
  That never are told again.
Oh, may I squire you round the meads
  And pick you posies gay?
—'T will do no harm to take my arm.
  'You may, young man, you may.'

Ah, spring was sent for lass and lad,
  'T is now the blood runs gold,
And man and maid had best be glad
  Before the world is old.
What flowers to-day may flower to-morrow,
  But never as good as new.
—Suppose I wound my right arm round—
  ' 'T is true, young man, 't is true.'

Some lads there are, 't is shame to say,
  That only court to thieve,
And once they bear the bloom away
  'T is little enough they leave.
Then keep your heart for men like me
  And safe from trustless chaps.
My love is true for all and you.
  'Perhaps, young man, perhaps.'

Oh, look in my eyes then, can you doubt?
  —Why, 't is a mile from town.
How green the grass is all about!
  We might as well sit down.
—Ah, life, what is it but a flower?
  Why must true lovers sigh?
Be kind, have pity, my own, my pretty,—
  'Good-by, young man, good-by.'

(1896)

When I Was One-and-Twenty

When I was one-and-twenty
  I heard a wise man say,
"Give crowns and pounds and guineas
  But not your heart away;
Give pearls away and rubies
  But keep your fancy free."
But I was one-and-twenty,
  No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty
  I heard him say again,
"The heart out of the bosom
  Was never given in vain;
'Tis paid with sighs a-plenty
  And sold for endless rue."
And I am two-and-twenty,
  And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

(1896)

With Rue My Heart Is Laden

With rue my heart is laden
  For golden friends I had,
For many a rose-lipt maiden
  And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping
  The lightfoot boys are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
  In fields where roses fade.

(1896)

To an Athlete Dying Young

The time you won your town the race
  We chaired you through the market-place;
Man and boy stood cheering by,
  And home we brought you shoulder-high.

To-day, the road all runners come,
  Shoulder-high we bring you home.
And set you at your threshold down,
  Townsman of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
  From fields where glory does not stay,
And early though the laurel grows
  It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut
  Cannot see the record cut,
And silence sounds no worse than cheers
  After earth has stopped the ears.

Now you will not swell the rout
  Of lads that wore their honors out,
Runners whom renown outran
  And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade.
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laurelled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.

(1896)

Bredon Hill

In summertime on Bredon
The bells they sound so clear;
Round both the shires they ring them
In steeples far and near,
A happy noise to hear.

Here of a Sunday morning
My love and I would lie,
And see the colored counties,[1]
And hear the larks so high
About us in the sky.

The bells would ring to call her
In valleys miles away:
"Come all to church, good people;
Good people, come and pray."
But here my love would stay.

And I would turn and answer
Among the springing thyme,
"Oh, peal upon our wedding,
And we will hear the chime,
And come to church in time."

But when the snows at Christmas
On Bredon top were strown,
My love rose up so early
And stole out unbeknown
And went to church alone.

They tolled the one bell only,
Groom there was none to see,
The mourners followed after,
And so to church went she,
And would not wait for me.

The bells they sound on Bredon,
And still the steeples hum.
"Come all to church, good people,"—
Oh, noisy bells, be dumb;
I hear you, I will come.

(1896)

[1] From Bredon Hill may be seen the varied landscape of five counties—Worcester, Gloucester, Hereford, Warwick, and Oxford.

White in the Moon

White in the moon the long road lies,
The moon stands blank above;
White in the moon the long road lies
That leads me from my love.

Still hangs the hedge without a gust.
Still, still the shadows stay:
My feet upon the moonlight dust
Pursue the ceaseless way.

The world is round, so travellers tell,
And straight though reach the track,
Trudge on, trudge on, 'twill all be well,
The way will guide one back.

But ere the circle homeward hies
Far, far it must remove:
White in the moon the long road lies
That leads me from my love.

(1896)

Far in a Western Brookland

Far in a western brookland
That bred me long ago
The poplars stand and tremble
By pools I used to know.

There, in the windless night-time
The wanderer, marvelling why,
Halts on the bridge to hearken
How soft the poplars sigh.

He hears: long since forgotten
In fields where I was known,
Here I lie down in London
And turn to rest alone.

There, by the starlit fences,
The wanderer halts and hears
My soul that lingers sighing
About the glimmering weirs.

(1896)

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