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SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF LORD MORLEY



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SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF LORD MORLEY

EDITED AND ARRANGED BY

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PROFESSOR, MUIR CENTRAL COLLEGE, ALLAHABAD; UNITED PROVINCES EDUCATIONAL SERVICE

"... homo, qui erranti comiter monstrat viam,
Quasi de suo lumine lumen accendat facit:
Nihilo minus ipsi lucet, cum illi accenderit."

ENNIUS.

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PREFATORY NOTE

More often than not, a preface is an apology. For the present volume, however, no apology is needed, and none will here be made. For Lord Morley is one of those rare persons who have left their mark in two widely-distanced spheres of human activity—literature and politics. People may differ from him, may think him occasionally too cautious, sometimes over-confident in the powers, beneficent influences and eventual triumph of Democracy. But one is forced—almost, at times, against one's will—to acknowledge in him one of the great masters of the Victorian era in literature. He has known well and met on equal terms almost all great thinkers and writers of a bygone generation. Then again, he is no mere 'singer of an empty day.' Like Bacon in the sixteenth century, Lord Morley has taken an active and far more honourable and memorable share in the government of his country. If Bacon 'wrote philosophy like a Lord Chancellor,' it may be said with equal truthfulness that Lord Morley has brought into

the rather stormy realm of practical politics the spirit of Mill and Comte and Burke and the other heroes of his creed. His writings are admired as well for the opinions which they contain as for the persuasive, incisive and *scharf* style which distinguishes them. Indians feel towards him, 'the disciple of Mill, the reverent student of Burke, the friend and biographer of Gladstone,' as towards a master—as the late Mr. Gokhale well put it. To us he is an embodiment of British Liberalism—that Liberalism the governing purpose of which was recently (May 16, 1919) declared by Mr. Asquith to be 'not to secure for this class or that class, but for all the community, every class of the community without distinction, without discrimination, without partiality or preference—to secure for all the community freedom in its fullest and most fruitful sense, both in corporate and individual life.'

That is one reason why Lord Morley's writings are so respected in India. Their frankness is another. A third is his hatred of cant and freedom from the tyranny of the catchword. But *vita brevis*, and man, in this busy century of ours, can afford only a sifting and selection even in the case of books eminently worth reading. The present volume is intended merely as an introduction to the original books and may for that reason be not entirely without usefulness.

I most respectfully thank Lord Morley for the graciousness with which he gave me permission to make these selections, and Messrs. Macmillan and Co. Ltd. for ratifying the same. My friend and quondam colleague, Prof. Nandalal Ganguly, M.A., of the Nagpur Morris College, and my friend and pupil, Mr. Anandanarain Sapru have rendered valuable assistance for which I am deeply obliged.

AMARANATHA JHA.

MUIR C. COLLEGE,
ALLAHABAD,
July 13, 1919.

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I

BURKE'S PLACE IN LITERATURE AND POLITICS

It will soon be a hundred and twenty years since Burke first took his seat in the House of Commons, and it is eighty-five years since his voice ceased to be heard there. Since his death, as during his life, opinion as to the place to which he is entitled among the eminent men of his country has touched every extreme. Tories have extolled him as the saviour of Europe. Whigs have detested him as the destroyer of his party. One undiscriminating panegyrist calls him the most profound and comprehensive of political philosophers that has yet existed in the world. Another and more distinguished writer insists that he is a resplendent and farseeing rhetorician, rather than a deep and subtle thinker. A third tells us that his works cannot be too much our study, if we mean either to understand or to maintain against its various enemies, open and concealed, designing and mistaken, the singular constitution of this fortunate island. A fourth, on the contrary, declares that it would be hard to find a single leading principle or prevailing sentiment in one half of these works, to which something extremely adverse cannot be found in the other half. A fifth calls him one of the greatest men, and,

Bacon alone excepted, the greatest thinker, who ever devoted himself to the practice of English politics. Yet, oddly enough, the author of the fifth verdict will have it that this great man and great thinker was actually out of his mind when he composed the pieces for which he has been most widely admired and revered.

A sufficient interval has now passed to allow all the sediment of party fanaticism to fall to the bottom. The circumstances of the world have since Burke's time undergone variation enough to enable us to judge, from many points of view, how far he was a contributor to the universal stock of enduring wisdom. Opinion is slowly, but without reaction, settling down to the verdict that Burke is one of the abiding names in our history, not because he either saved Europe or destroyed the Whig party, but because he added to the permanent considerations of wise political thought and to the maxims of wise practice in great affairs, and because he imprints himself upon us with a magnificence and elevation of expression that places him among the highest masters of literature in one of its highest and most commanding senses. Those who have acquired a love for abstract politics amid the almost mathematical closeness and precision of Hobbes, the philosophic calm of Locke or Mill, or even the majestic and solemn fervour of Milton, are revolted by the unrestrained passion and the decorated style of Burke. His passion appears hopelessly fatal to success in the pursuit of Truth, who does not usually reveal herself to followers thus inflamed. His ornate style appears fatal to the cautious and precise method

of statement, suitable to matter which is not known at all unless it is known distinctly. Yet the natural ardour which impelled Burke to clothe his judgments in glowing and exaggerated phrases, is one secret of his power over us, because it kindles in those who are capable of that generous infection a respondent interest and sympathy. But more than this, the reader is speedily conscious of the precedence in Burke of the facts of morality and conduct, of the many interwoven affinities of human affection and historical relation, over the unreal necessities of mere abstract logic. Burke's mind was full of the matter of great truths, copiously enriched from the fountains of generous and many-coloured feeling. He thought about life as a whole, with all its infirmities and all its pomps. With none of the mental exclusiveness of the moralist by profession, he fills every page with solemn reference and meaning; with none of the mechanical bustle of the common politician, he is everywhere conscious of the mastery of laws, institutions, and government over the character and happiness of men. Besides thus diffusing a strong light over the awful tides of human circumstance, Burke has the sacred gift of inspiring men to use a grave diligence in caring for high things, and in making their lives at once rich and austere. Such a part in literature is indeed high. We feel no emotion of revolt when Mackintosh speaks of Shakespeare and Burke in the same breath, as being both of them above mere talent. And we do not dissent when Macaulay, after reading Burke's works over again, exclaims, "How admirable: The greatest man since Milton."

II

BURKE IN HIS FINANCIAL MATTERS

THE unhappy truth is that from the middle of 1769, when we find him applying to Garrick for the loan of a thousand pounds, down to 1794 when the king gave him a pension, Burke was never free from the harassing strain of debts and want of money. It has been stated with good show of authority that his obligations to Lord Rockingham amounted to not less than thirty thousand pounds. When that nobleman died (1782), with a generosity which is not the less honourable to him for having been so richly earned by the faithful friend who was the object of it, he left instructions to his executors that all Burke's bonds should be destroyed.

We may indeed wish from the bottom of our hearts that all this had been otherwise. But those who press it as a reproach against Burke's memory, may be justly reminded that when Pitt died, after drawing the pay of a minister for twenty years, he left debts to the amount of forty thousand pounds. Burke had none of the vices of profusion, but he had that quality which Aristotle places high among the virtues—the noble mean of Magnificence, standing midway between the two extremes of vulgar ostentation and narrow pettiness. At least, every creditor was paid in good time, and nobody suffered but himself. Those who think these disagreeable matters of supreme importance, and allow such things to stand between them and Burke's greatness, are like the people

—slightly to alter a figure from a philosopher of old—who, when they went to Olympia, could only perceive that they were scorched by the sun, and pressed by the crowd, and deprived of comfortable means of bathing, and wetted by the rain, and that life was full of disagreeable and troublesome things, and so they almost forgot the great colossus of ivory and gold, Phidias's statue of Zeus, which they had come to see, and which stood in all its glory and power before their perturbed and foolish vision.

III

BURKE'S DEFENCE OF THE PARTY SYSTEM

THE same opposition of the positive to the doctrinaire spirit is to be observed in the remarkable vindication of Party which fills the last dozen pages of the pamphlet,[1] and which is one of the most courageous of all Burke's deliverances. Party combination is exactly one of those contrivances which, as it might seem, a wise man would accept for working purposes, but about which he would take care to say as little as possible. There appears to be something revolting to the intellectual integrity and self-respect of the individual in the systematic surrender of his personal action, interest, and power to a political connexion in which his own judgment may never once be allowed to count for anything. It is like the surrender of the right of private judgment to the authority of the Church, but with its nakedness not concealed by a

[1] *Thoughts on the Present Discontents.*

mystic doctrine. Nothing is more easy to demolish by the bare logical reason. But Burke cared nothing about the bare logical reason until it had been clothed in convenience and custom, in the affections on one side and experience on the other. Not content with insisting that for some special purpose of the hour, "when bad men combine, the good must associate," he contended boldly for the merits of fidelity to party combination in itself. Although Burke wrote these strong pages as a reply to Bolingbroke, who had denounced party as an evil, they remain as the best general apology that has ever been offered for that principle of public action, against more philosophic attacks than Bolingbroke's. Burke admitted that when he saw a man acting a desultory and disconnected part in public life with detriment to his fortune he was ready to believe such a man to be in earnest, though not ready to believe him to be right. In any case, he lamented to see rare and valuable qualities squandered away without any public utility. He admitted, moreover, on the other hand, that people frequently acquired in party confederacies a narrow, bigoted, and proscriptive spirit. "But where duty renders a critical situation a necessary one, it is our business to keep free from the evils attendant upon it, and not to fly from the situation itself. It is surely no very rational account of a man that he has always acted right; but has taken special care to act in such a manner that his endeavours could not possibly be productive of any consequence. . . . When men are not acquainted with each other's principles, nor experienced in each other's talents, nor at all practised

in their mutual habitudes and dispositions by joint efforts of business; no personal confidence, no friendship, no common interest subsisting among them; it is evidently impossible that they can act a public part with uniformity, perseverance, or efficacy."

In terms of eloquent eulogy he praised the sacred reverence with which the Romans used to regard the *necessitudo sortis*, or the relations that grew up between men who had only held office together by the casual fortune of the lot. He pointed out to emulation the Whig junto who held so close together in the reign of Anne—Sunderland, Godolphin, Somers, and Marlborough—who believed "that no men could act in concert, who did not act with confidence; and that no men could act with confidence, who were not bound together by common interests." In reading these energetic passages, we have to remember two things: first, that the writer assumes the direct object of party combination to be generous, great, and liberal causes; and second, that when the time came, and when he believed that his friends were espousing a wrong and pernicious cause, Burke, like Samson bursting asunder the seven green withes, broke away from the friendships of a life, and deliberately broke his party in pieces.

IV

BURKE'S VENERATION FOR THE PAST

WHAT he valued was the deep-seated order of systems that worked by the accepted uses, opinions, beliefs, prejudices of a community. This love of right and

stable order was not all. That was itself the growth from a deeper root, partly of conviction and partly of sympathy; the conviction of the rare and difficult conjunctures of circumstance which are needed for the formation of even the rudest forms of social union among mankind; and then the sympathy that the best men must always find it hard to withhold from any hoary fabric of belief, and any venerated system of government, that has cherished a certain order and shed even a ray of the faintest dawn, among the violences and the darkness of the race. It was reverence rather than sensibility, a noble and philosophic conservatism rather than philanthropy, which raised the storm in Burke's breast against the rapacity of English adventurers in India, and the imperial crimes of Hastings. Exactly the same tide of emotion which afterwards filled to the brim the cup of prophetic anger against the desecrators of the Church and the monarchy of France, now poured itself out against those who in India had "tossed about, subverted and tore to pieces, as if it were in the gambols of boyish unluckiness and malice, the most established rights, and the most ancient and most revered institutions of ages and nations." From beginning to end of the fourteen years in which Burke pursued his campaign against Hastings we see in every page that the India which ever glowed before his vision was not the home of picturesque usages and melodramatic costume, but rather, in his own words, the land of princes once of great dignity, authority and opulence; of an ancient and venerable priesthood, the guides of the people while living, and their consolation in death; of a

nobility of antiquity and renown; of millions of ingenious mechanics, and millions of diligent tillers of the earth; and finally, the land where might be found almost all the religions professed by men, the Brahminical, the Mussulman, the Eastern and the Western Christian. When he published his speech on the Nabob of Arcot, Burke prefixed to it an admirable quotation from one of the letters of the Emperor Julian. And Julian too, as we all know, had a strong feeling for the past. But what in that remarkable figure was only the sentimentalism of reaction, in Burke was a reasoned and philosophic veneration for all old and settled order, whether in the free Parliament of Great Britain, in the ancient absolutism of Versailles or in the secular pomp of Oudh and the inviolable sanctity of Benares, the holy city and the garden of God.

V

BURKE'S MYSTICISM

His practical reason was mastered by something that was deeper in him than reason. This brings me to remark a really singular trait. In spite of the predominance of practical sagacity, of the habits and spirit of public business, of vigorous actuality in Burke's character, yet at the bottom of all his thoughts about communities and governments there lay a certain mysticism. It was no irony, no literary trope, when he talked of our having taught the American husbandman "piously to believe in the mysterious virtue of wax and parchment." He was

using no idle epithet when he described the disposition of a stupendous wisdom, "moulding together the great mysterious incorporation of the human race." To him there actually was an element of mystery in the cohesion of men in societies, in political obedience, in the sanctity of contract; in all that fabric of law and charter and obligation, whether written or unwritten, which is the sheltering bulwark between civilization and barbarism. When reason and history had contributed all that they could to the explanation, it seemed to him as if the vital force, the secret of organization, the binding framework, must still come from the impenetrable regions beyond reasoning and beyond history.

VI

BURKE'S STYLE AND HIS DEBT TO LITERATURE

With all his hatred for the book-men in politics, Burke owed much of his own distinction to that generous richness and breadth of judgment which had been ripened in him by literature and his practice in it. Like some other men in our history, he showed that books are a better preparation for statesmanship, than early training in the subordinate posts and among the permanent officials of a public department. There is no copiousness of literary reference in his works, such as over-abounded in civil and ecclesiastical publicists of the seventeenth century. Nor can we truly say that there is much, though there is certainly some, of that tact, which literature is alleged to confer on those who approach it in a just spirit and with

the true gift. The influence of literature on Burke lay partly in the direction of emancipation from the mechanical formulæ of practical politics; partly in the association which it engendered, in a powerful understanding like his, between politics and the moral forces of the world, and between political maxims and the old and great sentences of morals; partly in drawing him, even when resting his case on prudence and expediency, to appeal to the widest and highest sympathies; partly, and more than all, in opening his thoughts to the many conditions, possibilities, and "varieties of untried being" in human character and situation, and so giving an incomparable flexibility to his methods of political approach.

This flexibility is not to be found in his manner and composition. That derives its immense power from other sources, from passion, intensity, imagination, size, truth, cogency of logical reason. If any one has imbued himself with that exacting love of delicacy, measure, and taste in expression which was until our own day a sacred tradition of the French, then he will not like Burke. Those who insist on charm, on winningness in style, on subtle harmonies and exquisite suggestion, are disappointed in Burke; they even find him stiff and over-coloured. And there are blemishes of this kind. His banter is nearly always ungainly, his wit blunt, as Johnson said of it, and very often unseasonable. We feel that Johnson must have been right in declaring that though Burke was always in search of pleasantries, he never made a good joke in his life. As is usual with a man who has not true humour, Burke is also without true pathos.

The thought of wrong or misery moved him less to pity for the victim, than to anger against the cause. Then there are some gratuitous and unredeemed vulgarities; some images whose barbarity makes us shudder, of creeping ascrides and inexpugnable tape-worms. But it is the mere foppery of literature to suffer ourselves to be long detained by specks like these.

VII

GRAY AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURY POETRY

It is to Gray that we must turn for the distinctive character of the best poetry of the eighteenth century. With reluctance we will surrender the Pindaric Odes, though not without risking the observation that some of Wordsworth's own criticism on Gray is as narrow and as much beside the mark as Jeffrey's on the Excursion. But the Ode on Eton College is not to have grudged to it the noble name and true quality of poetry, merely because, as one of Johnson's most unfortunate criticisms expresses it, the ode suggests nothing to Gray which every beholder does not equally think and feel. To find beautiful and pathetic language, set to harmonious numbers, for the common impressions of meditative minds, is no small part of the poet's task. That part has never been achieved by any poet in any tongue with more complete perfection and success than in the immortal Elegy, of which we may truly say that it has for nearly a century and a half given to greater multitudes of men more of the exquisite

pleasure of poetry than any other single piece in all the glorious treasury of English verse. It abounds, as Johnson says, "with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo." These moving commonplaces of the human lot Gray approached through books and studious contemplation; not, as Wordsworth approached them, by daily contact with the lives and habit of men and the forces and magical apparitions of external nature. But it is a narrow view to suppose that the men of the eighteenth century did not look through the literary conventions of the day to the truths of life and nature behind them. The conventions have gone, or are changed, and we are all glad of it. Wordsworth effected a wholesome deliverance when he attacked the artificial diction, the personifications, the allegories, the antitheses, the barren rhymes and monotonous metres, which the reigning taste had approved. But while welcoming the new freshness, sincerity, and direct and fertile return on nature, that is a very bad reason why we should disparage poetry so genial, so simple, so human, and so perpetually pleasing, as the best verse of the rationalistic century.

VIII

WORDSWORTH AND BYRON

SIMPLIFICATION was the keynote of the revolutionary time. Wordsworth was its purest exponent, but he had one remarkable peculiarity, which made him, in

England, at least, not only its purest but its greatest. While leading men to pierce below the artificial and conventional to the natural man and natural life, as Rousseau did, Wordsworth still cherished the symbols, the traditions, and the great institutes of social order. Simplification of life and thought and feeling was to be accomplished without summoning up the dangerous spirit of destruction and revolt. Wordsworth lived with nature, yet waged no angry railing war against society. The chief opposing force to Wordsworth in literature was Byron. Whatever he was in his heart, Byron in his work was drawn by all the forces of his character, genius, and circumstances to the side of violent social change, and hence the extraordinary popularity of Byron in the continental camp of emancipation. Communion with nature is in Wordsworth's doctrine the school of duty. With Byron nature is the mighty consoler and the vindicator of the rebel.

IX

FAULTS AND MERITS OF WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

THE faults and hindrances in Wordsworth's poetry are obvious to every reader. For one thing, the intention to instruct, to improve the occasion, is too deliberate and too hardly pressed. "We hate poetry," said Keats, "that has a palpable design upon us. Poetry should be great and unobtrusive." Charles Lamb's friendly remonstrance on one of Wordsworth's poems is applicable to more of them: "The instruc-

tions conveyed in it are too direct; they don't slide into the mind of the reader while he is imagining no such matter."

Then, except the sonnets and half a score of the pieces where he reaches his topmost height, there are few of his poems that are not too long, and it often happens even that no degree of reverence for the teacher prevents one from finding passages of almost unbearable prolixity. A defence was once made by a great artist for what, to the unregenerate mind, seemed the merciless tardiness of movement in one of Goethe's romances, that it was meant to impress on his readers the slow march and the tedium of events in human life. The lenient reader may give Wordsworth the advantage of the same ingenious explanation. We may venture on a counsel which is more to the point, in warning the student that not seldom in these blocks of afflicting prose, suddenly we come upon some of the profoundest and most beautiful passages that the poet ever wrote. In deserts of preaching we find, almost within sight of one another, delightful oases of purest poetry. Besides being prolix, Wordsworth is often cumbrous; has often no flight; is not liquid, is not musical. He is heavy and self-conscious with the burden of his message. How much at his best he is, when, as in the admirable and truly Wordsworthian poem of Michael, he spares us a sermon and leaves us the story. Then, he is apt to wear a somewhat stiff-cut garment of solemnity, when not solemnity, but either sternesss or sadness, which are so different things, would seem the fitter mood. In truth, Wordsworth hardly knows how to

be stern, as Dante or Milton was stern; nor has he the note of plangent sadness which strikes the ear in men as morally inferior to him as Rousseau, Keats, Shelley, or Coleridge; nor has he the Olympian air with which Goethe delivered sage oracles.

X

CHIEF FEATURES OF WORDSWORTH'S POETRY

CERTAIN favourers of Wordsworth answer our question with a triumphant affirmative, on the strength of some ethical, or metaphysical, or theological system which they believe themselves to find in him. But is it credible that poets can permanently live by systems? Or is not system, whether ethical, theological, or philosophical, the heavy lead of poetry? Lucretius is indisputably one of the mighty poets of the world, but Epicureanism is not the soul of that majestic muse. So with Wordsworth. Thought is, on the whole, predominant over feeling in his verse, but a prevailing atmosphere of deep and solemn reflection does not make a system. His theology and his ethics, and his so-called Platonical metaphysics, have as little to do with the power of his poetry over us, as the imputed Arianism or any other aspect of the theology of Paradise Lost has to do with the strength and the sublimity of Milton, and his claim to a high perpetual place in the hearts of men. It is best to be entirely sceptical as to the existence of system and ordered philosophy in Wordsworth. When he tells us that "one impulse from a vernal wood may teach you more

of man, of moral evil and of good, than all the sages can," such a proposition cannot be seriously taken as more than a half-playful sally for the benefit of some too bookish friend. No impulse from a vernal wood can teach us anything at all of moral evil and of good. When he says that it is his faith "that every flower enjoys the air it breathes," and that when the budding twigs spread out their fan to catch the air, he is compelled to think "that there was pleasure there," he expresses a charming poetic fancy and no more, and it is idle to pretend to see in it the fountain of a system of philosophy. In the famous Ode on Intimations of Immortality, the poet doubtless does point to a set of philosophic ideas, more or less complete; but the thought from which he sets out, that our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting, and that we are less and less able to perceive the visionary gleam, less and less alive to the glory and the dream of external nature, as infancy recedes further from us, is, with all respect for the declaration of Mr. Ruskin to the contrary, contrary to notorious fact, experience, and truth. It is a beggarly conception, no doubt, to judge as if poetry should always be capable of a prose rendering; but it is at least fatal to the philosophic pretensions of a line or a stanza if, when it is fairly reduced to prose, the prose discloses that it is nonsense, and there is at least one stanza of the great Ode that this doom would assuredly await. Wordsworth's claim, his special gift, his lasting contribution, lies in the extraordinary strenuousness, sincerity, and insight with which he first idealises and glorifies the vast universe around us, and then makes of it, not a

theatre on which men play their parts, but an animate presence, intermingling with our works, pouring its companionable spirit about us, and "breathing grandeur upon the very humblest face of human life." This two-fold and conjoint performance, consciously and expressly—perhaps only too consciously—undertaken by a man of strong inborn sensibility to natural impressions, and systematically carried out in a lifetime of brooding meditation and active composition, is Wordsworth's distinguishing title to fame and gratitude. In "words that speak of nothing more than what we are," he revealed new faces of nature; he dwelt on men as they are, men themselves; he strove to do that which has been declared to be the true secret of force in art, to make the trivial serve the expression of the sublime.

XI

WORDSWORTH'S CHIEF TITLE TO FAME

We are not called upon to place great men of his stamp as if they were collegians in a class-list. It is best to take with thankfulness and admiration from each man what he has to give. What Wordsworth does is to assuage, to reconcile, to fortify. He has not Shakespeare's richness and vast compass, nor Milton's sublime and unflagging strength, nor Dante's severe, vivid, ardent force of vision. Probably he is too deficient in clear beauty of form and in concentrated power to be classed by the ages among these great giants. We cannot be sure. We may leave it to the

ages to decide. But Wordsworth, at any rate, by his secret of bringing the infinite into common life, as he evokes it out of common life, has the skill to lead us, so long as we yield ourselves to his influence, into inner moods of settled peace, to touch "the depth and not the tumult of the soul," to give us quietness, strength, steadfastness, and purpose, whether to do or to endure. All art or poetry that has the effect of breathing into men's hearts, even if it be only for a space, these moods of settled peace, and strongly confirming their judgment and their will for good,—whatever limitations may be found besides, however prosaic may be some or much of the detail,—is great art and noble poetry, and the creator of it will always hold, as Wordsworth holds, a sovereign title to the reverence and gratitude of mankind.

XII

WHAT IS WISDOM?

WHAT is wisdom? That sovereign word, as has often been pointed out, is used for two different things. It may stand for knowledge, learning, science, systematic reasoning; or it may mean, as Coleridge had defined it, common sense in an uncommon degree; that is to say, the unsystematic truths that come to shrewd, penetrating, and observant minds, from their own experience of life and their daily commerce with the world, and that is called the wisdom of life, or the wisdom of the world, or the wisdom of time and the ages. The Greeks had two words for these

two kinds of wisdom: one for the wise who scaled the heights of thought and knowledge; another for those who, without logical method, technical phraseology, or any of the parade of the Schools, whether "Academics old and new, Cynic, Peripatetic, the sect Epicurean, or Stoic severe," held up the mirror to human nature, and took good counsel as to the ordering of character and of life.

Mill, in his little fragment on Aphorisms, has said that in the first kind of wisdom every age in which science flourishes ought to surpass the ages that have gone before. In knowledge and methods of science each generation starts from the point at which its predecessor left off; but in the wisdom of life, in the maxims of good sense applied to public and to private conduct, there is, said Mill, a pretty nearly equal amount in all ages.

If this seem doubtful to any one, let him think how many of the shrewdest moralities of human nature are to be found in writings as ancient as the apocryphal Book of the Wisdom of Solomon and of Jesus the Son of Sirach; as Aesop's Fables; as the oracular sentences that are to be found in Homer and the Greek dramatists and orators; as all that immense host of wise and pithy saws which, to the number of between four and five thousand, were collected from all ancient literature by the industry of Erasmus in his great folio of Adages. As we turn over these pages of old time, we almost feel that those are right who tell us that everything has been said, that the thing that has been is the thing that shall be, and there is no new thing under the sun.

Even so, we are happily not bound to Schopenhauer's gloomy conclusion (*Werke*, v. 332), that "The wise men of all times have always said the same, and the fools, that is the immense majority, of all times, have always done the same, that is to say, the opposite of what the wise have said; and that is why Voltaire tells us that we shall leave this world just as stupid and as bad as we found it when we came here."

It is natural that this second kind of wisdom, being detached and unsystematic, should embody itself in the short and pregnant form of proverb, sentence, maxim, and aphorism. The essence of aphorism is the compression of a mass of thought and observation into a single saying. It is the very opposite of dissertation and declamation; its distinction is not so much ingenuity, as good sense brought to a point; it ought to be neither enigmatical, nor flat, neither a truism on the one hand, nor a riddle on the other. These wise sayings, said Bacon, the author of some of the wisest of them, are not only for ornament, but for action and business, having a point or edge, whereby knots in business are pierced and discovered. And he applauds Cicero's description of such sayings as saltpits,—that you may extract salt out of them, and sprinkle it where you will. They are the guiding oracles which man has found out for himself in that great business of ours, of learning how to be, to do, to do without, and to depart. Their range extends from prudential kitchen maxims, such as Franklin set forth in the sayings of Poor Richard about thrift in time and money, up to such great and high moralities

of life as are the prose maxims of Goethe,—just as Bacon's Essays extend from precepts as to building and planting, up to solemn reflections on truth, death, and the vicissitudes of things. They cover the whole field of man as he is, and life as it is, not of either as they ought to be; friendship, ambition, money, studies, business, public duty, in all their actual laws and conditions as they are, and not as the ideal moralist may wish that they were.

The substance of the wisdom of life must be common-place, for the best of it is the result of the common experience of the world. Its most universal and important propositions must in a certain sense be truisms. The road has been so broadly trodden by the hosts who have travelled along it, that the main rules of the journey are clear enough, and we all know that the secret of breakdown and wreck is seldom so much an insufficient knowledge of the route as imperfect discipline of the will. The truism, however, and the common-place may be stated in a form so fresh, pungent, and free from triviality, as to have all the force of new discovery. Hence the need for a caution, that few maxims are to be taken without qualification. They seek sharpness of impression by excluding one side of the matter and exaggerating another, and most aphorisms are to be read as subject to all sorts of limits, conditions, and corrections.

XIII

WISDOM FOR ALL TIME

THERE is another cause for the passing eclipse of interest in wisdom of the world. Extraordinary advances have been made in ordered knowledge of the various stages of the long prehistoric dawn of human civilisation. The man of the flint implement and the fire-drill, who could only count up to five, and who was content to live in a hut like a beehive, has drawn interest away from the man of the market and the parlour. The literary passion for primitive times and the raw material of man has thrust polished man, the manufactured article, into a secondary place. All this is in the order of things. It is fitting enough that we should pierce into the origins of human nature. It is right, too, that the poets, the ideal interpreters of life, should be dearer to us than those who stop short with mere deciphering of what is real and actual. The poet has his own sphere of the beautiful and the sublime. But it is no less true that the enduring weight of historian, moralist, political orator, or preacher depends on the amount of the wisdom of life that is hived in his pages. They may be admirable by virtue of other qualities, by learning, by grasp, by majesty of flight; but it is his moral sentences on mankind or the State that rank the prose writer among the sages. These show that he has an eye for the large truths of action, for the permanent bearings of conduct, and for things that are for the guidance of all generations.

XIV

THE SAGE MAXIMS OF GOETHE

It is only Goethe and Schiller, and especially Goethe, "the strong, much-toiling sage, with spirit free from mists, and sane and clear," who combine the higher and the lower wisdom, and have skill to put moral truths into forms of words that fix themselves with stings in the reader's mind. All Goethe's work, whether poetry or prose, his plays, his novels, his letters, his conversations, are richly bestrewn with the luminous sentences of a keen-eyed, steadfast, patient, indefatigable watcher of human life. He deals gravely and sincerely with men. He has none of that shallow irony by which small men who have got wrong with the world seek a shabby revenge. He tells us the whole truth. He is not of those second-rate sages who keep their own secrets, externally complying with all the conventions of speech and demeanour, while privately nourishing unbridled freedom of opinion in the inner sanctuary of the mind. He handles soberly, faithfully, laboriously, cheerfully, every motive and all conduct. He marks himself the friend, the well-wisher, and the helper. I will not begin to quote from Goethe, for I should never end. The volume of Spruche, or aphorisms in rhyme and prose in his collected works, is accessible to everybody, but some of his wisest and finest are to be found in the plays, like the well-known one in his Tasso, "In stillness Talent forms itself, but Character in the great current of the world."

XV

'GREAT THOUGHTS COME FROM THE HEART'

THE best known of Vauvenargues' sayings, as it is the deepest and the broadest, is the far-reaching sentence already quoted, that "Great thoughts come from the heart." And this is the truth that shines out as we watch the voyagings of humanity from the "wide, grey, lampless depths" of time. Those have been greatest in thought who have been best endowed with faith, hope, sympathy, and the spirit of effort. And next to them come the great stern, mournful men, like Tacitus, Dante, Pascal, who, standing as far aloof from the soft poetic dejection of some of the moods of Shelley or Keats as from the savage fury of Swift, watch with a prophet's indignation the heedless waste of faculty and opportunity, the triumph of paltry motive and paltry aim, as if we were the flies of a summer noon, which do more than any active malignity to distort the noble lines, and to weaken or to frustrate the strong and healthy parts, of human nature. For practical purposes all these complaints of man are of as little avail as Johnson found the complaint that of the globe so large a space should be occupied by the uninhabitable ocean, encumbered by naked mountains, lost under barren sands, scorched by perpetual heat or petrified by perpetual frosts, and so small a space be left for the production of fruits, the pasture of cattle, and the accommodation of men.

When we have deducted, said Johnson, all the time

that is absorbed in sleep, or appropriated to the other demands of nature, or the inevitable requirements of social intercourse, all that is torn from us by violence of disease, or imperceptibly stolen from us by languor, we may realise of how small a portion of our time we are truly masters. And the same consideration of the ceaseless and natural pre-occupations of men in the daily struggle will reconcile the wise man to all the disappointments, delays, shortcomings of the world, without shaking the firmness of his own faith, or the intrepidity of his own purpose.

XVI

TOO MUCH MUST NOT BE EXPECTED FROM INSTITUTIONS

SOMETHING, no doubt, may often be gained by the mere cross-examination of catchwords and the exposure of platitudes. Popular government is no more free from catchwords and platitudes than any other political, religious, or social cause which interests a great many people, and is the subject of much discussion. Even the Historical Method has its own clap-trap. But one must not make too much of these things. "In order to love mankind," said Helvetius, "one must not expect too much from them." And fairly to appreciate institutions you must not hold them up against the light that blazes in Utopia; you must not expect them to satisfy microscopic analysis, nor judge their working, which is inevitably rough,

awkward, clumsy, and second best, by the fastidious standards of closet logic.

XVII

FIGHT FOR CATCHWORDS

We are entirely sceptical as to the proposition that "men have at all times quarrelled more fiercely about phrases and formulas than even about material interests." There has been a certain amount of fighting in the world about mere words, as idle as the faction fights between Caravats and Shanavests, or Two-Year-Olds and Three-Year-Olds in Ireland. But the more carefully we look into human history, the more apparent it becomes that underneath the phrase or the formula there is usually a material or a quasi-material, or a political, or a national, or an ecclesiastical interest. Few quarrels now seem so purely verbal as those which for several centuries raged about the mysteries of the faith in the Western and the Eastern Churches. Yet these quarrels, apparently as frivolous as they were ferocious, about the relations of mind and matter, about the composition of the Trinity, about the Divine nature, turned much less on futile metaphysics than on the solid competition for ecclesiastical power, or the conflict of rival nationalities. The most transcendental heresy or orthodoxy generally had business at the bottom of it.

XVIII

POPULAR GOVERNMENT AND THE ILLS OF SOCIETY

In short, modern societies, whether autocratic or democratic, are passing through a great transformation, social, religious, and political. The process is full of embarrassments, difficulties, and perils. These are the dominant marks of our era. To set them all down to popular government is as narrow, as confused, and as unintelligent as the imputation in a papal Encyclical of all modern ills to Liberalism. You cannot isolate government, and judge it apart from the other and deeper forces of the time. Western civilisation is slowly entering on a new stage. Form of government is the smallest part of it. It has been well said that those nations have the best chance of escaping a catastrophe in the obscure and uncertain march before us, who find a way of opening the most liberal career to the aspirations of the present without too rudely breaking with all the traditions of the past. This is what popular government, wisely guided, is best able to do.

XIX

WISE PRINCIPLES OF POLITICS

What these opinions came to, roughly speaking, was something to this effect: That the power alike of statesmen and of publicists over the course of affairs is strictly limited; that institutions and movements

are not capable of immediate or indefinite modification by any amount of mere will; that political truths are always relative, and never absolute; that the test of practical, and social proposals is not their conformity to abstract ideals, but to convenience, utility, expediency, and occasion; that for the reformer, considerations of time and place may be paramount; and finally, as Mill himself has put it, that government is always either in the hands, or passing into the hands, of whatever is the strongest power in society, and that what this power is, and shall be, depend upon it. If I were pressed for an illustration of these principles at work, inspiring the minds and guiding the practice of responsible statesmen in great transactions of our own day and generation, I should point to the sage, the patient, the triumphant action of Abraham Lincoln in the emancipation of the negro slaves. However that may be, contrast a creed of this unhistoric, peremptory notions and reasonings that formed the stock-in-trade of most, though not quite all, of the French revolutionists, alike in action and in thought. It is plain that they are the direct opposite and contradictory of one another.

XX

FUTILE COMPARISONS AND PRECEDENTS IN POLITICS

For the practical politician his problem is always individual. For his purposes history never repeats

itself. Human nature, doubtless, has a weakness for a precedent; it is a weakness to be respected. But there is no such thing as an essential reproduction of social and political combinations of circumstance. To talk about Robespierre in connection with Ireland is just as idle as it was in Robespierre to harangue about Lycurgus and Brutus in Paris. To compare the two is to place Ireland under a preposterous magnifying-glass of monstrous dimension. Nor is disparity of scale the only difference, vital as that is. In no one of the leading characteristics of a community in a state of ferment, save the odium that surrounds the landlords, and that not universal, does Ireland to-day really resemble the France of a hundred years ago. Manners, ideas, beliefs, traditions, crumbling institutions, rising aspirations, the ordering of castes and classes, the rivalry of creeds, the relations with the governing power—all constitute elements of such radical divergence as to make comparison between modern Ireland and revolutionary France for any more serious purpose than giving a conventional and familiar point to a sentence, entirely worthless.

XXI

PROMOTION OF THE CLASSIC TRADITION AMONG THE INDUSTRIAL CLASSES

We hear, perhaps more often than we like, that we live in a democratic age. It is true enough, and I can conceive nothing more democratic than such a

movement as this,[1] nothing which is more calculated to remedy defects that are incident to democracy, more thoroughly calculated to raise modern democracy to heights which other forms of government and older orderings of society have never yet attained. No movement can be more wisely democratic than one which seeks to give to the northern miner or the London artisan knowledge as good and as accurate, though he may not have so much of it, as if he were a student at Oxford or Cambridge. Something of the same kind may be said of the new frequency with which scholars of great eminence and consummate accomplishments, like Jowett, Lang, Myers, Leaf, and others, bring all their scholarship to bear, in order to provide for those who are not able, or do not care, to read old classics in the originals, brilliant and faithful renderings of them in our own tongue. Nothing but good, I am persuaded, can come of all these attempts to connect learning with the living forces of society, and to make industrial England a sharer in the classic tradition of the lettered world.

XXII

SCIENTIFIC, COMMERCIAL AND LITERARY EDUCATION

THERE is a great stir in the region of physical science at this moment, and it is likely, as anyone may see, to take a chief and foremost place in the field of intellectual activity. After the severity with which

[1] The University Extension Movement.—*Ed.*

science was for so many ages treated by literature, we cannot wonder that science now retaliates, now mightily exalts herself, and thrusts literature down into the lower place. I only have to say on the relative claims of science and literature what Dr. Arnold said: "If one might wish for impossibilities, I might then wish that my children might be well versed in physical science, but in due subordination to the fulness and freshness of their knowledge on moral subjects. This, however, I believe cannot be; wherefore, rather than have it the principal thing in my son's mind, I would gladly have him think that the sun went round the earth, and that the stars were so many spangles set in the bright blue firmament" (Stanley's *Life of Arnold*, ii. 31). It is satisfactory that one may know something of these matters, and yet not believe that the sun goes round the earth. But if there is to be exclusion, I, for one, am not prepared to accept the rather enormous pretensions that are nowadays sometimes made for physical science as the be-all and end-all of education.

Next to this we know that there is a great stir on behalf of technical and commercial education. The special needs of our time and country compel us to pay a particular attention to this subject. Here knowledge is business, and we shall never hold our industrial pre-eminence, with all that hangs upon that pre-eminence, unless we push on technical and commercial education with all our might. But there is a third kind of knowledge, and that too, in its way, is business. There is the cultivation of the sympathies and imagination, the quickening of the moral sensi-

bilities, and the enlargement of the moral vision. The great need in modern culture, which is scientific in method, rationalistic in spirit, and utilitarian in purpose, is to find some effective agency for cherishing within us the ideal. That is the business and function of literature. Literature alone will not make a good citizen; it will not make a good man. History affords too many proofs that scholarship and learning by no means purge men of acrimony, of vanity, of arrogance, of a murderous tenacity about trifles. Mere scholarship and learning and the knowledge of books do not by any means arrest and dissolve all the travelling acids of the human system. Nor would I pretend for a moment that literature can be any substitute for life and action. Burke said, "What is the education of the generality of the world? Reading a parcel of books? No! restraint and discipline, examples of virtue and of justice, these are what form the education of the world." That is profoundly true; it is life that is the great educator. But the parcel of books, if they are well chosen, reconcile us to this discipline; they interpret this virtue and justice; they awaken within us the diviner mind, and rouse us to a consciousness of what is best in others and ourselves.

XXIII

ON DAILY READING

No sensible person can suppose for a single moment that everybody is born with the ability for using

books, for reading and studying literature. Certainly not everybody is born with the capacity of being a great scholar. All people are no more born great scholars like Gibbon and Bentley, than they are all born great musicians like Handel and Beethoven. What is much worse than that, many come into the world with the incapacity of reading, just as they come into it with the incapacity of distinguishing one tune from another. To them I have nothing to say. Even the morning paper is too much for them. They can only skim the surface even of that. I go, further, and frankly admit that the habit and power of reading with reflection, comprehension, and memory all alert and awake, does not come at once to the natural man any more than many other sovereign virtues come to that interesting creature. What I do venture to press upon you is, that it requires no preterhuman force of will in any young man or woman—unless household circumstances are more than usually vexatious and unfavourable—to get at least half an hour out of a solid busy day for good and disinterested reading. Some will say that this is too much to expect, and the first persons to say it, I venture to predict, will be those who waste their time most. At any rate, if I cannot get half an hour, I will be content with a quarter. Now, in half an hour I fancy you can read fifteen or twenty pages of Burke; or you can read one of Wordsworth's master-pieces—say the lines on Tintern; or say, one third—if a scholar, in the original, and if not, in a translation of a book of the Iliad or the Æneid. I do not think that I am filling the half-hour too full. But try for yourselves what

you can read in half an hour. Then multiply the half-hour by 365, and consider what treasures you might have laid by at the end of the year; and what happiness, fortitude, and wisdom they would have given you during all the days of your life.

XXIV

OBJECTS OF A LITERARY EDUCATION

It is a mistake to think that every book that has a great name in the history of books or of thought is worth reading. Some of the most famous books are least worth reading. Their fame was due to their doing something that needed in their day to be done. The work done, the virtue of the book expires. Again, I agree with those who say that the steady working down one of these lists would end in the manufacture of that obnoxious product—the prig. A prig has been defined as an animal that is overfed for its size. I think that these bewildering miscellanies would lead to an immense quantity of that kind of overfeeding. The object of reading is not to dip into everything that even wise men have ever written. In the words of one of the most winning writers of English that ever existed—Cardinal Newman—the object of literature in education is to open the mind, to correct it, to refine it, to enable it to comprehend and digest its knowledge, to give it power over its own faculties, application, flexibility, method, critical exactness, sagacity, address, and expression. These are the

objects of that intellectual perfection which a literary education is destined to give.

XXV

SUBJECTS, AUTHORS, OR BOOKS?

We are often asked whether it is best to study subjects, or authors, or books. Well, I think that is like most of the stock questions with which the perverse ingenuity of mankind torments itself. There is no universal and exclusive answer. My own answer is a very plain one. It is sometimes best to study books, sometimes authors, and sometimes subjects; but at all times it is best to study authors, subjects, and books in connection with one another. Whether you make your first approach from interest in an author or in a book, the fruit will be only half gathered if you leave off without new ideas and clearer lights both on the man and matter. One of the noblest masterpieces in the literature of civil and political wisdom is to be found in Burke's three performances on the American war—his speech on Taxation in 1774, on Conciliation in 1775, and his letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol in 1777. I can only repeat to you what I have been saying in print and out of it for a good many years, and what I believe more firmly as observation is enlarged by time and occasion, that these three pieces are the most perfect manual in all literature for the study of great affairs, whether for the purpose of knowledge or action. "They are an example," as I have said before now, "an example

without fault of all the qualities which the critic, whether a theorist or an actor, of great political situations should strive by night and by day to possess. If their subjects were as remote as the quarrel between the Corinthians and Coreyra, or the war between Rome and the Allies, instead of a conflict to which the world owes the opportunity of one of the most important of political experiments, we should still have everything to learn from the author's treatment; the vigorous grasp of masses of compressed detail, the wide illumination from great principles of human experience, the strong and masculine feeling for the two great political ends of Justice and Freedom, the large and generous interpretation of expediency, the morality, the vision, the noble temper." No student worthy of the name will lay aside these pieces, so admirable in their literary expression, so important for history, so rich in the lessons of civil wisdom, until he has found out something from other sources as to the circumstances from which such writings arose, and as to the man whose resplendent genius inspired them. There are great personalities like Burke who march through history with voices like a clarion trumpet and something like the glitter of swords in their hands. They are as interesting as their work. Contact with them warms and kindles the mind. You will not be content, after reading one of these pieces, without knowing the character and personality of the man who conceived it, and until you have spent an hour or two—and an hour or two will go a long way with Burke still fresh in your mind—over other compositions in political literature, over Bacon's

civil pieces, or Machiavelli's Prince, and others in the same order of thought.

This points to the right answer to another question that is constantly asked. We are constantly asked whether desultory reading is among things lawful and permitted. May we browse at large in a library, as Johnson said, or is it forbidden to open a book without a definite aim and fixed expectations? I am for a compromise. If a man has once got his general point of view, if he has striven with success to place himself at the centre, what follows is of less consequence. If he has got in his head a good map of the country, he may ramble at large with impunity. If he has once well and truly laid the foundations of a methodical, systematic habit of mind, what he reads will find its way to its proper place. If his intellect is in good order, he will find in every quarter something to assimilate and something that will nourish.

XXVI

LITERATURE

LITERATURE consists of all the books—and they are not so many—where moral truth and human passion are touched with a certain largeness, sanity, and attraction of form. My notion of the literary student is one who through books explores the strange voyages of man's moral reason, the impulses of the human heart, the chances and changes that have overtaken human ideals of virtue and happiness, of conduct and manners, and the shifting fortunes of great

conceptions of truth and virtue. Poets, dramatists, humorists, satirists, masters of fiction, the great preachers, the character-writers, the maxim-writers, the great political orators—they are all literature in so far as they teach us to know man and to know human nature. This is what makes literature, rightly sifted and selected and rightly studied, not the mere elegant trifling that it is so often and so erroneously supposed to be, but a proper instrument for a systematic training of the imagination and sympathies, and of a genial and varied moral sensibility.

From this point of view let me remind you that books are not the products of accident and caprice. As Goethe said, if you would understand an author, you must understand his age. The same thing is just as true of a book. If you would fully comprehend it, you must know the age. There is an order; there are causes and relations between great compositions and the societies in which they have emerged. Just as the naturalist strives to understand and to explain the distribution of plants and animals over the surface of the globe, to connect their presence or their absence with the geological, climatic, and oceanic changes, so the student of literature, if he be wise, undertakes an ordered and connected survey of ideas, of tastes, of sentiments, of imagination, of humour, of invention, as they affect and as they are affected by the ever-changing experiences of human nature, and the manifold variations that time and circumstances are incessantly working in human society.

XXVII

STYLE AND ITS CULTIVATION

I WILL venture, with all respect to those who are teachers of literature, to doubt the excellence and utility of the practice of over-much essay-writing and composition. I have very little faith in rules of style, though I have an unbounded faith in the virtue of cultivating direct and precise expression. But you must carry on the operation inside the mind, and not merely by practising literary deportment on paper. It is not everybody who can command the mighty rhythm of the greatest masters of human speech. But every one can make reasonably sure that he knows what he means, and whether he has found the right word. These are internal operations, and are not forwarded by writing for writing's sake. Everybody must be urgent for attention to expression, if that attention be exercised in the right way. It has been said a million times that the foundation of right expression in speech or writing is sincerity. That is as true now as it has ever been. Right expression is a part of character. As somebody has said, by learning to speak with precision, you learn to think with correctness; and the way to firm and vigorous speech lies through the cultivation of high and noble sentiments. So far as my observation has gone, men will do better if they seek precision by studying carefully and with an open mind and a vigilant eye the great models of writing, than by excessive practice of writing on their own account.

XVIII

A PLEA FOR A QUIET STYLE

THE probabilities are that we are now coming to an epoch of a quieter style. There have been in our generation three strong masters in the art of prose writing. There was, first of all, Carlyle, there was Macaulay, and there is Mr. Ruskin. These are all giants, and they have the rights of giants. But I do not believe that a greater misfortune can befall the students who attend classes here, than that they should strive to write like any one of these three illustrious men. I think it is the worst thing that can happen to them. They can never attain to the high mark which they have set before themselves. It is not everybody who can bend the bow of Ulysses, and most men only do themselves a mischief by trying to bend it. If we are now on our way to a quieter style, I am not sorry for it. Truth is quiet. Milton's phrase ever lingers in our minds as one of imperishable beauty—where he regrets that he is drawn by I know not what, from beholding the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies. Moderation and judgment are, for most purposes, more than the flash and the glitter even of the genius. I hope that your professors of rhetoric will teach you to cultivate that golden art—the steadfast use of a language in which truth can be told; a speech that is strong by natural force, and not merely effective by declamation, an utterance without trick, without affectation, without mannerisms, without any of that

excessive ambition which overleaps itself as disastrously in prose writing as in so many other things.

XXIX

ARTIFICIAL LIMITS OF MODERN POETRY

THE truth is, we have for long been so debilitated by pastorals, by graceful presentation of the Arthurian legend for drawing-rooms, by idyll, not robust and Theocritean, by verse directly didactic, that a rude blast of air from the outside welter of human realities is apt to give a shock, that might well show in what simpleton's paradise we have been living. The ethics of the rectory parlour set to sweet music, the respectable aspirations of the sentimental curate married to exquisite verse, the everlasting glorification of domestic sentiment in blameless princes and others, as if that were the poet's single province and the divinely-appointed end of all art, as if domestic sentiment included and summed up the whole throng of passions, emotions, strife, and desire; all this might seem to be making valetudinarians of us all. Our public is beginning to measure the right and possible in art by the superficial probabilities of life and manners within a ten-mile radius of Charing Cross.

XXX

CLAIMS OF THE *RING AND THE BOOK* TO HIGH-CLASS POETRY

WHEN all is said that can be said about the violences which from time to time invade the poem, it remains

true that the complete work affects the reader most powerfully with that wide unity of impression which it is the highest aim of dramatic art, and perhaps of all art, to produce. After we have listened to all the whimsical dogmatising about beauty, to all the odious cant about morbid anatomy, to all the well-deserved reproach for unpardonable perversities of phrase and outrages on rhythm, there is left to us the consciousness that a striking human transaction has been seized by a vigorous and profound imagination, that its many diverse threads have been wrought into a single, rich, and many-coloured web of art, in which we may see traced for us the labyrinths of passion and indifference, stupidity and craft, prejudice and chance, along which truth and justice have to find a devious and doubtful way. The transaction itself, lurid and fuliginous, is secondary to the manner of its handling and presentment. We do not derive our sense of unity from the singleness and completeness of the horrid tragedy, so much as from the power with which its own circumstances as they happened, the rumours which clustered about it from the minds of men without, the many moods, fancies, dispositions, which it for the moment brought out into light, playing round the fact, the half-sporting flights with which lawyers, judges, quidnuncs of the street, darted at conviction and snatched hap-hazard at truth, are all wrought together into one self-sufficient and compacted shape.

But this shape is not beautiful, and the end of art is beauty? Verbal fanaticism is always perplexing, and, rubbing my eyes, I ask whether that beauty

means anything more than such an arrangement and disposition of the parts of the work as, first kindling a great variety of dispersed emotions and thoughts in the mind of the spectator, finally concentrates them in a single mood of joyous, sad, meditative, or interested delight. The sculptor, the painter, and the musician, have each their special means of producing this final and superlative impression; each is bound by the strictly limited capability in one direction and another of the medium in which he works. In poetry it is because they do not perceive how much more manifold and varied are the means of reaching the end than in the other expressions of art, that people insist each upon some particular quiddity which, entering into composition, alone constitutes it genuinely poetic, beautiful, or artistic. Pressing for definition, you never get much further than that each given quiddity means a certain Whatness. This is why poetical criticism is usually so little catholic. A man remembers that a poem in one style has filled him with consciousness of beauty and delight. Why conclude that this style constitutes the one access to the same impression? Why not rather perceive that, to take contemporaries, the beauty of Thyrsis is mainly produced by a fine suffusion of delicately-toned emotion; that of Atalanta by splendid and rivalled music of verse; of In Memoriam by its ordered and harmonious presentation of a sacred mood; of the Spanish Gypsy, in the parts where it reaches beauty, by a sublime ethical passion; of the Earthly Paradise, by sweet and simple reproduction of the spirit of the younger-hearted times? There are

poems by Mr. Browning in which it is difficult, or, let us frankly say, impossible, for most of us at all events and as yet, to discover the beauty or the shape. But if beauty may not be denied to a work which, abounding in many-coloured scenes and diverse characters, in vivid image and portraiture, wide reflection and multiform emotion, does further, by a broad thread of thought running under all, bind these impressions into one supreme and elevated conviction, then assuredly, whatever we may think of this passage or that, that episode or the other, the first volume or the third, we cannot deny that The Ring and the Book, in its perfection and integrity, fully satisfies the conditions of artistic triumph. Are we to ignore the grandeur of a colossal statue, and the nobility of the human conceptions which it embodies, because here and there we notice a flaw in the marble, a blemish in its colour, a jagged slip of the chisel ?

XXXI

POETRY AND MORAL INSTRUCTION

THEN, it is asked by persons of another and still more rigorous temper, whether, as the world goes, the subject, or its treatment either, justifies us in reading some twenty-one thousand and seventy-five lines, which do not seem to have any direct tendency to make us better or to improve mankind. This objection is an old enemy with a new face, and need not detain us, though perhaps the crude and incessant application of a narrow moral standard, thoroughly

misunderstood, is one of the intellectual dangers of our time. You may now and again hear a man of really masculine character confess that though he loves Shakespeare and takes habitual delight in his works, he cannot see that he was a particularly moral writer. That is to say, Shakespeare is never directly didactic; you can no more get a system of morals out of his writings than you can get such a system out of the writings of the ever-searching Plato. But, if we must be quantitative, one great creative poet probably exerts a nobler, deeper, more permanent ethical influence than a dozen generations of professed moral teachers. It is a commonplace to the wise, and an everlasting puzzle to the foolish, that direct inculcation of morals should invariably prove so powerless an instrument, so futile a method. The truth is that nothing can be more powerfully efficacious from the moral point of view than the exercise of an exalted creative art, stirring within the intelligence of the spectator active thought and curiosity about many types of character and many changeful issues of conduct and fortune, at once enlarging and elevating the range of his reflections on mankind, ever kindling his sympathies into the warm and continuous glow which purifies and strengthens nature, and fills men with that love of humanity which is the best inspirer of virtue. Is not this why music, too, is to be counted supreme among moral agents, soothing disorderly passion by diving down into the hidden deeps of character where there is no disorder, and touching the diviner mind? Given a certain rectitude as well as vigour of intelligence, then whatever stimulates

the fancy, expands the imagination, enlivens meditation upon the great human drama, is essentially moral.

XXXII

ANONYMOUS AND SIGNED ARTICLES

On the whole it may be said that the change from anonymous to signed articles has followed the course of most changes. It has not led to one half either of the evils or of the advantages that its advocates and its opponents foretold. That it has produced some charlatanry can hardly be denied. Readers are tempted to postpone serious and persistent interest in subjects to a semipersonal curiosity about the casual and unconnected deliverances of the literary or social star of the hour. That this conception has been worked out with signal ability in more cases than one; that it has made periodical literature full of actuality; that it has tickled and delighted the palate—is all most true. The obvious danger is lest we should be tempted to think more of the man who speaks than of the precise value of what he says.

XXXIII

MACHIAVELLI

The greatest of the Florentines has likened worldly fame to the breath of the wind that blows now one way and now another way, and changes name as it changes quarter. From every quarter, and all the

points of the historical compass, the veering gusts of public judgment have carried incessantly along, from country to country and from generation to generation, with countless mutations of aspect and of innuendo, the sinister renown of Machiavelli. Before he had been dead fifty years his name had become a byword and a proverb. From Thomas Cromwell and Elizabeth ; from the massacre of St. Bartholomew, through League and Fronde, through Louis Fourteenth, Revolution, and Empire, down to the third Napoleon and the days of December ; from the Lutheran Reformation down to the blood and iron of Prince Bismarck ; from Ferdinand the Catholic down to Don Carlos ; from the Sack of Rome down to Gioberti ; Mazzini, and Cavour : in all the great countries all over the West, this singular shade is seen haunting men's minds, exciting, frightening, provoking, perplexing them, like some unholy necromancer, bewildering reason and conscience by riddles and paradox. So far from withering or fading, his repute and his writings seem to attract deeper consideration as time goes on, and they have never been objects of more copious attention all over Europe than in the half-century that is now closing.

In the long and fierce struggle, from the fifteenth century onwards, among rival faiths and between contending forces in civil government, Machiavelli was hated and attacked from every side. In the great rising up of new types of life in the Church, and of life in the State, his name stood for something that partisans of old and new alike professed to abhor. The Church first tolerated, if it did not patronise, his

writings; but soon, under the double stress of the Reformation in Germany on one hand, and the pagan Renaissance in Italy on the other, it placed him in that Index of forbidden books which now first (1557), in dread of the new art of printing, crept into formal existence. He speedily came to be denounced as schismatical, heretical, perverse, the impious foe of faith and truth. He was burnt in effigy. His book was denounced as written with the very fingers of Satan himself. The vituperation of the sixteenth century has never been surpassed either among learned or unlearned men, and the dead Machiavelli came in for his full share of unmeasured words. As Voltaire has said of Dante that his fame is secure, because nobody reads him, so in an inverse sense, the bad name of Machiavelli grew worse, because men reproached, confuted, and cursed, but never read. Catholics attacked him as the enemy of the Holy See, and Protestants attacked him because he looked to a restoration of the spirit of ancient Rome, instead of restoration of the faith and discipline of the primitive Church. While both of them railed at him, Catholic and Protestant each reviled the other as Machiavellist. In France, national prejudice against the famous Italian queen-mother hit Machiavelli too, for his book was declared to be the oracle of Catherine de Medici, to whose father it was dedicated; it was held responsible for the Bartholomew massacre and the Huguenot wars. In Spain, opposite ground was taken, and he who elsewhere was blamed as the advocate of persecution, was abominated here as the enemy of wars of religion, and the advocate of

that monstrous thing, civil toleration. In England, royalists called him an atheist, and roundheads called him a jesuit. A recent German writer has noted three hundred and ninety-five references to him in our Elizabethan literature, all fixing him with the craft, malice, and hypocrisy of the Evil One. Everybody knows how Hudibras finds in his Christian name the origin of our domestic title for the devil, though scholars have now long taught us to refer it to Nyke, the water-goblin of Norse mythology.

Some divines scented mischief in the comparative method, and held up their hands at the impudent wickedness that dared to find a parallel between people in the Bible and people in profane history, between King David and Philip of Macedon. Whenever a bad name floated into currency, it was flung at Machiavelli, and his own name was counted among the worst that could be flung at a bad man. Averroes for a couple of centuries became a conventional label for a scoffer and an atheist, and Machiavelli, though he cared no more for the abstract problems that exercised the Moslem thinker than he would have cared for the inward sanctities of Thomas à Kempis, was held up to odium as an Averroist. The Annals of Tacitus were discovered: his stern ironies on Tiberius and the rest did not prevent one school of politicians from treating his book as a manual for tyrants, while another school applied it against the Holy Roman Empire; his name was caught up in the storms of the hour, and Machiavellism and Tacitism became convertible terms.

XXXIV

MACHIAVELLI AS A MAN OF LETTERS

He has the highest of all the virtues that prose-writing can possess—save the half-dozen cases in literature of genius with unconquerable wings,—he is simple, unaffected, direct, vivid, and rational. He possesses the truest of all forms of irony, which consists in literal statement, and of which you are not sure whether it is irony or naïvete. He disentangles his thought from the fact so skilfully and cleanly, that it looks almost obvious. Nobody has ever surpassed him in power of throwing pregnant vigour into a single concentrated word. Of some pages it has been well said that they are written with the point of a stiletto. He uses few of our loud easy words of praise and blame, he is not often sorry or glad, he does not smile and he does not scold, he is seldom indignant and he is never surprised. He has not even the mastering human infirmity of trying to persuade. His business is that of the clinical lecturer, explaining the nature of the malady, the proper treatment, and the chances of recovery. He strips away the flowing garments of convention and commonplace; closes his will against sympathy and feeling; ignores pity as an irrelevance, just as the operating surgeon does.

XXXV

THE ONE-SIDEDNESS OF MACHIAVELLI'S STANDPOINT

LIKE most of those who take a pride in seeing human nature as it is, Machiavelli only saw half of it. We must remember the atmosphere of craft, suspicion, fraud, violence, in which he had moved, with Borgias, Medici, Pope Julius, Maximilian, Louis XII., and the reckless factions of Florence. His estimate was low. Mankind are more prone to evil than to good. We may say this of them generally, that they are ungrateful, fickle, deceivers, greedy of gain, runaways before peril. While you serve them, they are all yours—lives, goods, children—so long as no danger is at hand; but when the hour of need draws nigh, they turn their backs. They are readier to seek revenge for wrong, than to prove gratitude for service: as Tacitus says of people who lived in Italy long ages before, readier to pay back injury than kindness. Men never do anything good, unless they are driven; and where they have their choice, and can use what licence they will, all is filled with disorder and confusion. They are taken in by appearances. They follow the event. They easily become corrupted. Their will is weak. They know not how to be either thoroughly good or thoroughly bad; they vacillate between; they take middle paths, the worst of all. Men are a little breed.

All this is not satire, it is not misanthropy; it is the student of the art of government thinking over the material with which he has to deal. These

judgments of Machiavelli have none of the wrath of Juvenal, none of the savage truculence of Swift. They cut deeper into simple reality than the polished proverbs of the moralists of the boudoir. They have not the bitterness that hides in the laugh of Molière, nor the chargin and disdain with which Pascal broods over unhappy man and his dark lot. Least of all are they the voice of the Preacher calling sinners to repentance. The tale is only a rather grim record, from inspection, of the foundations on which the rulers of states must do their best to build.

XXXVI

MACHIAVELLI'S OPINIONS

To the question whether the world grows better or worse, Machivalli gave an answer that startles an age like ours, that lives on its faith in progress. The world neither grows better nor worse; in fact, it is always the same. Human fortunes are never still; they are every moment either going up or sinking down. But among all nations and states, the same desires, the same humours prevail, and are what they always were. Men are for travelling on the beaten track. Diligently study bygone things, and in every State you will be able to discover the things to come. All the things that have been may be again. Just as the modern physicist tells us that neither physical nor chemical transformation changes the mass nor the weight of any quantity of matter, so Machiavelli judged the good and evil in the world to be ever the

same. "This bad and this good shift from land to land," he says, "as we may see from ancient empires; they rose and fell with the changes of their usage, but the world remained as it was. The only difference was that it concentrated its power (virtue) in Assyria, then in Media, then in Persia, until at last it came to Italy and Rome."

In our age, when we think of the chequered course of human time, of the shocks of irreconcilable civilisations, of war, trade, faction, revolution, empire, laws, creeds, sects, we seek a clue to the vast maze of historic and pre-historic fact. Machiavelli seeks no clue to his distribution of good and evil. He never tries to find a moral interpretation for the mysterious scroll. Men obey laws they do not know, but cannot resist. We can only make an effort to seize events as they whirl by, and to extort from them a maxim, a precept, or a principle, to serve our immediate turn. Fortune, he says,—that is, Providence, or else Circumstance, or the Stars,—is mistress of more than half we do. What is her deep secret, he shows no curiosity to fathom. He contents himself with a maxim for the practical man (Prince 15th), that it is better to be adventurous than cautious, for Fortune is a woman, and to be mastered must be boldly handled.

XXXVII

MORALITY AND THE STATE

WHY should the ruler of a State be bound by a moral code from which the soldier is free? Why should

not he have the benefit of what has been called the "evolutionary beatitude,"—Blessed are the strong, for they shall prey on the weak? Right and wrong, cause and effect, are two sides of one question. "Morality is the nature of things." We must include in the computation the whole sum of consequences, and consider acts of State as worked out to their furthest results. Bishop Butler tells you that we cannot give the whole account of any one thing whatever, of all its causes, ends, and necessary adjuncts. In short, means and end are a single transaction. You must regard policy as a whole. The ruler as an individual is, like other men, "no more than the generation of leaves, fleeting, a shadow, a dream." But the State lives on after he has vanished. He is a trustee for times to come. He is not shaping his own life only, but guiding the long fortunes of a nation. Leaves fall, the tree stands.

Such is the defence of reason of State, of the worship of nation and empire. Everything that policy requires, justice sanctions. There are no crimes in politics, only blunders. "The man of action is essentially conscienceless" (Goethe). "Praised be those," said one, in words much applauded by Machiavelli, "who love their country rather than the safety of their souls." "Let us be Venetians first," said Father Paul, "and Christians after."

We see now the deep questions that lie behind these sophistries, and all the alarming propositions in which they close. Does morality apply only to end and not to means? Is the State means or end? For what does it really exist? For the sake of the

individual, his moral and material well-being, or is the individual a mere cog or pinion in the vast machine? How far is it true that citizenship dominates all other relations and duties, and is the most important of them? Are we to test the true civilisation of a State by anything else than the predominance of justice, right, equality, in its laws, its institutions, its relations to neighbours? Is one of the most important aspects of national policy its reaction upon the character of the nation itself, and can States enter on courses of duplicity and selfish violence, without paying the penalty in national demoralisation? What are we to think of such saying as d'Alembert's motto for a virtuous man, "I prefer my family to myself, my country to my family, and humanity to my country"? Is this the true order? To Machiavelli all these questions would have been futile. Yet the world, in spite of a thousand mischances, and at tortoise-pace, has steadily moved away from him and his Romans.

The modern conception of a State has long made it a moral person, capable of right and wrong, just as are the individuals composing it. Civilisation is taken to advance, exactly in proportion as communities leave behind them the violences of external nature, and of man in a state of war. The usages of war are constantly undergoing mitigation. Diplomacy, though it is said even now not to be wholly purged of lying, fraud, and duplicity, still is conscious of having a character to keep up for truth and plain dealing, so far as circumstances allow. Such conferences, again, as those at Berlin and Brussels in

our own day, imperfectly as they have worked, mark the recognition of duty towards inferior races. All these improvements in the character of nations were in the minds of the best men in Machivelli's day. Reason of State has always been a plea for impeding and resisting them. Las Casas and other churchmen, Machiavelli's contemporaries, fought nobly at the Spanish court against the inhuman treatment of Indians in the New World, and they were defeated by arguments which read like maxims from The Prince. Grotius had forerunners in his powerful contribution towards assuaging the abominations of war, but both letter and spirit in Machiavelli made all the other way. Times have come and gone since Machiavelli wrote down his deep truths, but in the great cycles of human change he can have no place among the strong thinkers, and orators, and writers, who have elevated the conception of the State, and humanised the methods and maxims of government, and raised citizenship to be " a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection." He turned to the past, just as scholars, architects, sculptors, turned to it, but the idea of reconstructing a society that had once been saturated with the great ruling conceptions of the thirteenth century, by trying to awaken the social energy of ancient Rome, was as much of an anachronism as Julian the Apostate.

XXXVIII

"LET THE ANCHOR HOLD"

THE world is travelling under formidable omens into a new era, very unlike the times in which my lot was cast. This is no reason why an effort to recall some lines in the physiognomy of those times should be out of place or season. There is an old saying that to live is to out-live. This is not to tell us that "from the tablet should be abolished quite the cheerful past." It means no more than that Ideals have their hours and fade. The oracle of to-day drops from his tripod on the morrow. In common lines of human thought and act, as in the business of the elements, winds shift, tides ebb and flow, the boat swings. Only let the anchor hold. We should not cast our horoscopes too narrowly. One's first associations must have been ill chosen if fidelity to their essence and foundations comes to be over-clouded by the falling mists of afternoon.

XXXIX

PRINCIPLE IS ITS OWN REWARD

MOCKERS say that men of Principle are dispensed from the necessity of succeeding; principle is its own reward. But the ironic point depends on your standard of success. We may perceive plenty of wrong turns taken at the cross roads, time misused or wasted, gold taken for dross and dross for gold,

manful effort misdirected, facts misread, men misjudged. And yet those who have felt life no stage-play, but a hard campaign with some lost battles, may still resist all spirit of general insurgence in the evening of their day. The world's black catastrophe in your new age is hardly a proved and shining victory over the principles and policies of the age before it.

XL.

THE MID-VICTORIAN AGE: A DEFENCE

Critics to-day are wont to speak contemptuously of the mid-Victorian age. They should now and then pause to bethink themselves. Darwin's famous book appeared in 1859. Buckle's *History of Civilisation* caught lively public attention the year before, and whatever may be decided on his worth either as philosopher or scholar, his system with its panoply of detail must, as Acton, the severest and most destructive of his Catholic critics, allows, have powerfully appealed to something or other in the public mind, or told something or other very important that people wanted to know. This something or other in the public mind was, in truth, a common readiness to extend an excited welcome to explanation whether of species or social phenomena by general laws, at the expense of special providence. Anybody can see what tremendous questions this curious ferment brought to issue. Herbert Spencer began with *Social Statics* in 1850. *In Memoriam* (1850) exhausted no problems, but it intimated many of the

deepest of them, and lent the voice of pathetic music and exquisite human feeling to the widening doubts, misgivings, and flat incredulities of the time. The lines in *The Two Voices* about coming through lower lives, and growing through past experience to be consolidate in mind and frame, were taken by Herbert Spencer and other people to show right evolutionary interest in the elucidation of mental science. In 1857 George Eliot began the career of story-teller "in shadowy thoroughfares of thought," that laid such hold upon the reading England of her time, and made critics of high authority, both French and English, both Catholic and rationalist, call her the most considerable literary personality since the death of Goethe. On such an estimate as this perhaps we may say in passing that some teachers, it may be, are too great to be found fault with—a point well worth bearing in mind by fallable mortals—but we should not be over-prompt in allotting these seats side by side with the Olympians on their throne. We may now have outgrown our first glow of enthusiasm for George Eliot's wide and profound culture, her enviable diligence and fidelity of observation, humanity of her genius. Experience, as the wise in time discover, brings discrimination. Even of Goethe himself, many and many a page has grown unreadable. There was a philosopher who ruled the official world of thought in France about this time; a rival philosopher said of him that for three days of the week he was mediocre, for three days absurd; but for one day sublime. Let us remain grateful to writers of George Eliot's standard for their seventh day. At least we cannot

but agree with Acton, as a fact of public mental history, when he calls her books the emblem of a generation distracted between the intense need of believing and the difficulty of beliefs, while her teaching he called the highest within the resources to which Atheism is restricted. Then the second volume of *Modern Painters*, which George Eliot once told me made a deep and lasting mark in her mind, was published in 1846, and the fifth volume in the summer of the last year of our decade (1860). *The Seven Lamps* and *Stones of Venice* belong to the intervening period. Long and singular was Ruskin's journey through many landscapes, and his influence in all directions, social and aesthetic, was so remarkable that even those who have least predilection for it may perhaps call it the greatest event in our literary history since *Lyrical Ballads* and *Waverley*. At least one exceptionally good observer judged that as Carlyle, now busied in the clamorous sophistries of his *Frederick the Great* had written himself out as a source of social inspiration, it was Ruskin alone among writers of prose, apart from fiction, who relieved us from the reign of Commentators, brilliant and valuable as ideas of others. Whatever else may be said, it was, I think, at any rate possible to be, or think yourself, a fervent disciple of Ruskin, without adhering to a single article of theological tradition or authority. As much may be said of Carlyle, whom Ruskin called his master.

XLI

RELIGIOUS DOUBTS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

It was easy to reproach us with sunless creeds and declarations of mental insolvency. Supernatural magic was by no means payment of the rational debt in full, and the fortitude of a resolute, open-hearted stoicism is no bankrupt or useless thing. Well might students discern how the epoch about the middle of the nineteenth century resembled in England the epoch of an older world seventeen centuries before. Tide swept upon tide—Evangelicalism, all the movements of liberal theology, Catholic reaction within the Anglican communion, stay of ultramontane leanings among English Catholics, the school then so popular in our middle class of High and Dry. Those who are most alive to the great human impulses that reared the Christian fabric will most readily recognise the analogy between this age and that which witnessed the introduction of Christianity, as it was put by Leslie Stephen from a point of approach opposed to Arnold's —much empty profession of barren orthodoxy, and, beneath all, a vague disquiet, a breaking up of ancient social and natural bonds, and a blind groping toward some more cosmopolitan creed and some deeper satisfaction for the emotional needs of mankind.

XLII

A DESCRIPTION OF LIBERALISM

FOREIGN ideas reached us of that generation in glorious mould. England was the refuge of two famous exiles between 1849 and 1871, a great Italian and a great Frenchman, voices of the most energetic and most imaginative genius since Byron and Shelley. Mazzini and Victor Hugo imparted activity, elevation, and generous breadth of cosmopolitan outlook to the most ardent spirits of the new time in our own island. Humanity fought one of its most glorious battles across the Atlantic. An end had been brought to the only war in modern times as to which we can be sure, first, that no skill or patience of diplomacy could have averted it, and second, that preservation of the American Union and abolition of negro slavery were two vast triumphs of good by which even the inferno of war was justified. The silent, unbroken patience of Lancashire in the sore privations of the cotton famine was another element in the popular direction. If we seek a word for the significance of it all, it is not hard to find. Alike with those who adore and those who detest it, the dominating force in the living mind of Europe for a long generation after the overthrow of the French monarchy in 1830 has been that marked way of looking at things, feeling them, handling them, judging main actors in them, for which, with a hundred kaleidoscopic turns, the accepted name is Liberalism. It is a summary term with many extensive applications; people are not always careful

to sort them out, and they are by no means always bound to one another. There are as many differences in Liberalism in different ages and communities as there are in the attributes imputed to that great idol of the world which has been glorified under the name of Republic, though the sytem of the American Republic is one thing, and the working principles of the French Republic are another, and the republic in the north of the American continent has little in common with either system or spirit in the republics of the south.

Respect for the dignity and worth of the individual is its root. It stands for pursuit of social good against class interest or dynastic interest. It stands for the subjection to human judgment of all claims of external authority, whether in an organised Church, or in more loosely gathered societies of believers, or in books held sacred. In law-making it does not neglect the higher characteristics of human nature, it attends to them first. In executive administration, though judge, gaoler, and perhaps the hangman will be indispensable, still mercy is counted a wise supplement to terror. General Gordon spoke a noble word for Liberalist ideas when he upheld the sovereign duty of trying to creep under men's skins—only another way of putting the Golden Rule. The whole creed is a good deal too comprehensive to be written out here, and it is far more than a formalised creed. Treitschke, the greatest of modern absolutists, lays it down that everything new that the nineteenth century has erected is the work of Liberalism. Needless to say we use the mighty word in its large, far-spreading,

continental sense, not merely in the zone of English politics and party. It is worth noting that a strange and important liberalising movement of thought had awakened the mind of New England with Emerson for its noble and pure-hearted preacher in 1837. The duty of mental detachment, the supreme claim of the individual conscience, spread from religious opinion to the conduct of life and its interwoven social relations. Not a reading man, Emerson said with a twinkle of good humour, but has a draft of a new community in his waistcoat-pocket. *The Blithedale Romance* and *Walden* are enough to tell us what this strange disquiet came to. In deeper, graver, more extensive shape, the like new-born ideals of simplification, release, enlarged outlook as to Labour, Property, War, Political Rule, excited like a flaming comet the reflective imagination all over Europe in 1848.

XLIII

PROGRESS

ONE word of sovereign power is to be noted. We all know the fire and enthusiasm that spread with splendid flame from France in 1830, or a little later, by half a dozen eternally noble, vibrating, far-sounding words—Right, Justice, Equality, Fraternity, Progress. The last of these five beacon lights had a profound difference from its companion phrases. Progress went far further into "the deep heart of man."

Belief in Progress has become the basis of social thought, and has even taken the place of a religion as the inspiring, guiding, and testing power over social action. It is mixed idea, hope, emotion; on many lips no better than a convenient catchword, as little able to bear anything like penetrating analysis as the seventeenth of the thirty-nine articles. The dialectician armed with superficial history for the past, and with his eyes wide open on the present, may easily, if he should have nothing better to do, seem to grind the ideas of Progress to powder. Has strength of mind grown stronger? he asks. For what proportion of the world's inhabitants have the marvellous mechanical inventions of our scientific age lightened the day's toil? Is it only that a greater proportion lives the same life of drudgery? Is the small area of the globe that we call civilised more humane, prosperous, peaceful at this very hour than the Roman Empire was under Severus Antoninus centuries ago? A radical Norfolk vicar of bold intelligence, and a wide traveller, found his way to Egypt (1870), and drew an incidental picture that gave social complacency a start.

"It is now winter. Hodge turned out this morning long before the daylight. He is now working in a wet ditch up to his ankles in mud all day long, facing a hedge bank. This is a job that will take him three or four weeks. It is winter work, in out-of-the-way fields; and no one will pass in sight all day. He will eat his breakfast of bread and cheese alone, seated on the damp ground with his back against a tree, on the lea-side; and his dinner of the same

viands, in the same place, and with the same company.

"And what will he be thinking about all day? He will wish that farmer Giles would let him have one of those old pollards on the hedge bank. He could stay and grub it up after work of moonlight nights. It would give a little firing, and his missus would be glad to see it to come home. Things are getting unneighbourly dear, and he will hope that farmer Giles will raise his wages a shilling, or even sixpence a week. Times are very hard, and folk must live. He will hope that baby will soon be better. He will hope his wife may not be laid up this winter as she was last. That was a bad job. He got behind at the mill then. Tom and Dick have been without shoes ever since, and he cannot say how the doctor's bill is ever to be paid. He will wish he could buy a little malt to brew a little beer. He shouldn't make it over-strong. He does not hold with that. . . . As he trudges home you see that his features are weather-beaten and hard. His back is bent; his gait is slouchy; his joints are beginning to stiffen from work and rheumatism. His life is dreary and hard, and so is his wife's. She, too, is up before daylight; and her candle is alight for some time after he has laid down his weary limbs, and sleep has brought him forgetfulness. She has some damages to repair, and some odd things to do, which must be done before to-morrow morning and which she had no time to do during the day. She is now seated for the first time since five o'clock in the morning, with the exception of the short intervals when she snatched

her humble meals. She has to look after the sick baby, and the other children ; and to look in occasionally on her sick neighbour.

. . . . . .

Achmed is a child of the sun, that sun his forefathers worshipped, and whose symbol he sees on the old temples. Every day of his life, and all day long, he has seen him :

> Not as in northern climes, obscurely bright,
> But one unclouded blaze of living light,

pouring floods of light and gladness about him, as he pours floods of life into his veins. The sunshine without has created a kind of sunshine within. It has given him plenty of fête-days and holidays. It has made his muscles springy, his joints supple, his step light, his eye and wits and tongue quick. He is not without his troubles. The Khedivé and his people will take all that his land produces, except the doura, the maize, the cucumbers, and the onions that will be barely sufficient to keep himself and his family alive. He will get bastinadoed into the bargain. It always was so, and always will be so. Besides, is it not Allah's will ? "[1]

When this vein has been worked to the dregs, when you have shown, if you can, that it is all chimera and illusion, yet let us remain invincibly sure that Progress stands for a working belief that the modern world will never consent to do without. It may be true that the telephone and the miracle of Marconi are

[1] *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, by F. Barham Zincke.

not the last words of civilisation, nor are mechanical inventions of its essence. Let us look beyond. The outcast and the poor are better tended. The prisoner knows more of mercy, and has better chances of a new start. Duelling has been transformed from folly to crime. The end of the greatest of civil wars—always the bitterest of wars—was followed by the widest of amnesties. Slavery has gone, or is going. The creatures below man may have souls or not—a question that brings us into dangerous dispute with churches and philosophies—either way, the spirit of compassion, justice, understanding is more steadily extending to those dumb friends and oppressed servitors of ours, who have such strange resemblances to us in form, faculty, and feeling. These good things the decline of theologic faith has not impeded, and the votaries of human perfectibility are not likely to let us pause. An enterprising youth, emerging from collegiate visions into the rough paths of real life, was not likely to take reflective stock of the wide world into which he had been thrown to sink or swim. He has something else to think of then, the Time Spirit—an ennobling conception, yet an elusive force. Seen or unseen, whether its main confluence or the tributaries that swell its volume and compress its course—one way or another the Time Spirit makes itself his master, and is in truth his mirror.

XLIV

MILL AND CARLYLE

WHAT gave value to his [Mill's] talk, whether in company with six or eight or only one, was mental discipline at least as much as tenets. The edification lay in the processes that brought him to his conclusions—impersonal temper, tentative feeling of the way, acquiescence in the provisional when you could not reach certitude, instant readiness to weigh a new fact or a revised presentation of an old argument. Ideas are not everything in a teacher, vital though they may be. Mill's merit was the extension of them in spirit and letter to social and political issues and marked events, just where the tentative, suspensory, provisional is least readily welcomed. "The future of mankind," he used to say, "will be gravely imperilled if great questions are left to be fought out between ignorant change and ignorant opposition to change." Boundless patience went with a social hope for mankind that could never be shaken. All the grand sources of human suffering, he was convinced, are conquerable more or less by human effort. The process is slow; many generations perish in the breach; every mind intelligent enough and generous enough to bear a part, however small, will draw an enjoyment in the contest which he would not for any bribe in selfish indulgence consent to be without. Mill distrusted emotion apart from well-directed effort. He once called it a fatal drawback to Victor Hugo's claim to the world's immense recognition that he

had not brought forward a single practical proposal for the improvement of that society against which he was incessantly thundering. I offered the obvious reflection in reply, that you have no business to ask poets to draft bills; Hugo was inspired by sovereign pity for his fellows, a divine rage against the injustices of the strong to the weak, and a passionate revolt against the monstrous cruelties of outer Nature to her sentient creatures, and this was exactly what happened to be Mill's own strongest objections to ordinary theism. I always felt the force of his distrust of "thunderings" after an hour with Carlyle. You walked away from Chelsea stirred to the depths by a torrent of humour. But then it was splendid caricature: words and images infinitely picturesque and satiric, marvellous collocations and antitheses, impassioned railing against all the human and even superhuman elements in our blindly misguided universe. But of direction, of any sign-post or way out, not a trace was to be discovered, any more than a judicial page, or sense of any wisdom in the judicial, is to be found in his greatest pieces of history. After the grand humorist's despair was over, it was a healthy restorative in passing homeward along the Embankment to fling oneself into the arms of any statistician, politician, political economist, sanitary authority, poor-law reformer, prisoner-reformer, drainage enthusiast, or other practical friend of improvement, whom genial accident might throw in one's way.

XLV

SALUTARY EFFECTS OF POLITICAL LIFE

In Parliament, as out of it, one sighs heavily over those optimistic hearts who, through blasts that are destroying forests, throwing down strong walls, laying harvests waste, and sweeping away a whole generation of men, keep the fingers on the dialplate of their barometer nailed firm at "Set Fair." They are mainly useless, and they are provoking. In the House again, as out of it, in synods, oecumenical councils, and everywhere else, are always men who will fight as stubbornly over the thin shadow of a shade of difference as if it was cardinal, fundamental, covered the whole ground, and settled the main case. So there were the kindred men who habitually insist on mistaking the ephemeral for the Day of Judgement.

Much of parliamentary debate is dispute between men who in truth and at bottom agree, but invent arguments to disguise agreement and contrive a difference. It is artificial, but serves a purpose in justifying two lobbies and a party division. You have patiently to learn the wholesome lesson, that wisdom may be wisdom even when she chooses rhetorical apparel. You cannot expect to escape a continual exhibition of the common error of politics, and of much besides, the attribution to one cause of what is the effect of many; nor the vexation of listening to the wrong arguments for the right object. Above all, one often felt the pregnant truth, that most mistakes in politics arise from flat and invincible

disregard of the plain maxim that it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be. But then here too parliament is only representative. Nowhere are you more puzzled than in political battle for a working reply to Goethe's searching and pathetic interrogatory, "Whatever are we to do with people who mean well?" And what with those who will have it that if a thing be desirable enough it must be possible? In truth the theorist, idealist, doctrinaire, or by whatever name we choose for the salt of the earth, is exposed to one curious peril of his own. He often becomes in business excessively, narrowly, and tiresomely pragmatical and opportunist, and actually cultivates near sight. With or without cause he suspects himself, and is bent on showing that he is as fit for the profession of real politics as the best of them. There is a danger in the opposite direction of which I might perhaps have been more sensible. Windham was the idolater of Burke, for whom I should have had none but good words if only, by the way, he had not been the champion of bull-baiting, cock-fighting, and the slave trade. "From the indomitable bravery of his disposition," says Brougham of Windham, "and his loathing of everything mean, or that savoured of truckling to mere power, he was not infrequently led to prefer a course of conduct or a line of argument because of their running counter to public opinion or the general feeling." This is a weakness, however, which Parliament is no bad place to cure.

XLVI

LORD ACTON AND HIS LIBRARY

In this way, I believe, Cambridge will have the most appropriate monument of a man whom, though she thrice refused him as a learner, she afterwards welcomed as a teacher—one of the most remarkable men of our time, extraordinary in his acquisitions, extraordinary in the depth and compass of his mind. The books will, in the opinion of scholars more competent to judge than I, be a valuable instrument of knowledge; but that is hardly all. The very sight of this vast and ordered array in all departments, tongues, and times, of the history of civilized governments, the growth of faiths and institutions, the fluctuating movements of human thought, all the struggles of churches and creeds, the diverse types of great civil and ecclesiastical governors, the diverse ideals of States—all this will be to the ardent scholar a powerful stimulus to thought. And it was Acton himself who said that the gifts of historical thinking are better than historical learning. His books are sure to inspire both, for, multitudinous though they be, they concentrate the cardinal problems of modern history.

XLVII

THE CHARACTER OF BOLINGBROKE

We cannot wonder that his own generation should have been dazzled by the genius of a man who had

taken the main part in overturning a ministry so covered with glory as that of Marlborough and Godolphin; who showed such unexampled dexterity, alike in framing, carrying, and defending the great instruments of Utrecht; who led men of such force, brilliancy, and position as Carteret, Pulteney, and Wyndham; and who finally, as he had contributed more than any one else to the fall of Marlborough, now boldly applied himself to sap the power of the minister who was as strong and as successful in civil government as Marlborough had ever been in the field.[1] The misanthropy of Swift, the mockery of Voltaire, the sensitiveness of Pope, were all overcome by the fascination of his address, the glitter of his ideas, and the eloquence of his talk. Swift wrote to Stella that Mr. St. John was the greatest young man he ever knew—wit, capacity, beauty, quickness of apprehension, good learning, and excellent taste; the best orator in the House of Commons, admirable conversation, good nature, and good manners; generous and a despiser of money.[2] Another of his friends vowed, in a grand transport of praise, that the writings and conversation of Bolingbroke did nothing less than unite the wisdom of Socrates, the dignity and ease of Pliny, and the wit of Horace. In every part he was a consummate posture-master—the stoical philosopher musing on the true uses of retirement and study, the statesman busily framing policies, erecting combinations, and moulding foolish princes into patriot kings, or the simple country gentleman smoking tobacco with his honest neighbours, inquiring how the wheat

[1] See Walpole's *George II*, i. 222. [2] 1st November, 1711.

was doing in the four-acre field, and careful to know the names of all his hounds. Parallels to this extraordinary man have been sought all through history, from Alcibiades down to Lord Byron; he supplied the best poet of his day with philosophy; made speeches that intoxicated the House of Commons, and left such a tradition that illustrious authorities declared that they would rather recover one of Bolingbroke's orations than the lost books of Livy, or "all the gaps in Greek and Roman lore;" he developed ideas on statecraft and the constitution which have lived to find some favour among eminent men even in our own time; and finally, he handled the great and difficult instrument of written language with such freedom and copiousness, such vivacity and ease, that in spite of much literary foppery and falsetto he ranks, in all that musicians call execution, only below the three or four highest masters of English prose. Yet of all the characters in our history, Bolingbroke must be pronounced to be most of a charlatan; of all the writing in our literature, his is the hollowest, the flashiest, the most insincere.

XLVIII

PRINCIPLE AND EXPEDIENCY

THE supposed antagonism between expediency and principle has been pressed further and further away from the little piece of true meaning that it ever could be rightly allowed to have, until it has now come to signify the paramount wisdom of counting the narrow,

immediate, and personal expediency for everything, and the whole, general, ultimate, and completed expediency for nothing. Principle is only another name for a proposition stating the terms of one of these larger expediencies. When principle is held in contempt, or banished to the far dreamland of the philosopher and the student, with an affectation of reverence that in a materialist generation is in truth the most overweening kind of contempt, this only means that men are thinking much of the interests of to-day, and little of the more ample interests of the many days to come. It means that the conditions of the time are unfriendly to the penetration and the breadth of vision which disclose to us the whole range of consequences that follow on certain kinds of action or opinion, and unfriendly to the intrepidity and disinterestedness which make us willing to sacrifice our own present ease or near convenience, in the hope of securing higher advantages for others or for ourselves in the future.

XLIX

THE NATION'S GREATNESS DEPENDS ON ITS GREAT MEN

WHAT is important is the mind and attitude, not of the ordinary man, but of those who should be extraordinary. The decisive sign of the elevation of a nation's life is to be sought among those who lead or ought to lead. The test of the health of a people is to be found in the utterances of those who are its

spokesmen, and in the action of those whom it accepts or chooses to be its chiefs. We have to look to the magnitude of the issues and the height of the interests which engage its foremost spirits. What are the best men in a country striving for? And is the struggle pursued intrepidly and with a sense of its size and amplitude, or with creeping foot and blinking eye? The answer to these questions is the answer to the other question, whether the best men in the country are small or great.

L

IMMEDIATE CONVENIENCE AND RESPECT FOR TRUTH CONTRASTED

THE consequences of such a transformation, of putting immediate social convenience in the first place, and respect for truth in the second, are seen, as we have said, in a distinct and unmistakable lowering of the level of national life; a slack and lethargic quality about public opinion; a growing predominance of material, temporary, and selfish aims, over those which are generous, far-reaching, and spiritual; a deadly weakening of intellectual conclusiveness, and clear-shining moral illumination, and, lastly, of a certain stoutness of self-respect for which England was once especially famous. A plain categorical proposition is becoming less and less credible to average minds. Or at least the slovenly willingness to hold two directly contradictory propositions at one and the same time is becoming more and more common.

In religion, morals, and politics, the suppression of your true opinion, if not the positive profession of what you hold to be a false opinion, is hardly ever counted a vice, and not seldom even goes for virtue and solid wisdom. One is conjured to respect the beliefs of others, but forbidden to claim the same respect for one's own.

This dread of the categorical proposition might be creditable, if it sprang from attachment to a very high standard of evidence, or from a deep sense of the relative and provisional quality of truth. There might even be a plausible defence set up for it, if it sprang from that formulated distrust of the energetic rational judgment in comparison with the emotional, affective, contemplative parts of man, which underlies the various forms of religious mysticism. If you look closely into our present mood, it is seen to be the product mainly and above all of a shrinking deference to the *status quo*, not merely as having a claim not to be lightly dealt with, which every serious man concedes, but as being the last word and final test of truth and justice. Physical science is allowed to be the sphere of accurate reasoning and distinct conclusions, but in morals and politics, instead of admitting that these subjects have equally a logic of their own, we silently suspect all first principles, and practically deny the strict inferences from demonstrated premisses. Faith in the soundness of given general theories of right and wrong melts away before the first momentary triumph of wrong, or the first passing discouragement in enforcing right.

LI

CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGLISH SOCIETY AND THEIR EFFECT

THOROUGHNESS is a mistake, and nailing your flag to the mast a bit of delusive heroics. Think wholly of to-day, and not at all of to-morrow. Beware of the high and hold fast to the safe. Dismiss conviction, and study general consensus. No zeal, no faith, no intellectual trenchancy, but as much low-minded geniality and trivial complaisance as you please.

Of course, all these characteristics of our own society mark tendencies that are common enough in all societies. They often spring from an indolence and enervation that besets a certain number of people, however invigorating the general mental climate may be. What we are now saying is that the general mental climate itself has, outside of the domain of physical science, ceased to be invigorating; that, on the contrary, it fosters the more inglorious predispositions of men, and encourages a native willingness, already so strong, to acquiesce in a lazy accommodation with error, an ignoble economy of truth, and a vicious compromise of the permanent gains of adhering to a sound general principle, for the sake of the temporary gains of departing from it.

LII

"MORALITY IS THE NATURE OF THINGS"

A MINOR event, which now looks much less important than it did not many years ago, but which still had real influence in deteriorating moral judgment, was the career of a late sovereign of France. Some apparent advantages followed for a season from a rule which had its origin in a violent and perfidious usurpation, and which was upheld by all the arts of moral corruption, political enervation, and military repression. The advantages lasted long enough to create in this country a steady and powerful opinion that Napoleon the Third's early crime was redeemed by the seeming prosperity which followed. The shocking prematureness of this shallow condonation is now too glaringly visible for any one to deny it. Not often in history has the great truth that "morality is the nature of things" received corroboration so prompt and timely. We need not commit ourselves to the optimistic or sentimental hypothesis that wickedness always fares ill in the world, or on the other hand that whoso hearkens diligently to the divine voice, and observes all the commandments to do them, shall be blessed in his basket and his store and all the work of his hand. The claims of morality to our allegiance, so far as its precepts are solidly established, rest on the same positive base as our faith in the truth of physical laws. Moral principles, when they are true, are at bottom only registered generalisations from experience. They record certain uniformities of antecedence and

consequence in the region of human conduct. Want of faith in the persistency of these uniformities is only a little less fatuous in the moral order than a corresponding want of faith would instantly disclose itself to be in the purely physical order. In both orders alike there is only too much of this kind of fatuousness, this readiness to believe that for once in our favour the stream shall flow up hill, that we may live in miasmatic air unpoisoned, that a government may depress the energy, the self-reliance, the public spirit of its citizens, and yet be able to count on these qualities whenever the government itself may have broken down, and left the country to make the best of such resources as are left after so severe and prolonged a drain. This is the sense in which morality is the nature of things.

LIII

THE HISTORIC METHOD

THE Historic Method may be described as the comparison of the forms of an idea, or a usage, or a belief, at any given time, with the earlier forms from which they were evolved, or the later forms into which they were developed, and the establishment, from such a comparison, of an ascending and descending order among the facts. It consists in the explanation of existing parts in the frame of society by connecting them with corresponding parts in some earlier frame; in the identification of present forms in the past, and past forms in the present. Its main process is the

detection of corresponding customs, opinions, laws, beliefs, among different communities, and a grouping of them into general classes with reference to some one common feature. It is a certain way of seeking answers to various questions of origin, resting on the same general doctrine of evolution, applied to moral and social forms, as that which is being applied with so much ingenuity to the series of organic matter. The historic conception is a reference of every state of society to a particular stage in the evolution of its general conditions. Ideas of law, of virtue, of religion, of the physical universe, of history of the social union itself, all march in a harmonious and interdependent order.

Curiosity with reference to origins is for various reasons the most marked element among modern scientific tendencies. It covers the whole field, moral, intellectual, and physical, from the smile or the frown on a man's face, up to the most complex of the ideas in his mind; from the expression of his emotions, to their root and relations with one another in his inmost organisation. As an ingenious writer, too soon lost to our political literature, has put it:—"If we wanted to describe one of the most marked results, perhaps the most marked result, of late thought, we should say that by it everything is made *an antiquity*. When in former times our ancestors thought of an antiquarian, they described him as occupied with coins and medals and Druids' stones. But now there are other relics; indeed all matter is become such. Man himself has to the eye of science become an antiquity. She tries to read, is beginning

to read, knows she ought to read, in the frame of each man the result of a whole history of all his life, and what he is and what makes him so." [1] Character is considered less with reference to its absolute qualities than as an interesting scene strewn with scattered rudiments, survivals, inherited predispositions. Opinions are counted rather as phenomena to be explained than as matters of truth and falsehood. Of usages, we are beginning first of all to think where they came from, and secondarily whether they are the most fitting and convenient that men could be got to accept. In the last century men asked of a belief or a story, Is it true? We now ask, How did men come to take it for true? In short the relations among social phenomena which now engage most attention, are relations of original source, rather than those of actual consistency in theory and actual fitness in practice. The devotees of the current method are more concerned with the pedigree and genealogical connections of a custom or an idea than with its own proper goodness or badness, its strength or its weakness.

Though there is no necessity or truly logical association between systematic use of this method rightly limited, and a slack and slipshod preference of vague general forms over definite ideas, yet every one can see its tendency, if uncorrected, to make men shrink from importing anything like absolute quality into their propositions. We can see also, what is still worse, its tendency to place individual robustness and initiative in the light of superfluities, with which

[1] Bagehot.

a world that goes by evolution can very well dispense. Men easily come to consider clearness and positiveness in their opinions, staunchness in holding and defending them, and fervour in carrying them into action as equivocal virtues of very doubtful perfection, in a state of things where every abuse has after all had a defensible origin; where every error has, we must confess, once been true relatively to other parts of belief in those who held the error; and where all parts of life are so bound up with one another, that it is of no avail to attack one evil, unless you attack many more at the same time. This is a caricature of the real teaching of the Historic Method of which we shall have to speak presently; but it is one of those caricatures which the natural sloth in such matters, and the indigenous intellectual haziness of the majority of men, make them very willing to take for the true philosophy of things.

LIV

THE NEWSPAPER PRESS

THEN there is the newspaper press, that huge engine for keeping discussion on a low level, and making the political test final. To take off the taxes on knowledge was to place a heavy tax on broad and independent opinion. The multiplication of journals "delivering brawling judgments unashamed on all things all day long," has done much to deaden the small stock of individuality in public verdicts. It has done much to make vulgar ways of looking at

things and vulgar ways of speaking of them stronger and stronger, by formulating and repeating and stereotyping them incessantly from morning until afternoon, and from year's end to year's end. For a newspaper must live, and to live it must please, and its conductors suppose, perhaps not altogether rightly, that it can only please by being very cheerful towards prejudices, very chilly to general theories, loftily disdainful to the men of a principle. Their one cry to an advocate of improvement is some sagacious silliness about recognising the limits of the practicable in politics, and seeing the necessity of adapting theories to facts. As if the fact of taking a broader and wiser view than the common crowd disqualifies a man from knowing what the view of the common crowd happens to be, and from estimating it at the proper value for practical purposes. Why are the men who despair of improvement to be the only persons endowed with the gift of discerning the practicable ? It is, however, only too easy to understand how a journal, existing for a day, should limit its view to the possibilities of the day, and how, being most closely affected by the particular, it should coldly turn its back upon all that is general. And it is easy, too, to understand the reaction of this intellectual timorousness upon the minds of ordinary readers, who have too little natural force and too little cultivation to be able to resist the narrowing and deadly effect of the daily iteration of short-sighted commonplaces.

LV

THE TWO MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THIS GENERATION

FAR the most penetrating of all the influences that are impairing the moral and intellectual nerve of our generation, remain still to be mentioned. The first of these is the immense increase of material prosperity, and the second is the immense decline in sincerity of spiritual interest. The evil wrought by the one fills up the measure of the evil wrought by the other. We have been, in spite of momentary declensions, on a flood tide of high profits and a roaring trade, and there is nothing like a roaring trade for engendering latitudinarians. The effect of many possessions, especially if they be newly acquired, in slackening moral vigour, is a proverb. Our new wealth is hardly leavened by any tradition of public duty such as lingers among the English nobles, nor as yet by any common custom of devotion to public causes, such as seems to live and grow in the United States. Under such conditions with new wealth come luxury and love of ease and that fatal readiness to believe that God has placed us in the best of possible worlds, which so lowers men's aims and unstrings their firmness of purpose. Pleasure saps high interests, and the weakening of high interests leaves more undisputed room for pleasure. Management and compromise appear among the permitted arts, because they tend to comfort, and comfort is the end of ends, comprehending all ends.

LVI

THE PRESENT AN AGE OF TRANSITION

EVERY age is in some sort an age of transition, but our own is characteristically and cardinally an epoch of transition in the very foundations of belief and conduct. The old hopes have grown pale, the old fears dim; strong sanctions are become weak, and once vivid faiths very numb. Religion, whatever destinies may be in store for it, is at least for the present hardly any longer an organic power. It is not that supreme, penetrating, controlling, decisive part of a man's life, which it has been, and will be again. The work of destruction is all the more perturbing to timorous spirits, and more harassing even to the doughtier spirits, for being done impalpably, indirectly, almost silently, and as if by unseen hands. Those who dwell in the tower of ancient faiths look about them in constant apprehension, misgiving, and wonder, with the hurried uneasy mien of people living amid earthquakes. The air seems to their alarms to be full of missiles, and all is doubt, hesitation, and shivering expectancy. Hence a decisive reluctance to commit one's self. Conscience has lost its strong and on-pressing energy, and the sense of personal responsibility lacks sharpness of edge. The native hue of spiritual resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of distracted, wavering, confused thought. The souls of men have become void. Into the void have entered in triumph the seven devils of Secularity.

LVII

DOGMA

THIS is not a proper occasion for saying anything about the adequateness of the catholic, or any other special manner of fostering and solacing the religious impulses of men. We have to assume that the instructed class believes the catholic dogmas to be untrue, and yet wishes the uninstructed to be handed over to a system that reposes on the theory that these dogmas are superlatively true. What then is to be said of the tenableness of such a position? To the plain man it looks like a deliberate connivance at a plan for the propagation of error—assuming, as I say, for the moment, that these articles of belief are erroneous and contrary to fact and evidence. Ah, but, we are told, the people make no explicit affirmation of dogma; that does nothing for them; they are indifferent to it. A great variety of things might be said to this statement. We might ask, for instance, whether the people ever made an explicit affirmation of dogma in the past, or whether it was always the hazy indifferent matter which it is supposed to be now. If so, whether we shall not have to re-cast our most fundamental notions of the way in which Christian civilisation has been evolved. If not, and if people did once explicitly affirm dogma, when exactly was it that they ceased to do so?

The answers to these questions would all go to show that at the time when religion was the great controlling and organising force in conduct, the prime

elemental dogmas were accepted with the most vivid conviction of reality. I do not pretend that the common people followed all the inferences which the intellectual subtlety of the master-spirits of theology drew so industriously from the simple premisses of scripture and tradition. But assuredly dogma was at the foundation of the whole structure.

LVIII

A COMMUNITY OF TWO CLASSES

One would say to those who think that all will go well if you divide the community into two classes, one privileged to use its own mind, the other privileged to have its mind used by a priesthood, that they overlook the momentous circumstance of these professional upholders of dogmatic systems being also possessed of a vast social influence in questions that naturally belong to another sphere. There is hardly a single great controversy in modern politics, where the statesman does not find himself in immediate contact with the real or supposed interests, and with the active or passive sentiment, of one of these religious systems. Therefore if the instructed or intellectually privileged class cheerfully leave the field open to men who, *ex hypothesi*, are presumed to be less instructed, narrower, more impenetrable by reason, and the partisans of the letter against the spirit, then this result follows. They are deliberately strengthening the hands of the persons least fitted by judgment, experience, and temper, for using

such power rightly. And they are strengthening them not merely in dealing with religious matters, but, what is of more importance, in dealing with an endless variety of the gravest social and political matters. It is impossible to map out the exact dimensions of the field in which a man shall exercise his influence, and to which he is to be rigorously confined. Give men influence in one matter, especially if that be such a matter as religious belief and ceremonial, and it is simply impossible that this influence shall not extend with more or less effect over as much of the whole sphere of conduct as they may choose to claim. This is no discredit to them; on the contrary it is to their honour. So, in short, in surrendering the common people without dispute or effort to organised priesthoods for religious purposes, you would be inevitably including a vast number of other purposes in the self-same destination. This does not in the least prejudice practical ways of dealing with certain existing circumstances, such as the propriety or justice of allowing a catholic people to have a catholic university. It is only an argument against erecting into a complete and definite formula the division of a society into two great castes, the one with a religion of the spirit, the other with a creed of the letter.

Again, supposing that the enlightened caste were to consent to abandon the common people to what are assumed to be lower and narrower forms of truth,—which is after all little more than a fine phrase for forms of falsehood,—what can be more futile than to suppose that such a compromise will be listened to for a

single moment by a caste whose first principle is that they are the possessors and ministers, not of an inferior or superior form of truth, but of the very truth itself, absolute, final, complete, divinely sent, infallibly interpreted ? The disciples of the relative may afford to compromise. The disciples of the absolute, never.

LIX

THE UTILITY OF ERROR

A FALSE opinion, it may be said, is frequently found to have clustering around it a multitude of excellent associations, which do far more good than the false opinion that supports them does harm. In the middle ages, for instance, there was a belief that a holy man had the gift of routing demons, of healing the sick, and of working diverse other miracles. Supposing that this belief was untrue, supposing that it was an error to attribute the sudden death of an incredible multitude of troublesome flies in a church to the fact of Saint Bernard having excommunicated them, what then ? The mistaken opinion was still associated with a deep reverence for virtue and sanctity, and this was more valuable than the error of the explanation of the death of the flies was noxious or degrading.

The answer to this seems to be as follows. First, in making false notions the proofs or close associates of true ones, you are exposing the latter to the ruin which awaits the former. For example, if you have in the minds of the children or servants associated

honesty, industry, truthfulness, with the fear of hell-fire, then supposing this fear to become extinct in their minds,—which, being unfounded in truth, it is in constant risk of doing—the virtues associated with it are likely to be weakened exactly in proportion as that association was strong.

Second, for all good habits in thought or conduct there are good and real reasons in the nature of things. To leave such habits attached to false opinions is to lessen the weight of these natural or spontaneous reasons, and so to do more harm in the long run than effacement of them seems for a time to do good. Most excellences in human character have a spontaneous root in our nature. Moreover if they have not, and where they have not, there is always a valid and real external defence for them. The unreal defence must be weaker than the real one, and the substitution of a weak for a strong defence, where both are to be had, is not useful but the very opposite.

It is true, the objector would probably continue, that there is a rational defence for all excellences of conduct, as there is for all that is worthy and fitting in institutions. But the force of a rational defence lies in the rationality of the man to whom it is proffered. The arguments which persuade one trained in scientific habits of thought, only touch persons of the same kind. Character is not all pure reason. That fitness of things which you pronounce to be the foundation of good habits, may be borne in upon men, and may speak to them, through other channels than the syllogism. You assume a community of highly-trained wranglers and proficient sophisters. The

plain fact is that, for the mass of men, use and wont, rude or gracious symbols, blind customs, prejudices, superstitions,—however erroneous in themselves, however inadequate to the conveyance of the best truth,—are the only safe guardians of the common virtues. In this sense, then, error may have its usefulness.

LX

"HISTORY IS A *PIS-ALLER*"

To me at any rate the history of mankind is a huge *pis-aller*, just as our present society is; a prodigious wasteful experiment, from which a certain number of precious results have been extracted, but which is not now, nor ever has been at any other time, a final measure of all the possibilities of the time. This is not inconsistent with the scientific conception of history; it is not to deny the great law that society has a certain order of progress; but only to urge that within that, the only possible order, there is always room for all kinds and degrees of invention, improvement, and happy or unhappy accident. There is no discoverable law fixing precisely the more or the less of these; nor how much of each of them a community shall meet with, nor exactly when it shall meet with them. We have to distinguish between possibility and necessity. Only certain steps in advance are possible at a given time; but it is not inevitable that these potential advances should all be realised. Does anybody suppose that humanity

has had the profit of all the inventive and improving capacity born into the world? That Turgot, for example, was the only man that ever lived who might have done more for society than he was allowed to do, and spared society a cataclysm? No,—history is a *pis-aller*. It has assuredly not moved without the relation of cause and effect; it is a record of social growth and its conditions; but it is also a record of interruption and misadventure and perturbation. You trace the long chain which has made us what we are in this aspect and that. But where are the dropped links that might have made all the difference? *Ubi sunt eorum tabulæ qui post vota nuncupata perierunt?* Where is the fruit of those multitudinous gifts which came into the world in untimely seasons? We accept the past for the same reason that we accept the laws of the solar system, though, as Comte says, "we can easily conceive them improved in certain respects." The past, like the solar system, is beyond reach of modification at our hands, and we cannot help it. But it is surely the mere midsummer madness of philosophic complacency to think that we have come by the shortest and easiest of all imaginable routes to our present point in the march; to suppose that we have wasted nothing, lost nothing, cruelly destroyed nothing, on the road. What we have lost is all in the region of the "might have been," and we are justified in taking this into account, and thinking much of it, and in trying to find causes for the loss. One of them has been want of liberty for the human intelligence; and another, to return to our proper subject, has been the prolonged existence of super-

stition, of false opinions, and of attachment to gross symbols, beyond the time when they might have been successfully attacked, and would have fallen into decay but for the mistaken political notion of their utility. In making a just estimate of this utility, if we see reason to believe that these false opinions, narrow superstitions, gross symbols, have been an impediment to the free exercise of the intelligence and a worthier culture of the emotions, then we are justified in placing the unknown loss as a real and most weighty item in the account against them.

In short, then, the utmost that can be said on behalf of errors in opinion and motive, is that they are inevitable elements in human growth. But the inevitable does not coincide with the useful. Pain can be avoided by none of the sons of men, yet the horrible and uncompensated subtraction which it makes from the value and usefulness of human life, is one of the most formidable obstacles to the smoother progress of the world. And as with pain, so with error. The moral of our contention has reference to the temper in which practically we ought to regard false doctrine and ill-directed motive. It goes to show that if we have satisfied ourselves on good grounds that the doctrine is false, or the motive ill-directed, then the only question that we need ask ourselves turns solely upon the possibility of breaking it up and dispersing it, by methods compatible with the doctrine of liberty. Any embarassment in dealing with it, due to a semi-latent notion that it may be useful to some one else, is a weakness that hinders social progress.

LXI

THE SENSITIVENESS OF INTELLECT

WE do not find out until it is too late that the intellect too, at least where it is capable of being exercised on the higher objects, has its sensitiveness. It loses its colour and potency and finer fragrance in an atmosphere of mean purpose and low conception of the sacredness of fact and reality. Who has not observed inferior original power achieving greater results even in the intellectual field itself, where the superior understanding happens to have been unequally yoked with a self-seeking character, ever scenting the expedient? If Hume had been in the early productive part of his life the hypocrite which he wished it were in his power to show himself in its latter part, we may be tolerably sure that European philosophy would have missed one of its foremost figures. It has been often said that he who begins life by stifling his convictions is in a fair way for ending it without any convictions to stifle. We may perhaps add that he who sets out with the notion that the difference between truth and falsehood is a thing of no concern to the vulgar, is very likely sooner or later to come to the kindred notion that it is not a thing of any supreme concern to himself.

LXII

COMPROMISE IN MAKING UP ONE'S MIND

THE evil of which we have been speaking comes of not seeing the great truth that it is worth while to take pains to find out the best way of doing a given task, even if you have strong grounds for suspecting that it will ultimately be done in a worse way. And so also in spheres of thought away from the political sphere, it is worth while "to scorn delights and live laborious days" in order to make as sure as we can of having the best opinion, even if we know that this opinion has an infinitely small chance of being speedily or ever accepted by the majority, or by anybody but ourselves. Truth and wisdom have to bide their time, and then take their chance after all. The most that the individual can do is to seek them for himself, even if he seek alone. And if it is the most, it is also the least. Yet in our present mood we seem not to feel this. We misunderstand the considerations which should rightly lead us in practice to surrender some of what we desire, in order to secure the rest; and rightly make us acquiesce in a second-best course of action, in order to avoid stagnation or retrogression. We misunderstand all this, and go on to suppose that there are the same grounds why we should in our own minds acquiesce in second-best opinions; why we should mix a little alloy of conventional expression with the too fine ore of conviction; why we should adopt beliefs that we suspect in our hearts to be of

more than equivocal authenticity, but into whose antecedents we do not greatly care to inquire, because they stand so well with the general public. This is compromise or economy or management of the first of the three kinds of which we are talking. It is economy applied to the formation of opinion; compromise or management in making up one's mind.

LXIII

THE OXFORD MOVEMENT

GLARING as were the intellectual faults of the Oxford movement, it was at any rate a recognition in a very forcible way of the doctrine that spiritual matters are not to be settled by the dicta of a political council. It acknowledged that a man is answerable at his own peril for having found or lost the truth. It was a warning that he must reckon with a judge who will not account the *status quo*, nor the convenience of a cabinet, a good plea for indolent acquiescence in theological error. It ended, in the case of its most vigorous champions, in a final and deliberate putting out of the eyes of the understanding. The last act of assertion of personal responsibility was a headlong acceptance of the responsibility of tradition and the Church. This was deplorable enough. But apart from other advantages incidental to the tractarian movement, such as the attention which it was the means of drawing to history and the organic connection between present and past, it had, we repeat, the merit of being an effective protest against what may be

called the House of Commons' view of human life—a view excellent in its place, but most blighting and dwarfing out of it. It was, what every sincere uprising of the better spirit in men and women must always be, an effective protest against the leaden tyranny of the man of the world and the so-called practical person. The man of the world despises catholics for taking their religious opinions on trust and being the slaves of tradition. As if he had himself formed his own most important opinions either in religion or anything else. He laughs at them for their superstitious awe of the Church. As if his own inward awe of the Greater Number were one whit less of a superstition. He mocks their deference for the past. As if his own absorbing deference to the present were one tittle better bottomed or a jot more respectable. The modern emancipation will profit us very little if the *status quo* is to be fastened round our necks with the despotic authority of a heavenly dispensation, and if in the stead of ancient Scriptures we are to accept the plenary inspiration of Majorities.

LXIV

CHARACTER AND INTELLECTUAL OPINION

CHARACTER is doubtless of far more importance than mere intellectual opinion. We only too often see highly rationalised convictions in persons of weak purpose or low motives. But while fully recognising this, and the sort of possible reality which lies at the root of such a phrase as "godless intellect" or

"intellectual devils"—though the phrase has no reality when it is used by self-seeking politicians or prelates—yet it is well to remember the very obvious truth that opinions are at least an extremely important part of character. As it is sometimes put, what we think has a prodigiously close connection with what we are. The consciousness of having reflected seriously and conclusively on important questions, whether social or spiritual, augments dignity while it does not lessen humility. In this sense, taking thought can and does add a cubit to our stature. Opinions which we may not feel bound or even permitted to press on other people, are not the less forces for being latent. They shape ideals, and it is ideals that inspire conduct. They do this, though from afar, and though he who possesses them may not presume to take the world into his confidence. Finally, unless a man follows out ideas to their full conclusion without fear what the conclusion may be, whether he thinks it expedient to make his thought and its goal fully known or not, it is impossible that he should acquire a commanding grasp of principles. And a commanding grasp of principles, whether they are public or not, is at the very root of coherency of character. It raises mediocrity near to a level with the highest talents, if these talents are in company with a disposition that allows the little prudences of the hour incessantly to obscure the persistent laws of things. These persistencies, if a man has once satisfied himself of their direction and mastered their bearings and application, are just as cogent and valuable a guide to conduct, whether he publishes

them *ad urbem et orbem*, or esteems them too strong meat for people who have, through indurated use and wont, lost the courage of facing unexpected truths.

LXV

TOLERANCE AND LATITUDINARIANISM

INDOLENCE and timidity have united to popularise among us a flaccid latitudinarianism, which thinks itself a benign tolerance for the opinions of others. It is in truth only a pretentious form of being without settled opinions of our own, and without any desire to settle them. No one can complain of the want of speculative activity at the present time in a certain way. The air, at a certain social elevation, is as full as it has ever been of ideas, theories, problems, possible solutions, suggested questions, and proffered answers. But then they are at large, without cohesion, and very apt to be the objects even in the more instructed minds of not much more than dilettante interest. We see in solution an immense number of notions, which people think it quite unnecessary to precipitate in the form of convictions. We constantly hear the age lauded for its tolerance, for its candour, for its openness of mind, for the readiness with which a hearing is given to ideas that forty years ago, or even less than that, would have excluded persons suspected of holding them from decent society, and in fact did so exclude them. Before, however, we congratulate ourselves too warmly on this, let us be quite sure that we are not

mistaking for tolerance what is really nothing more creditable than indifference. These two attitudes of mind, which are so vitally unlike in their real quality, are so hard to distinguish in their outer seeming.

One is led to suspect that carelessness is the right name for what looks like reasoned toleration, by such a line of consideration as the following. It is justly said that at the bottom of all the great discussions of modern society lie the two momentous questions, first whether there is a God, and second whether the soul is immortal. In other words, whether our fellow-creatures are the highest beings who take an interest in us, or in whom we need take an interest; and, then, whether life in this world is the only life of which we shall ever be conscious. It is true of most people that when they are talking of evolution, and the origin of species, and the experiential or intuitional source of ideas, and the utilitarian or transcendental basis of moral obligation, these are the questions which they really have in their minds. Now, in spite of the scientific activity of the day, nobody is likely to contend that men are pressed keenly in their souls by any poignant stress of spiritual tribulation in the face of the two supreme enigmas. Nobody will say that there is much of that striving and wrestling and bitter agonising, which whole societies of men have felt before now on questions of far less tremendous import. Ours, as has been truly said, is "a time of loud disputes and weak convictions." In a generation deeply impressed by a sense of intellectual responsibility this could not be. As it

is, even superior men are better pleased to play about the height of these great arguments, to fly in busy intellectual sport from side to side, from aspect to aspect, than they are intent on resolving what it is, after all, that the discussion comes to and to which solution, when everything has been said and heard, the balance of truth really seems to incline. There are too many giggling epigrams; people are too willing to look on collections of mutually hostile opinions with the same kind of curiosity which they bestow on a collection of mutually hostile beasts in a menagerie. They have very faint predilections for one rather than another. If they were truly alive to the duty of conclusiveness, or to the inexpressible magnitude of the subjects which nominally occupy their minds, but really only exercise their tongues, this elegant Pyrrhonism would be impossible, and this light-hearted neutrality most unendurable.

LXVI

FREE SPEECH AND INDEPENDENT THOUGHT

THE duties and rights of free speech are by no means identical with those of independent thought. One general reason for this is tolerably plain. The expression of opinion directly affects other people, while its mere formation directly affects no one but ourselves. Therefore the limits of compromise in expression are less widely and freely placed, because the rights and interests of all who may be made

listeners to our spoken or written words are immediately concerned. In forming opinions, a man or woman owes no consideration to any person or persons whatever. Truth is the single object. It is truth that in the forum of conscience claims an undivided allegiance. The publication of opinion stands on another footing. That is an external act, with possible consequences, like all other external acts, both to the doer and to every one within the sphere of his influence. And, besides these, it has possible consequences to the prosperity of the opinion itself.[1]

A hundred questions of fitness, of seasonableness, of conflicting expediencies, present themselves in this connection, and nothing gives more anxiety to a sensible man who holds notions opposed to the current prejudices, than to hit the right mark where intellectual integrity and prudence, firmness and wise reserve, are in exact accord. When we come to declaring opinions that are, however foolishly and unreasonably, associated with pain and even a kind of turpitude in the minds of those who strongly object to them, then some of our most powerful sympathies are naturally engaged. We wonder whether duty to truth can possibly require

[1] There is another ground for the distinction between the conditions of holding and those of expressing opinion. This depends upon the psychological proposition that belief is independent of the will. Though this or any other state of the understanding may be involuntary, the manifestation of such a state is not so, but is a voluntary act, and, 'being neutral in itself, may be commendable or reprehensible according to the circumstances in which it takes place.' (Bailey's *Essay on Formation of Opinion*, § 7.)

us to inflict keen distress on those to whom we are bound by the tenderest and most consecrated ties. This is so wholly honourable a sentiment, that no one who has not made himself drunk with the thin sour wine of a crude and absolute logic will refuse to consider it. Before, however, attempting to illustrate cases of conscience in this order we venture to make a short digression into the region of the matter, as distinct from the manner of free speech. One or two changes of great importance in the way in which men think about religion, bear directly upon the conditions on which they may permit themselves and others to speak about it.

LXVII

RELIGIOSITY

It is an untenable idea that religiosity or devoutness of spirit is valuable in itself, without reference to the goodness or badness of the dogmatic forms and the practices in which it clothes itself. A fakir would hardly be an estimable figure in our society, merely because his way of living happens to be a manifestation of the religious spirit. If the religious spirit leads to a worthy and beautiful life, if it shows itself in cheerfulness, in pity, in charity and tolerance, in forgiveness, in a sense of the largeness and the mystery of things, in a lifting up of the soul in gratitude and awe to some supreme power and sovereign force, then whatever drawback there may be in the way of superstitious dogma, still such a spirit is on the

whole a good thing. If not, not. It would be better without the superstition: even with the superstition it is good. But if the religious spirit is only a fine name for narrowness of understanding, for stubborn intolerance, for mere social formality, for a dread of losing that poor respectability which means thinking and doing exactly as the people around us think and do, then the religious spirit is not a good thing, but a thoroughly bad and hateful thing. To that we owe no management of any kind. Any one who suppresses his real opinions, and feigns others, out of deference to such a spirit as this in his household, ought to say plainly both to himself and to us that he cares more for his own ease and undisturbed comfort than he cares for truth and uprightness. For it is that, and not any tenderness for holy things, which is the real ground of his hypocrisy.

LXVIII

INSTILLING THE TRUE RELIGIOUS SPIRIT INTO THE YOUNG MIND

THE great object is to keep the minds of the young as open as possible in the matter of religion; to breed in them a certain simplicity and freedom from self-consciousness, in finding themselves without the religious beliefs and customs of those around them; to make them regard differences in these respects as very natural and ordinary matters, susceptible of an easy explanation. It is of course

inevitable, unless they are brought up in cloistered seclusion, that they should hear much of the various articles of belief which we are anxious that they should not share. They will ask you whether the story of the creation of the universe is true; whether such and such miracles really happened; whether this person or that actually lived, and actually did all that he is said to have done. Plainly the right course is to tell them, without any agitation or excess or vehemence or too much elaboration, the simple truth in such matters exactly as it appears to one's own mind. There is no reason why they should not know the best parts of the Bible as well as they know the Iliad or Herodotus. There are many reasons why they should know them better. But one most important condition of this is constantly overlooked by people, who like to satisfy their intellectual vanity by scepticism, and at the same time to make their comfort safe by external conformity. If the Bible is to be taught only because it is a noble and most majestic monument of literature, it should be taught as that and no more. That a man who regards it solely as supreme literature, should impress it upon the young as the supernaturally inspired word of God and the accurate record of objective occurrences, is a piece of the plainest and most shocking dishonesty. Let a youth be trained in simple and straightforward recognition of the truth that we can know, and can conjecture, nothing with any assurance as to the ultimate mysteries of things. Let his imagination and his sense of awe be fed from those springs, which are none the

less bounteous because they flow in natural rather than supernatural channels. Let him be taught the historic place and source of the religions which he is not bound to accept, unless the evidence for their authority by and by brings him to another mind. A boy or girl trained in this way has an infinitely better chance of growing up with the true spirit and leanings of religion implanted in the character, than if they had been educated in formulæ which they could not understand, by people who do not believe them.

LXIX

A PROGRESSIVE SOCIETY

A PROGRESSIVE society is now constantly and justly compared to a growing organism. Its vitality in this aspect consists of a series of changes in ideas and institutions. These changes arise spontaneously from the operation of the whole body of social conditions, external and internal. The understanding and the affections and desires are always acting on the domestic, political, and economic ordering. They influence the religious sentiment. They touch relations with societies outside. In turn they are constantly being acted on by all these elements. In a society progressing in a normal and uninterrupted course, this play and interaction is the sign and essence of life. It is, as we are so often told, a long process of new adaptations and re-adaptations; of the modification of tradition and usage by truer

ideas and improved institutions. There may be, and there are, epochs of rest, when this modification in its active and demonstrative shape slackens or ceases to be visible. But even then the modifying forces are only latent. Further progress depends on the revival of their energy, before there has been time for the social structure to become ossified and inelastic. The history of civilisation is the history of the displacement of old conceptions by new ones more conformable to the facts. It is the record of the removal of old institutions and ways of living, in favour of others of greater convenience and ampler capacity, at once multiplying and satisfying human requirements.

LXX

PROGRESS

PROGRESS depends upon tendencies and forces in a community. But of these tendencies and forces, the organs and representatives must plainly be found among the men and women of the community, and cannot possibly be found anywhere else. Progress is not automatic, in the sense that if we were all to be cast into a deep slumber for the space of a generation, we should awake to find ourselves in a greatly improved social state. The world only grows better, even in the moderate degree in which it does grow better, because people wish that it should, and take the right steps to make it better. Evolution is not a force, but a process; not a cause,

but a law. It explains the source, and marks the immovable limitations, of social energy. But social energy itself can never be superseded either by evolution or by anything else.

LXXI

TRANSITORY AND LASTING USEFULNESS

LET us not, because we deem a thing to be useful for the hour, act as if it were to be useful for ever. The people who selfishly seek to enjoy as much comfort and ease as they can in an existing state of things, with the desperate maxim, "After us, the deluge," are not any worse than those who cherish present comfort and ease and take the world as it comes, in the fatuous and self-deluding hope, "After us, the millennium." Those who make no sacrifice to avert the deluge, and those who make none to hasten their millennium, are on the same moral level. And the former have at least the quality of being no worse than their avowed principle, while the latter nullify their pretended hopes by conformities which are only proper either to profound social contentment, or to profound social despair. Nay, they seem to think that there is some merit in this merely speculative hopefulness. They act as if they supposed that to be very sanguine about the general improvement of mankind, is a virtue that relieves them from taking trouble about any improvement in particular.

LXXII

THE QUICKENING OF MORAL SENSIBILITY

THE advance of the community depends not merely on the improvement and elevation of its moral maxims, but also on the quickening of moral sensibility. The latter work has mostly been effected, when it has been effected on a large scale, by teachers of a certain singular personal quality. They do nothing to improve the theory of conduct, but they have the art of stimulating men to a more enthusiastic willingness to rise in daily practice to the requirements of whatever theory they may accept. The love of virtue, of duty, of holiness, or by whatever name we call this powerful sentiment, exists in the majority of men, where it exists at all, independently of argument. It is a matter of affection, sympathy, association, aspiration. Hence, even while, in quality, sense of duty is a stationary factor, it is constantly changing in quantity. The amount of conscience in different communities, or in the same community at different times, varies infinitely. The immediate cause of the decline of a society in the order of morals is a decline in the quantity of its conscience, a deadening of its moral sensitiveness, and not a depravation of its theoretical ethics. The Greeks became corrupt and enfeebled, not for lack of ethical science, but through the decay in the numbers of those who were actually alive to the reality and force of ethical obligations. Mahometans triumphed over Christians in the East and in Spain

—if we may for a moment isolate moral conditions from the rest of the total circumstances—not because their scheme of duty was more elevated or comprehensive, but because their respect for duty was more strenuous and fervid.

The great importance of leaving this priceless element in a community as free, as keen, and as active as possible, is overlooked by the thinkers who uphold coercion against liberty, as a saving social principle. Every act of coercion directed against an opinion or a way of living is in so far calculated to lessen the quantity of conscience in the society where such acts are practised. Of course, where ways of living interfere with the lawful rights of others, where they are not strictly self-regarding in all their details, it is necessary to force the dissidents, however strong may be their conscientious sentiment. The evil of attenuating that sentiment is smaller than the evil of allowing one set of persons to realise their own notions of happiness, at the expense of all the rest of the world. But where these notions can be realised without unlawful interference of that kind, then the forcible hindrance of such realisation is a direct weakening of the force and amount of conscience on which the community may count. There is one memorable historic case to illustrate this. Lewis XIV., in revoking the Edict of Nantes, and the author of the still more cruel law of 1724, not only violently drove out multitudes of the most scrupulous part of the French nation; they virtually offered the most tremendous bribes to those of less stern resolution, to feign conversion to the

orthodox faith. This was to treat conscience as a thing of mean value. It was to scatter to the wind with both hands the moral resources of the community. And who can fail to see the strength which would have been given to France in her hour of storm, a hundred years after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, if her protestant sons, fortified by the training in the habits of individual responsibility which protestantism involves, had only been there to aid ?

LXXIII

BELIEF IN ONE'S OWN INFALLIBILITY IN RELATION TO INTOLERANCE

EVEN belief in one's own infallibility does not necessarily lead to intolerance. For it may be said that though no man in his senses would claim to be incapable of error, yet in every given case he is quite sure that he is not in error, and therefore this assurance in particular is tantamount by process of cumulation to a sense of infallibility in general. Now even if this were so, it would not of necessity either produce or justify intolerance. The certainty of the truth of your own opinions is independent of any special idea as to the means by which others may best be brought to share them. The question between persuasion and force remains apart—unless, indeed, we may say that in societies where habits of free discussion have once begun to take root, those who are least really sure about their opinions, are often most unwilling to trust to persuasion to bring them

converts, and most disposed to grasp the rude implements of coercion, whether legal or merely social. The cry, "Be my brother, or I slay thee," was the sign of a very weak, though very fiery, faith in the worth of fraternity. He whose faith is most assured, has the best reason for relying on persuasion, and the strongest motive to thrust from him all temptations to use angry force. The substitution of force for persuasion, among its other disadvantages, has this further drawback, from our present point of view, that it lessens the conscience of a society and breeds hypocrisy. You have not converted a man, because you have silenced him. Opinion and force belong to different elements. To think that you are able by social disapproval or other coercive means to crush a man's opinion, is as one who should fire a blunderbuss to put out a star. The acquiescence in current notions which is secured by law or by petulant social disapproval, is as worthless and as essentially hypocritical, as the conversion of an Irish pauper to protestantism by means of soup-tickets, or that of a savage to Christianity by the gift of a string of beads. Here is the radical fallacy of those who urge that people must use promises and threats in order to encourage opinions, thoughts, and feelings which they think good, and to prevent others which they think bad. Promises and threats can influence acts. Opinions and thoughts on morals, politics, and the rest, after they have once grown in a man's mind, can no more be influenced by promises and threats than can my knowledge that snow is white or that ice is cold. You may impose penalties on me by

statute for saying that snow is white, or acting as if I thought ice cold, and the penalties may affect my conduct. They will not, because they cannot, modify my beliefs in the matter by a single iota. One result therefore of intolerance is to make hypocrites. On this, as on the rest of the grounds which vindicate the doctrine of liberty, a man who thought himself infallible either in particular or in general, from the Pope of Rome down to the editor of the daily newspaper, might still be inclined to abstain from any form of compulsion. The only reason to the contrary is that a man who is so silly as to think himself incapable of going wrong, is very likely to be too silly to perceive that coercion may be one way of going wrong.

LXXIV

THE TRUE VIEW OF HISTORY

M. D'Hericault does not belong to the school of writers who treat the course of history as a great high road, following a firmly traced line, and set with plain and ineffaceable landmarks. The French Revolution has nearly always been handled in this way, alike by those who think it fruitful in blessings, and by their adversaries, who pronounce it a curse inflicted by the wrath of Heaven. Historians have looked at the Revolution as a plain landsman looks at the sea. To the landsman the ocean seems one huge immeasurable flood, obeying a simple law of ebb and flow, and offering to the navigator a single

uniform force. Yet in truth we know that the oceanic movement is the product of many forces; the seeming uniformity covers the energy of a hundred currents and counter-currents; the sea-floor is not even nor the same, but is subject to untold conditions of elevation and subsidence; the sea is not one mass, but many masses moving along definite lines of their own. It is the same with the great tides of history. Wise men shrink from summing them up in single propositions. That the French Revolution led to an immense augmentation of happiness, both for the French and for mankind, can only be denied by the Pope. That it secured its beneficent results untempered by any mixture of evil, can only be maintained by men as mad as Doctor Pangloss. The Greek poetess Corinna said to the youthful Pindar, when he had interwoven all the gods and goddesses in the Theban mythology into a single hymn, that we should sow with the hand and not with the sack. Corinna's monition to the singer is proper to the interpreter of historical truth: he should cull with the hand, and not sweep in with the scythe. It is doubtless mere pedantry to abstain from the widest conception of the sum of a great movement. A clear, definite, and stable idea of the meaning in the history of human progress of such vast groups of events as the Reformation or the Revolution, is indispensable for any one to whom history is a serious study of society. It is just as important, however, not to forget that they were really groups of events, and not in either case a single uniform movement. The World-Epos is after all

only a file of the morning paper in a state of glorification. A sensible man learns, in everyday life, to abstain from praising and blaming character by wholesale; he becomes content to say of this trait that it is good, and of that act that it was bad. So in history, we become unwilling to join or to admire those who insist upon transferring their sentiment upon the whole to their judgment upon each part. We seek to be allowed to retain a decided opinion as to the final value to mankind of a long series of transactions, and yet not to commit ourselves to set the same estimate on each transaction in particular, still less on each person associated with it. Why shall we not prize the general results of the Reformation, without being obliged to defend John of Leyden and the Munster Anabaptists ?

LXXV

THE CRISIS OF ROBESPIERRE'S LIFE

THE time was now come when such men as Robespierre were to be tried with fire, when they were to drink the cup of fury and the dregs of the cup of trembling. Sybils and prophets have already spoken their inexorable decree, as Goethe has said, on the day that first gives the man to the world; no time and no might can break the stamped mould of his character; only as life wears on, do all its aforeshapen lines come into light. He is launched into a sea of external conditions, that are as independent of his own will as the temperament with which he

confronts them. It is action that tries, and variation of circumstance. The leaden chains of use bind many an ugly unsuspected prisoner in the soul; and when the habit of their lives has been sundered, the most immaculate are capable of antics beyond prevision. A great crisis of the world was prepared for Robespierre and those others, his allies or his destroyers, who with him came like the lightning and went like the wind.

LXXVI

MARIE ANTOINETTE

MARIE ANTOINETTE'S high mien in adversity, and the contrast between the dazzling splendour of her first years and the scenes of outrage and bloody death that made the climax of her fate, could not but strike the imaginations of men. Such contrasts are the very stuff of which Tragedy, the gorgeous muse with scepter'd pall, loves to weave her most imposing raiment. But history must be just; and the character of the Queen had far more concern in the disaster of the first five years of the Revolution than had the character of Robespierre. Every new document that comes to light heaps up proof that if blind and obstinate choice of personal gratification before the common weal be enough to constitute a state criminal, then the Queen of France was one of the worst state criminals that ever afflicted a nation. The popular hatred of Marie Antoinette sprang from

a sound instinct. We shall never know how much or how little truth there was in those frightful charges against her, that may still be read in a thousand pamphlets. These imputed depravities far surpass anything that John Knox ever said against Mary Stuart, or that Juvenal has recorded against Messalina; and, perhaps, for the only parallel we must look to the hideous stories of the Byzantine secretary against Theodora, the too famou empress of Justinian and the persecutor of Belisarius. We have to remember that all the revolutionary portraits are distorted by furious passion, and that Marie Antoinette may no more deserve to be compared to Mary Stuart than Robespierre deserves to be compared to Ezzelino or to Alva. The aristocrats were the libellers, if libels they were. It is at least certain that, from the unlucky hour when the Austrian archduchess crossed the French frontier, a childish bride of fourteen, down to the hour when the Queen of France made the attempt to recross it in resentful flight one and twenty years afterwards, Marie Antoinette was ignorant, unteachable, blind to events and deaf to good counsels, a bitter grief to her heroic mother, the evil genius of her husband, the despair of her truest advisers, and an exceedingly bad friend to the people of France. When Burke had that immortal vision of her at Versailles—"just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in, glittering like the morning star, full of life and splendour and joy"—we know from the correspondence between Maria Theresa and her minister at Versailles, that what

Burke really saw was no divinity, but a flighty and troublesome schoolgirl, an accomplice in all the ignoble intrigues, and a sharer of all the small busy passions, that convulse the insects of a court. The levity that came with her Lorraine blood, broke out in incredible dissipations; in indiscreet visits to the masked balls at the opera, in midnight parades and mystifications on the terrace at Versailles, in insensate gambling. "The court of France is turned into a gaming-hell," said the Emperor Joseph, the Queen's own brother: "if they do not amend, the revolution will be cruel." These vices or follies were less mischievous than her intervention in affairs of state. Here her levity was as marked as in the paltry affairs of the boudoir and the ante-chamber, and here to levity she added both dissimulation and vindictiveness. It was the Queen's influence that procured the dismissal of the two virtuous ministers by whose aid the King was striving to arrest the decay of the government of his kingdom. Malesherbes was distasteful to her for no better reason than that she wanted his post for some favourite's favourite. Against Turgot she conspired with tenacious animosity, because he had suppressed a sinecure which she designed for a court parasite, and because he would not support her caprice on behalf of a worthless creature of her faction. These two admirable men were disgraced on the same day. The Queen wrote to her mother that she had not meddled in the affair. This was a falsehood, for she had even sought to have Turgot thrown into the Bastille. "I am as one dashed to the ground," cried the great Voltaire,

now nearing his end. "Never can we console ourselves for having seen the golden age dawn and vanish. My eyes see only death in front of me, now that Turgot is gone. The rest of my days must be all bitterness." What hope could there be that the personage who had thus put out the light of hope for France in 1776, would welcome that greater flame which was kindled in the land in 1789 ?

When people write hymns of pity for the Queen, we always recall the poor woman whom Arthur Young met, as he was walking up a hill to ease his horse near Mars-le-Tour. Though the unfortunate creature was only twenty-eight, she might have been taken for sixty or seventy, her figure was so bent, her face so furrowed and hardened by toil. Her husband, she said, had a morsel of land, one cow, and a poor little horse, yet he had to pay forty-two pounds of wheat and three chickens to one Seigneur, and one hundred and sixty pounds of oats, one chicken, and one franc to another, besides very heavy tailles and other taxes ; and they had seven children. She had heard that "something was to be done by some great folks for such poor ones, but she did not know who nor how, but God send us better, for the tailles and the dues grind us to the earth." It was such hapless drudges as this who replenished the Queen's gaming tables at Versailles. Thousands of them dragged on the burden of their harassed and desperate days, less like men and women than beasts of the field wrung and tortured and mercilessly overladen, in order that the Queen might gratify her childish passion for diamonds, or lavish money and estates on worthless

female Polignacs and Lamballes, or kill time at a cost of five hundred louis a night at lansquenet and the faro bank. The Queen, it is true, was in all this no worse than other dissipated women then and since. She did not realise that it was the system to which she had stubbornly committed herself, that drove the people of the fields to cut their crops green to be baked in the oven, because their hunger could not wait; or made them cower whole days in their beds, because misery seemed to gnaw them there with a duller fang. That she was unconscious of its effect, makes no difference in the real drift of her policy; makes no difference in the judgment that we ought to pass upon it, nor in the gratitude that is owed to the stern men who rose up to consume her and her court with righteous flame. The Queen and the courtiers, and the hard-faring woman of Mars-le-Tour, and that whole generation, have long been dust and shadow; they have vanished from the earth, as if they were no more than the fire-flies that the peasant of the Italian poet saw dancing in the vineyard, as he took his evening rest on the hillside. They have all fled back into the impenetrable shade whence they came; our minds are free; and if social equity is not a chimera, Marie Antoinette was the protagonist of the most barbarous and execrable of causes.

LXXVII

WEARY STEPS TOWARDS DEMOCRACY

PRUDENCE in new cases, as has been somewhere said, can do nothing on grounds of retrospect. The work of the Constituent was doomed by the very nature of things. Their assumption that the Revolution was made, while all France was still torn by fierce and unappeasable disputes as to seignorial rights, was one of the most striking pieces of self-deception in history. It is told how in the eleventh century, when the fervent hosts of the Crusaders tramped across Europe on their way to deliver the Holy City from the hands of the unbelievers, the wearied children, as they espied each new town that lay in their interminable march, cried out with joyful expectation, "Is not this, then, Jerusalem?" So France had set out on a portentous journey, little knowing how far off was the end; lightly taking each poor halting-place for the deeply longed-for goal; and waxing more fiercely disappointed, as each new height that they gained only disclosed yet farther and more unattainable horizons. "Alas," said Burke, "they little know how many a weary step is to be taken, before they can form themselves into a mass which has a true political personality."

LXXVIII

ROBESPIERRE'S DEISM

IT is a monument of presumptuous infatuation that any one should feel so strongly as he did that order could only be restored on condition of coming to terms with religious use and prejudice, and then that he should dream that his Supreme Being—a mere didactic phrase, the deity of a poet's georgic—should adequately replace that eternal marvel of construction, by means of which the great churchmen had wrought dogma and liturgy and priest and holy office into every hour and every mood of men's lives. There is no binding principle of human association in a creed with this one bald article. "In truth," as I have said elsewhere of such deism as Robespierre's, "one can scarcely call it a creed. It is mainly a name for a particular mood of fine spiritual exaltation; the expression of a state of indefinite aspiration and supreme feeling for lofty things. Are you going to convert the new barbarians of our western world with this fair word of emptiness? Will you sweeten the lives of suffering men, and take its heaviness from that droning piteous chronicle of wrong and cruelty and despair, which everlastingly saddens the compassionating ear like moaning of a midnight sea; will you animate the stout of heart with new fire, and the firm of hand with fresh joy of battle, by the thought of a being without intelligible attributes, a mere abstract creation of metaphysic, whose mercy is not as our mercy, nor his justice as

our justice, nor his fatherhood as the fatherhood of men? It was not by a cold, a cheerless, a radically depraving conception such as this, that the church became the refuge of humanity in the dark times of old, but by the representation, to men sitting in bondage and confusion, of godlike natures moving among them, under figure of the most eternally touching of human relations,—a tender mother ever interceding for them, and an elder brother laying down his life that their burdens might be loosened."

LXXIX

CARLYLE THE PROPHET

THE new library edition of Mr. Carlyle's works may be taken for the final presentation of all that the author has to say to his contemporaries, and to possess the settled form in which he wishes his words to go to those of posterity who may prove to have ears for them. The canon is definitely made up. The golden Gospel of Silence is effectively compressed in thirty fine volumes. After all has been said about self-indulgent mannerisms, moral perversities, phraseological outrages, and the rest, these volumes will remain the noble monument of the industry, originality, conscientiousness, and genius of a noble character, and of an intellectual career that has exercised on many sides the profoundest sort of influence upon English feeling. Men who have long since moved far away from these spiritual latitudes, like those who still find an adequate shelter

in them, can hardly help feeling as they turn the pages of the now disused pieces which they were once wont to ponder daily, that whatever later teachers may have done in definitely shaping opinion, in giving specific form to sentiment, and in subjecting impulse to rational discipline, here was the friendly fire-bearer who first conveyed the Promethean spark, here the prophet who first smote the rock.

LXXX

THE DURABILITY OF CARLYLE'S INFLUENCE

THE degree of durability which his influence is likely to possess with the next and following generations is another and rather sterile question, which we are not now concerned to discuss. The unrestrained eccentricities which Mr. Carlyle's strong individuality has precipitated in his written style may, in spite of the poetic fineness of his imagination, which no historian or humorist has excelled, still be expected to deprive his work of that permanence which is only secured by classic form. The incorporation of so many phrases, allusions, nicknames, that belong only to the hour, inevitably makes the vitality of the composition conditional on the vitality of these transient and accidental elements which are so deeply imbedded in it. Another consideration is that no philosophic writer, however ardently his words may have been treasured and followed by the people of his own time, can well be cherished by succeeding generations, unless his name is associated

through some definable and positive contribution with the central march of European thought and feeling. In other words, there is a difference between living in the history of literature or belief, and living in literature itself and in the minds of believers. Mr. Carlyle has been a most powerful solvent, but it is the tendency of solvents to become merely historic. The historian of the intellectual and moral movements of Great Britain during the present century, will fail egregiously in his task if he omits to give a large and conspicuous space to the author of *Sartor Resartus*. But it is one thing to study historically the ideas which have influenced our predecessors, and another thing to seek in them an influence fruitful for ourselves. It is to be hoped that one may doubt the permanent soundness of Mr. Carlyle's peculiar speculations, without either doubting or failing to share that warm affection and reverence which his personality has worthily inspired in many thousands of his readers. He has himself taught us to separate these two sides of a man, and we have learnt from him to love Samuel Johnson without reading much or a word that the old sage wrote. "Sterling and I walked westward," he says once, "arguing copiously, but *except* in opinion not disagreeing."

It is none the less for what has just been said a weightier and a rarer privilege for a man to give a stirring impulse to the moral activity of a generation, than to write in classic style; and to have impressed the spirit of his own personality deeply upon the minds of multitudes of men, than to have composed most of those works which the world is said not

willingly to let die. Nor, again, is to say that this higher renown belongs to Mr. Carlyle, to underrate the less resounding, but most substantial, services of a definite kind which he has rendered both to literature and history. This work may be in time superseded with the advance of knowledge, but the value of the first service will remain unimpaired. It was he, as has been said, "who first taught England to appreciate Goethe;" and not only to appreciate Goethe, but to recognise and seek yet further knowledge of the genius and industry of Goethe's countrymen. His splendid drama of the French Revolution has done, and may be expected long to continue to do, more to bring before our slow-moving and unimaginative public the portentous meaning of that tremendous cataclysm, than all the other writings on the subject in the English language put together. His presentation of Puritanism and the Commonwealth and Oliver Cromwell first made the most elevating period of the national history in any way really intelligible. The Life of Frederick the Second, whatever judgment we may pass upon its morality, or even upon its place as a work of historic art, is a model of laborious and exhaustive narration of facts not before accessible to the reader of history. For all this, and for much other work eminently useful and meritorious even from the mechanical point of view, Mr. Carlyle deserves the warmest recognition. His genius gave him a right to mock at the ineffectiveness of Dryasdust, but his genius was also too true to prevent him from adding the always needful supplement of a painstaking industry that rivals

Dryasdust's own most strenuous toil. Take out of the mind of the English reader of ordinary cultivation and the average journalist, usually a degree or two lower than this, their conceptions of the French Revolution and the English Rebellion, and their knowledge of German literature and history, as well as most of their acquaintance with the prominent men of the eighteenth century, and we shall see how much work Mr. Carlyle has done simply as schoolmaster.

This, however, is emphatically a secondary aspect of his character, and of the function which he has fulfilled in relation to the more active tendencies of modern opinion and feeling. We must go on to other ground, if we would find the field in which he has laboured most ardently and with most acceptance. History and literature have been with him, what they will always be with wise and understanding minds of creative and even of the higher critical faculty—only embodiments, illustrations, experiments, for ideas about religion, conduct, society, history, government, and all the other great heads and departments of a complete social doctrine.

LXXXI

REASON AND IMAGINATION

With most men and women the master element in their opinions is obviously neither their own reason nor their own imagination, independently exercised, but only mere use and wont, chequered by fortuitous

sensations, and modified in the better cases by the influence of a favourite teacher; while in the worse the teacher is the favourite who happens to chime in most harmoniously with prepossessions, or most effectually to nurse and exaggerate them. Among the superior minds the balance between reason and imagination is scarcely ever held exactly true, nor is either firmly kept within the precise bounds that are proper to it. It is a question of temperament which of the two mental attitudes becomes fixed and habitual, as it is a question of temperament how violently either of them straitens and distorts the normal faculties of vision. The man who prides himself on a hard head, which would usually be better described as a thin head, may and constantly does fall into a confirmed manner of judging character and circumstance, so narrow, one-sided, and elaborately superficial, as to make common sense shudder at the crimes that are committed in the divine name of reason. Excess on the other side leads people into emotional transports, in which the pre-eminent respect that is due to truth, the difficulty of discovering the truth, the narrowness of the way that leads thereto, the merits of intellectual precision and definiteness, and even the merits of moral precision and definiteness, are all effectually veiled by purple or fiery clouds of anger, sympathy, and sentimentalism, which imagination has hung over the intelligence.

The familiar distinction between the poetic and the scientific temper is another way of stating the same difference. The one fuses or crystallises external

objects and circumstances in the medium of human feeling and passion; the other is concerned with the relations of objects and circumstances among themselves, including in them all the facts of human consciousness, and with the discovery and classification of these relations. There is, too, a corresponding distinction between the aspects which conduct, character, social movement, and the objects of nature are able to present, according as we scrutinise them with a view to exactitude of knowledge, or are stirred by some appeal which they make to our various faculties and forms of sensibility, our tenderness, sympathy, awe, terror, love of beauty, and all the other emotions in this momentous catalogue. The starry heavens have one side for the astronomer, as astronomer, and another for the poet, as poet. The nightingale, the skylark, the cuckoo, move one sort of interest in an ornithologist, and a very different sort in a Shelley or a Wordsworth. The hoary and stupendous formations of the inorganic world, the thousand tribes of insects, the great universe of plants, from those whose size and form and hue make us afraid as if they were deadly monsters, down to "the meanest flower that blows," all these are clothed with one set of attributes by scientific intelligence, and with another by sentiment, fancy, and imaginative association.

The contentiousness of rival schools of philosophy has obscured the application of the same distinction to the various orders of fact more nearly and immediately relating to man and the social union. One school has maintained the virtually unmeaning doctrine that the will is free, and therefore its followers

never gave any quarter to the idea that man was as proper an object of scientific scrutiny morally and historically, as they could not deny him to be anatomically and physiologically. Their enemies have been more concerned to dislodge them from this position, than to fortify, organise, and cultivate their own. The consequences have not been without their danger. Poetic persons have rushed in where scientific persons ought not to have feared to tread. That human character and the order of events have their poetic aspect, and that their poetic treatment demands the rarest and most valuable qualities of mind, is a truth which none but narrow and superficial men of the world are rash enough to deny. But that there is a scientific aspect of these things, an order among them that can only be understood and criticised and effectually modified scientifically, by using all the caution and precision and infinite patience of the truly scientific spirit, is a truth that is constantly ignored even by men and women of the loftiest and most humane nature. In such cases misdirected and uncontrolled sensibility ends in mournful waste of their own energy, in the certain disappointment of their own aims, and where such sensibility is backed by genius, eloquence, and a peculiar set of public conditions, in prolonged and fatal disturbance of society.

LXXXII

CARLYLISM AND BYRONISM

In England, the greatest literary organ of the Revolution was unquestionably Byron, whose genius, daring, and melodramatic lawlessness, exercised what now seems such an amazing fascination over the least revolutionary of European nations. Unfitted for scientific work and full of ardour, Mr. Carlyle found his mission in rushing with all his might to the annihilation of this terrible poet, who, like some gorgon, hydra, or chimera dire planted at the gate, carried off a yearly tale of youths and virgins from the city. In literature, only a revolutionist can thoroughly overpower a revolutionist. Mr. Carlyle had fully as much daring as Byron; his writing at its best, if without the many-eyed minuteness and sustained pulsing force of Byron, has still the full swell and tide and energy of genius: he is as lawless in his disrespect for some things established. He had the unspeakable advantage of being that which, though not in this sense, only his own favourite word of contempt describes, respectable; and, for another thing, of being ruggedly sincere. Carlylism is the male of Byronism. It is Byronism with thew and sinew, bass pipe and shaggy bosom. There is the same grievous complaint against the time and its men and its spirit, something even of the same contemptuous despair, the same sense of the puniness of man in the centre of a cruel and frowning universe; but there is in Carlylism a deliverance from it all, indeed

the only deliverance possible. Its despair is a despair without misery. Labour in a high spirit, duty done, and right service performed in fortitudinous temper—here was, not indeed a way out, but a way of erect living within.

Against Byronism the ordinary moralist and preacher could really do nothing, because Byronism was an appeal that lay in the regions of the mind only accessible by one with an eye and a large poetic feeling for the infinite whole of things. It was not the rebellion only in *Manfred*, nor the wit in *Don Juan*, nor the graceful melancholy of *Childe Harold*, which made their author an idol, and still make him one to multitudes of Frenchmen and Germans and Italians. One prime secret of it is the air and spaciousness, the freedom and elemental grandeur of Byron. Who has not felt this to be one of the glories of Mr. Carlyle's work, that it, too, is large and spacious, rich with the fullness of a sense of things unknown and wonderful, and ever in the tiniest part showing us the stupendous and overwhelming whole? The magnitude of the universal forces enlarges the pettiness of man, and the smallness of his achievement and endurance takes a complexion of greatness from the vague immensity that surrounds and impalpably mixes with it.

Remember further, that while in Byron the outcome of this was rebellion, in Carlyle its outcome is reverence, a noble mood, which is one of the highest predispositions of the English character. The instincts of sanctification rooted in Teutonic races, and which in the corrupt and unctuous forms of a

mechanical religious profession are so revolting, were mocked and outraged, where they were not superciliously ignored, in every line of the one, while in the other they were enthroned under the name of Worship, as the very key and centre of the right life. The prophet who never wearies of declaring that "only in bowing down before the Higher does man feel himself exalted," touched solemn organ notes, that awoke a response from dim religious depths, never reached by the stormy wailings of the Byronic lyre. The political side of the reverential sentiment is equally conciliated, and the prime business of individuals and communities pronounced to be the search after worthy objects of this divine quality of reverence. While kings' cloaks and church tippets are never spared, still less suffered to protect the dishonour of ignoble wearers of them, the inadequateness of aggression and demolition, the necessity of quiet order, the uncounted debt that we owe to rulers and to all sorts of holy and great men who have given this order to the world, all this brought repose and harmony into spirits that the hollow thunders of universal rebellion against tyrants and priests had worn into thinness and confusion. Again, at the bottom of the veriest *frondeur* with English blood in his veins, in his most defiant moment there lies a conviction that after all something known as common sense is the measure of life, and that to work hard is a demonstrated precept of common sense. Carlylism exactly hits this and brings it forward. We cannot wonder that Byronism was routed from the field.

LXXXIII

SUCH STUFF AS DREAMS

THERE is no passage which Mr. Carlyle so often quotes as the sublime—

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on ; and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

If the ever present impression of this awful, most moving, yet most soothing thought, be a law of spiritual breadth and height, there is still a peril in it. Such an impression may inform the soul with a devout mingled sense of grandeur and nothingness, or it may blacken into cynicism and antinomian living for self and the day. It may be a solemn and holy refrain, sounding far off but clear in the dusty course of work and duty ; or it may be the comforting chorus of a diabolic drama of selfishness and violence. As a reaction against religious theories which make humanity over-abound in self-consequence, and fill individuals with the strutting importance of creatures with private souls to save or lose, even such cynicism as Byron's was wholesome and nearly forgivable. Nevertheless, the most important question that we can ask of any great teacher, as of the walk and conversation of any commonest person, remains this—how far has he strengthened and raised the conscious and harmonious dignity of humanity ; how stirred in men and women, many or few, deeper and more active sense of the worth and obligation and innumerable possibilities, not of their own little lives,

one or another, but of life collectively; how heightened the self-respect of the race? There is no need to plant oneself in a fool's paradise, with no eye for the weakness of men, the futility of their hopes, the irony of their fate, the dominion of the satyr and the tiger in their hearts. Laughter has a fore-place in life. All this we may see and show that we see, and yet so throw it behind the weightier facts of nobleness and sacrifice, of the boundless gifts which fraternal union has given, and has the power of giving, as to kindle in every breast, not callous to exalted impressions, the glow of sympathetic endeavour, and of serene exultation in the bond that makes "precious the soul of man to man."

LXXXIV

BYRON'S ART AND PERSONALITY

More attention is now paid to the mysteries of Byron's life than to the merits of his work, and criticism and morality are equally injured by the confusion between the worth of the verse he wrote, and the virtue or wickedness of the life he lived. The admirers of his poetry appear sensible of some obligation to be the champions of his conduct, while those who have diligently gathered together the details of an accurate knowledge of the unseemliness of his conduct, cannot bear to think that from this bramble men have been able to gather figs. The result of the confusion has been that grave men and women have applied themselves to investigate and

judge Byron's private life, as if the exact manner of it, the more or less of his outrages upon decorum, the degree of the deadness of his sense of moral responsibility, were matter of minute and profound interest to all ages. As if all this had anything to do with criticism proper. It is right that we should know the life and manners of one whom we choose for a friend, or of one who asks us to entrust him with the control of public interests. In either of these two cases, we need a guarantee for present and future. Art knows nothing of guarantees. The work is before us, its own warranty. What is it to us whether Turner had coarse orgies with the trulls of Wapping. We can judge his art without knowing or thinking of the artist. And in the same way, what are the stories of Byron's libertinism to us? They may have biographical interest, but of critical interest hardly the least. If the name of the author of *Manfred, Cain, Childe Harold,* were already lost, as it may be in remote times, the work abides, and its mark on European opinion. "*Je ne considère les gens après leur mort,*" said Voltaire, "*que par leurs ouvrages; tout le reste est anéanti pour moi.*"

There is a sense in which biographical detail gives light to criticism, but not the sense in which the prurient moralist uses or seeks it. The life of the poet may help to explain the growth and prominence of a characteristic sentiment or peculiar idea. Knowledge of this or that fact in his life may uncover the roots of something that strikes, or unravel something that perplexes us. Considering the relations between a man's character and circumstance, and what he

produces, we can from this point of view hardly know too much as to the personality of a great writer. Only let us recollect that this personality manifests itself outwardly in two separate forms, in conduct, and in literary production, and that each of these manifestations is to be judged independently of the other. If one of them is wholly censurable, the other may still be the outcome of the better mind; and even from the purely biographical aspect, it is a plain injustice to insist on identifying a character with its worse expression only.

LXXXV

POETRY, POETS, AND BYRON

Poetry, and not only poetry, but every other channel of emotional expression and æsthetic culture, confessedly moves with the general march of the human mind, and art is only the transformation into ideal and imaginative shapes of a predominant system and philosophy of life. Minor verse-writers may fairly be consigned, without disrespect, to the region of the literature of taste; and criticism of their work takes the shape of a discussion of stray graces, of new turns, of little variations of shade and colour, of their conformity to the accepted rules that constitute the technique of poetry. The loftier masters, though their technical power and originality, their beauty of form, strength of flight, music and variousness of rhythm, are all full of interest and instruction, yet, besides these precious gifts, come to us with the size

and quality of great historic forces, for they represent the hope and energies, the dreams and the consummation, of the human intelligence in its most enormous movements. To appreciate one of these, we need to survey it on every side. For these we need synthetic criticism, which, after analysis has done its work, and disclosed to us the peculiar qualities of form, conception, and treatment, shall collect the products of this first process, construct for us the poet's mental figure in its integrity and just coherence, and then finally, as the sum of its work, shall trace the relations of the poet's ideas, either direct or indirect, through the central currents of thought, to the visible tendencies of an existing age.

The greatest poets reflect beside all else the broad-bosomed haven of a perfect and positive faith, in which mankind has for some space found shelter, unsuspicious of the new and distant wayfarings that are ever in store. To this band of sacred bards few are called, while perhaps not more than four high names would fill the list of the chosen: Dante, the poet of Catholicism; Shakespeare, of Feudalism; Milton, of Protestantism; Goethe, of that new faith which is as yet without any universally recognised label, but whose heaven is an ever-closer harmony between the consciousness of man and all the natural forces of the universe; whose liturgy is culture, and whose deity is a certain high composure of the human heart.

The far-shining pre-eminence of Shakespeare, apart from the incomparable fertility and depth of his natural gifts, arises secondarily from the larger extent

to which he transcended the special forming influences, and refreshed his fancy and widened his range of sympathy, by recourse to what was then the nearest possible approach to a historic or political method. To the poet, vision reveals a certain form of the truth, which the rest of men laboriously discover and prove by the tardier methods of meditation and science. Shakespeare did not walk in imagination with the great warriors, monarchs, churchmen, and rulers of history, nor conceive their conduct, ideas, schemes, and throw himself into their words and actions, without strengthening that original taste which must have first drawn him to historical subjects, and without deepening both his feeling for the great progression of human affairs, and his sympathy for those relative moods of surveying and dealing with them, which are not more positive, scientific, and political, than they may be made truly poetic.

Again, while in Dante the inspiring force was spiritual, and in Goethe it was intellectual, we may say that both in Shakespeare and Milton it was political and social. In other words, with these two, the drama of the one and the epic of the other were each of them connected with ideas of government and the other external movements of men in society, and with the play of the sentiments which spring from them. We assuredly do not mean that in either of them, least of all in Shakespeare, there is an absence of the spiritual element. This would be at once to thrust them down into a lower place ; for the spiritual is of the very essence of poetry. But with the spiritual

there mixes in our Englishmen a most abundant leaven of recognition of the impressions and impulses of the outer forms of life, as well as of active sympathy with the every-day debate of the world. They are neither of them inferior to the highest in sense of the wide and unutterable things of the spirit; yet with both of them, more than with other poets of the same rank, the man with whose soul and circumstance they have to deal is the πολιτικὸν ζῷον, no high abstraction of the race, but the creature with concrete relations and a full objective life. In Shakespeare the dramatic form helps partly to make this more prominent, though the poet's spirit shines forth thus, independently of the mould which it imposes on itself. Of Milton we may say, too, that, in spite of the supernatural machinery of his greatest poem, it bears strongly impressed on it the political mark, and that in those minor pieces, where he is avowedly in the political sphere, he still rises to the full height of his majestic harmony and noblest dignity.

Byron was touched by the same fire. The contemporary and friend of the most truly spiritual of all English poets, Shelley, he was himself among the most essentially political. Or perhaps one will be better understood, describing his quality as a quality of poetical *worldliness*, in its enlarged and generous sense of energetic interest in real transactions, and a capacity of being moved and raised by them into those lofty moods of emotion which in more spiritual natures are only kindled by contemplation of the vast infinitudes that compass the human soul round about. That Shelley was immeasurably superior to Byron in

all the rarer qualities of the specially poetic mind appears to us so unmistakably assured a fact, that difference of opinion upon it can only spring from a more fundamental difference of opinion as to what it is that constitutes this specially poetic quality. If more than anything else it consists in the power of transfiguring action, character, and thought, in the serene radiance of the purest imaginative intelligence, and the gift of expressing these transformed products in the finest articulate vibrations of emotional speech, then must we not confess that Byron has composed no piece which from this point may compare with *Prometheus* or the *Cenci*, any more than Rubens may take his place with Raphael? We feel that Shelley transports the spirit to the highest bound and limit of the intelligible; and that with him thought passes through one superadded and more rarefying process than the other poet is master of. If it be true, as has been written, that "Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge," we may say that Shelley teaches us to apprehend that further something, the breath and finer spirit of poetry itself. Contrasting, for example, Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*, with the famous and truly noble stanzas on the eternal sea which close the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*, who does not feel that there is in the first a volatile and unseizable element that is quite distinct from the imagination and force and high impressiveness, or from any indefinable product of all of these united, which form the glory and power of the second? We may ask in the same way whether *Manfred*, where the spiritual element is as pre-

dominant as it ever is in Byron, is worth half a page of *Prometheus*.

To perceive and admit this is not to disparage Byron's achievements. To be most deeply penetrated with the differentiating quality of the poet is not, after all, to contain the whole of that admixture of varying and moderating elements which goes to the composition of the broadest and most effective work. Of these elements, Shelley, with all his rare gifts of spiritual imagination and winged melodiousness of verse, was markedly wanting in a keen and omnipresent feeling for the great course of human events. All nature stirred him, except the consummating crown of natural growth.

We do not mean anything so untrue as that Shelley was wanting either in deep humanity or in active benevolence, or that social injustice was a thing indifferent to him. We do not forget the energetic political propagandism of his youth in Ireland and elsewhere. Many a furious stanza remains to show how deeply and bitterly the spectacle of this injustice burnt into his soul. But these pieces are accidents. They do not belong to the immortal part of his work. An American original, unconsciously bringing the revolutionary mind to the climax of all utterances possible to it, has said that "men are degraded when considered as the members of a political organisation." [1] Shelley's position was on a yet more remote pinnacle than this. Of mankind he was barely conscious, in his loftiest and divinest flights. His muse seeks the vague translucent spaces where the

[1] Thoreau.

care of man melts away in vision of the eternal forces, of which man may be but the fortuitous manifestation of an hour.

Byron, on the other hand, is never moved by the strength of his passion or the depth of his contemplation quite away from the round earth and the civil animal who dwells upon it. Even his misanthropy is only an inverted form of social solicitude. His practical zeal for good and noble causes might teach us this. He never grudged either money or time or personal peril for the cause of Italian freedom, and his life was the measure and the cost of his interest in the liberty of Greece. Then again he was full not merely of wit, which is sometimes only an affair of the tongue, but of humour also, which goes much deeper; and it is of the essence of the humoristic nature, that whether sunny or saturnine, it binds the thoughts of him who possesses it to the wide medley of expressly human things. Byron did not misknow himself, nor misapprehend the most marked turn of his own character, when he wrote the lines—

> I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
> From these our interviews, in which I steal
> From all I may be, or have been before,
> To mingle with the universe and feel
> What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

It was this which made Byron a social force, a far greater force than Shelley either has been or can be. Men read in each page that he was one of like passions with themselves; that he had their own feet of clay, if he had other members of brass and gold and fine silver which they had none of; and that vehement

sensibility, tenacious energy of imagination, a bounding swell of poetic fancy, had not obliterated, but had rather quickened, the sense of the highest kind of man of the world, which did not decay but waxed stronger in him with years. His openness to beauty and care for it were always inferior in keenness and in hold upon him to his sense of human interest, and the superiority in certain respects of *Marino Faliero*, for example, where he handles a social theme in a worthy spirit, over *Manfred*, where he seeks a something tumultuously beautiful, is due to that subordination in his mind of æsthetic to social intention, which is one of the most strongly distinctive marks of the truly modern spirit. The admirable wit both of his letters, and of pieces like the *Vision of Judgment* and *Don Juan*, where wit reaches as high as any English writer has ever carried it, shows in another way the same vividness and reality of attraction which every side of human affairs possessed for this glowing and incessantly animated spirit.

In spite of a good many surface affectations, which may have cheated the lighter heads, but which may now be easily seen through, and counted off for as much as they are worth, Byron possessed a bottom of plain sincerity and rational sobriety, which kept him substantially straight, real, and human, and made him the genuine exponent of that immense social movement which we sum up as the Revolution. If Keats's whole soul was absorbed by sensuous impressions of the outer world, and his art was the splendid and exquisite reproduction of these ; if Shelley on the other hand distilled from the fine impressions of the

senses by process of inmost meditation some thrice ethereal essence, "the viewless spirit of a lovely sound;" we may say of Byron that, even in the moods when the mightiness and wonder of nature had most effectually possessed themselves of his imagination, his mind never moved for very long on these remote heights, apart from the busy world of men, but returned again like the fabled dove from the desolate void of waters to the ark of mortal stress and human passion. Nature, in her most dazzling aspects or stupendous parts, is but the background and theatre of the tragedy of man.

LXXXVI

THE SECRET OF MACAULAY'S POPULARITY

THE first and most obvious secret of Macaulay's place on popular bookshelves is that he has a true genius for narration, and narration will always in the eyes, not only of our squatters in the Australian bush, but of the many all over the world, stand first among literary gifts. The common run of plain men, as has been noticed since the beginning of the world, are as eager as children for a story, and like children they will embrace the man who will tell them a story, with abundance of details and plenty of colour, and a realistic assurance that it is no mere make-believe. Macaulay never stops to brood over an incident or a character, with an inner eye intent on penetrating to the lowest depths of motive and cause, to the furthest complexity of impulse, calculation, and subtle incen-

tive. The spirit of analysis is not in him, and the divine spirit of meditation is not in him. His whole mind runs in action and movement; it busies itself with eager interest in all objective particulars. He is seized by the external and the superficial, and revels in every detail that appeals to the five senses. "The brilliant Macaulay," said Emerson, with slight exaggeration, "who expresses the tone of the English governing classes of the day, explicitly teaches that *good* means good to eat, good to wear, material commodity." So ready a faculty of exultation in the exceeding great glories of taste and touch, of loud sound and glittering spectacle, is a gift of the utmost service to the narrator who craves immense audiences. Let it be said that if Macaulay exults in the details that go to our five senses, his sensuousness is always clean, manly, and fit for honest daylight and the summer sun. There is none of that curious odour of autumnal decay that clings to the passion of a more modern school for colour and flavour and the enumerated treasures of subtle indulgence.

Mere picturesqueness, however, is a minor qualification compared with another quality which everybody assumes himself to have, but which is in reality extremely uncommon; the quality, I mean, of telling a tale directly and in straightforward order. In speaking of Hallam, Macaulay complained that Gibbon had brought into fashion an unpleasant trick of telling a story by implication and allusion. This provoking obliquity has certainly increased rather than declined since Hallam's day. Mr. Froude, it is true, whatever may be his shortcomings on the side

of sound moral and political judgment, has admirable gifts in the way of straightforward narration, and Mr. Freeman, when he does not press too hotly after emphasis, and abstains from overloading his account with superabundance of detail, is usually excellent in the way of direct description. Still, it is not merely because these two writers are alive and Macaulay is not, that most people would say of him that he is unequalled in our time in his mastery of the art of letting us know in an express and unmistakable way exactly what it was that happened; though it is quite true that in many portions of his too elaborated History of William the Third he describes a large number of events about which, I think, no sensible man can in the least care either how they happened, or whether indeed they happened at all or not.

Another reason why people have sought Macaulay is, that he has in one way or another something to tell them about many of the most striking personages and interesting events in the history of mankind. And he does really tell them something. If any one will be at the trouble to count up the number of those names that belong to the world and time, about which Macaulay has found not merely something, but something definite and pointed to say, he will be astonished to see how large a portion of the wide historic realm is traversed in that ample flight of reference, allusion, and illustration, and what unsparing copiousness of knowledge gives substance, meaning, and attraction to that resplendent blaze of rhetoric.

LXXXVII

IMAGINATIVE HANDLING OF THE COMMONPLACE

ADDISON puts fine writing in sentiments that are natural without being obvious, and this is a true account of the "law" of the exquisite literature of the Queen Anne men. We may perhaps add to Addison's definition, that the great secret of the best kind of popularity is always the noble or imaginative handling of Commonplace. Shakespeare may at first seem an example to the contrary; and indeed is it not a standing marvel that the greatest writer of a nation that is distinguished among all nations for the pharisaism, puritanism, and unimaginative narrowness of its judgments on conduct and type of character, should be paramount over all writers for the breadth, maturity, fulness, subtlety, and infinite variousness of his conception of human life and nature? One possible answer to the perplexity is that the puritanism does not go below the surface in us, and that Englishmen are not really limited in their view by the too strait formulas that are supposed to contain their explanations of the moral universe. On this theory the popular appreciation of Shakespeare is the irrepressible response of the hearty inner man to a voice, in which he recognises the full note of human nature, and those wonders of the world which are not dreamt of in his professed philosophy. A more obvious answer than this is that Shakespeare's popularity with the many is not due to those finer glimpses that are the very essence

of all poetic delight to the few, but to his thousand other magnificent attractions, and above all, after his skill as a pure dramatist and master of scenic interest and situation, to the lofty or pathetic setting with which he vivifies, not the subtleties or refinements, but the commonest and most elementary traits of the commonest and most elementary human moods. The few with minds touched by nature or right cultivation to the finer issues, admire the supreme genius which takes some poor Italian tale, with its coarse plot and gross personages, and shooting it through with threads of variegated meditation, produces a masterpiece of penetrative reflection and high pensive suggestion as to the deepest things and most secret parts of the life of men. But to the general these finer threads are indiscernible. What touches them in the Shakesperean poetry, and most rightly touches them and us all, are topics eternally old, yet of eternal freshness, the perennial truisms of the grave and the bride-chamber, of shifting fortune, of the surprises of destiny, and the emptiness of the answered vow. This is the region in which the poet wins his widest if not his hardest triumphs, the region of the noble Commonplace.

LXXXVIII

MACAULAY'S STYLE

MACAULAY is of those who think prose as susceptible of polished and definite form as verse, and he was, we should suppose, of those also who hold the type

and mould of all written language to be spoken language. There are more reasons for demurring to the soundness of the latter doctrine, than can conveniently be made to fill a digression here. For one thing, spoken language necessarily implies one or more listeners, whereas written language may often have to express meditative moods and trains of inward reflection that move through the mind without trace of external reference, and that would lose their special traits by the introduction of any suspicion that they were to be overheard. Again, even granting that all composition must be supposed to be meant, by the fact of its existence, to be addressed to a body of readers, it still remains to be shown that indirect address to the inner ear should follow the same method and rhythm as address directly through impressions on the outer organ. The attitude of the recipient mind is different, and there is the symbolism of a new medium between it and the speaker. The writer, being cut off from all those effects which are producible by the physical intonations of the voice, has to find substitutes for them by other means, by subtler cadences, by a more varied modulation, by firmer notes, by more complex circuits, than suffice for the utmost perfection of spoken language, which has all the potent and manifold aids of personality. In writing, whether it be prose or verse, you are free to produce effects whose peculiarity one can only define vaguely, by saying that the senses have one part less in them than in any other of the forms and effects of art, and the imaginary voice one part more. But the question need not be laboured here, because

there can be no dispute as to the quality of Macaulay's prose. Its measures are emphatically the measures of spoken deliverance. Those who have made the experiment, pronounce him to be one of the authors whose works are most admirably fitted for reading aloud. His firmness and directness of statement, his spiritedness, his art of selecting salient and highly coloured detail, and all his other merits as a narrator, keep the listener's attention, and make him the easiest of writers to follow.

Although, however, clearness, directness, and positiveness are master qualities and the indispensable foundations of all good style, yet does the matter plainly by no means end with them. And it is even possible to have these virtues so unhappily proportioned and inauspiciously mixed with other turns and casts of mind, as to end in work with little grace or harmony or fine tracery about it, but only overweening purpose and vehement will. And it is overweeningness and self-confident will that are the chief notes of Macaulay's style. It has no benignity. Energy is doubtless a delightful quality, but then Macaulay's energy is perhaps energy without momentum, and he impresses us more by a strong volubility than by volume. It is the energy of interests and intuitions, which though they are profoundly sincere if ever they were sincere in any man, are yet in the relations which they comprehend, essentially superficial.

Still, trenchancy whether in speaker or writer is a most effective tone for a large public. It gives them confidence in their man, and prevents tediousness—

except to those who reflect how delicate is the poise of truth, and what steeps and pits encompass the dealer in unqualified propositions. To such persons, a writer who is trenchant in every sentence of every page, who never lapses for a line into the contingent, who marches through the intricacies of things in a blaze of certainty, is not only a writer to be distrusted, but the owner of a doubtful and displeasing style. It is a great test of style to watch how an author disposes of the qualifications, limitations, and exceptions that clog the wings of his main proposition. The grave and conscientious men of the seventeenth century insisted on packing them all honestly along with the main proposition itself, within the bounds of a single period. Burke arranges them in tolerably close order in the paragraph. Dr. Newman, that winning writer, disperses them lightly over his page. Of Macaulay it is hardly unfair to say that he despatches all qualifications into outer space before he begins to write, or if he magnanimously admits one or two here and there, it is only to bring them the more imposingly to the same murderous end.

We have spoken of Macaulay's interests and intuitions wearing a certain air of superficiality; there is a feeling of the same kind about his attempts to be genial. It is not truly festive. There is no abandonment in it. It has no deep root in moral humour, and is merely a literary form, resembling nothing so much as the hard geniality of some clever college tutor of stiff manners, entertaining undergraduates at an official breakfast-party. This is not because his tone is bookish; on the contrary, his tone and level are

distinctly those of the man of the world. But one always seems to find that neither a wide range of cultivation, nor familiar access to the best Whig circles, had quite removed the stiffness and self-conscious precision of the Clapham Sect. We would give much for a little more flexibility, and would welcome ever so slight a consciousness of infirmity. As has been said, the only people whom men cannot pardon are the perfect. Macaulay is like the military king who never suffered himself to be seen, even by the attendants in his bed-chamber, until he had had time to put on his uniform and jack-boots. His severity of eye is very wholesome; it makes his writing firm, and firmness is certainly one of the first qualities that good writing must have. But there is such a thing as soft and considerate precision, as well as hard and scolding precision. Those most interesting English critics of the generation slightly anterior to Macaulay,—Hazlitt, Lamb, De Quincey, Leigh Hunt,—were fully his equals in precision, and yet they knew how to be clear, acute, and definite, without that edginess and inelasticity which is so conspicuous in Macaulay's criticisms, alike in their matter and their form.

To borrow the figure of an old writer, Macaulay's prose is not like a flowing vestment to his thought, but like a suit of armour. It is often splendid and glittering, and the movement of the opening pages of his History is superb in its dignity. But that movement is exceptional. As a rule there is the hardness, if there is also often the sheen, of highly-wrought metal. Or, to change our figure, his pages

are composed as a handsome edifice is reared, not as a fine statue or a frieze "with bossy sculptures graven" grows up in the imaginative mind of the statuary. There is no liquid continuity, such as indicates a writer possessed by his subject and not merely possessing it. The periods are marshalled in due order of procession, bright and high-stepping; they never escape under an impulse of emotion into the full current of a brimming stream. What is curious is that though Macaulay seems ever to be brandishing a two-edged gleaming sword, and though he steeps us in an atmosphere of belligerency, yet we are never conscious of inward agitation in him, and perhaps this alone would debar him from a place among the greatest writers. For they, under that reserve, suppression, or management, which is an indispensable condition of the finest rhetorical art, even when aiming at the most passionate effects, still succeed in conveying to their readers a thrilling sense of the strong fires that are glowing underneath. Now when Macaulay advances with his hectoring sentences and his rough pistolling ways, we feel all the time that his pulse is as steady as that of the most practised duellist who ever ate fire. He is too cool to be betrayed into a single phrase of happy improvisation. His pictures glare, but are seldom warm. Those strokes of minute circumstantiality which he loved so dearly, show that even in moments when his imagination might seem to be moving both spontaneously and ardently, it was really only a literary instrument, a fashioning tool and not a melting flame. Let us take a single example. He is

describing the trial of Warren Hastings. "Every step in the proceedings," he says, "carried the mind either backward through many troubled centuries to the days when the foundations of our constitution were laid; or far away over boundless seas and deserts, to dusky nations living under strange stars, worshipping strange gods, and writing strange characters from right to left." The odd triviality of the last detail, its unworthiness of the sentiment of the passage, leaves the reader checked; what sets out as a fine stroke of imagination dwindles down to a sort of literary conceit. And this puerile twist, by the way, is all the poorer, when it is considered that the native writing is really from left to right, and only takes the other direction in a foreign, that is to say, a Persian alphabet. And so in other places, even where the writer is most deservedly admired for gorgeous picturesque effect, we feel that it is only the literary picturesque, a kind of infinitely glorified newspaper-reporting. Compare, for instance, the most imaginative piece to be found in any part of Macaulay's writings with that sudden and lovely apostrophe in Carlyle, after describing the bloody horrors that followed the fall of the Bastille in 1789:—"O evening sun of July, how, at this hour, thy beams fall slant on reapers amid peaceful woody fields; on old women spinning in cottages; on ships far out in the silent main; on balls at the Orangerie at Versailles, where high-rouged dames of the Palace are even now dancing with double-jacketed Hussar officers;—and also on this roaring Hell-porch of a Hotel de Ville!" Who does not feel in this the

breath of poetic inspiration, and how different it is from the mere composite of the rhetorician's imagination, assiduously working to order ?

This remark is no disparagement of Macaulay's genius, but a classification of it. We are interrogating our own impressions, and asking ourselves among what kind of writers he ought to be placed. Rhetoric is a good and worthy art, and rhetorical authors are often more useful, more instructive, more really respectable than poetical authors. But it is to be said that Macaulay as a rhetorician will hardly be placed in the first rank, by those who have studied both him and the great masters. Once more, no amount of embellishment or emphasis or brilliant figure suffices to produce this intense effect of agitation rigorously restrained ; nor can any beauty of decoration be in the least a substitute for that touching and penetrative music, which is made in prose by the repressed trouble of grave and high souls. There is a certain music, we do not deny, in Macaulay, but it is the music of a man everlastingly playing for us rapid solos on a silver trumpet, never the swelling diapasons of the organ, and never the deep ecstasies of the four magic strings. That so sensible a man as Macaulay should keep clear of the modern abomination of dithyrambic prose, that rank and sprawling weed of speech, was natural enough ; but then the effects which we miss in him, and which, considering how strong the literary faculty in him really was, we are almost astonished to miss, are not produced by dithyramb but by repression. Of course the answer has been already given ; Macaulay,

powerful and vigorous as he was, had no agitation, no wonder, no tumult of spirit to repress. The world was spread out clear before him; he read it as plainly and as certainly as he read his books; life was all an affair of direct categoricals.

This was at least one secret of those hard modulations and shallow cadences. How poor is the rhythm of Macaulay's prose we only realise by going with his periods fresh in our ear to some true master of harmony. It is not worth while to quote passages from an author who is in everybody's library, and Macaulay is always so much like himself that almost any one page will serve for an illustration exactly as well as any other. Let any one turn to his character of Somers, for whom he had so much admiration, and then turn to Clarendon's character of Falkland;—"a person of such prodigious parts of learning and knowledge, of that inimitable sweetness and delight in conversation, of so flowing and obliging a humanity and goodness to mankind, and of that primitive simplicity and integrity of life, that if there were no other brand upon this odious and accursed civil war than that single loss, it must be most infamous and execrable to all posterity." Now Clarendon is not a great writer, not even a good writer, for he is prolix and involved, yet we see that even Clarendon, when he comes to a matter in which his heart is engaged, becomes sweet and harmonious in his rhythm. If we turn to a prose-writer of the very first place, we are instantly conscious of a still greater difference. How flashy and shallow Macaulay's periods seem, as we listen to the fine ground-base that rolls in the melody

of the following passage of Burke's, and it is taken from one of the least ornate of all his pieces :—

You will not, we trust, believe that, born in a civilised country, formed to gentle manners, trained in a merciful religion, and living in enlightened and polished times, where even foreign hostility is softened from its original sternness, we could have thought of letting loose upon you, our late beloved brethren, these fierce tribes of savages and cannibals, in whom the traces of human nature are effaced by ignorance and barbarity. We rather wished to have joined with you in bringing gradually that unhappy part of mankind into civility, order, piety, and virtuous discipline, than to have confirmed their evil habits and increased their natural ferocity by fleshing them in the slaughter of you, whom our wiser and better ancestors had sent into the wilderness with the express view of introducing, along with our holy religion, its humane and charitable manners. We do not hold that all things are lawful in war. We should think every barbarity, in fire, in wasting, in murders, in tortures, and other cruelties, too horrible and too full of turpitude for Christian mouths to utter or ears to hear, if done at our instigation, by those who we know will make war thus if they make it at all, to be, to all intents and purposes, as if done by ourselves. We clear ourselves to you our brethren, to the present age, and to future generations, to our king and our country, and to Europe, which as a spectator, beholds this tragic scene, of every part or share in adding this last and worst of evils to the inevitable mischiefs of a civil war.

We do not call you rebels and traitors. We do not call for the vengeance of the crown against you. We do not know how to qualify millions of our countrymen, contending with one heart for an admission to privileges which we have ever thought our own happiness and honour, by odious and unworthy names. On the contrary, we highly revere the principles on which you act, though we lament some of their effects. Armed as you are, we embrace you, as our friends and as our brethren by the best and dearest ties of relation.

It may be said that there is a patent injustice in comparing the prose of a historian criticising or

describing great events at second hand, with the prose of a statesman taking active part in great events, fired by the passion of a present conflict, and stimulated by the vivid interest of undetermined issues. If this be a well-grounded plea, and it may be so, then of course it excludes a contrast not only with Burke, but also with Bolingbroke, whose fine manners and polished gaiety give us a keen sense of the grievous garishness of Macaulay. If we may not institute a comparison between Macaulay and great actors on the stage of affairs, at least there can be no objection to the introduction of Southey as a standard of comparison. Southey was a man of letters pure and simple, and it is worth remarking that Macaulay himself admitted that he found so great a charm in Southey's style, as nearly always to read it with pleasure, even when Southey was talking nonsense. Now, take any page of the Life of Nelson or the Life of Wesley; consider how easy, smooth, natural, and winning is the diction and the rise and fall of the sentence, and yet how varied the rhythm and how nervous the phrases; and then turn to a page of Macaulay, and wince under its stamping emphasis, its over-coloured tropes, its exaggerated expressions, its unlovely staccato. Southey's History of the Peninsular War is now dead, but if any of my readers has a copy on his highest shelves, I would venture to ask him to take down the third volume, and read the concluding pages, of which Coleridge used to say that they were the finest specimen of historic eulogy he had ever read in English, adding with forgivable hyperbole, that they were more to

the Duke's fame and glory than a campaign. "Foresight and enterprise with our commander went hand in hand; he never advanced but so as to be sure of his retreat; and never retreated but in such an attitude as to impose upon a superior enemy," and so on through the sum of Wellington's achievements. "There was something more precious than these, more to be desired than the high and enduring fame which he had secured by his military achievements, the satisfaction of thinking to what end those achievements had been directed; that they were for the deliverance of two most injured and grievously oppressed nations; for the safety, honour, and welfare of his own country; and for the general interests of Europe and of the civilised world. His campaigns were sanctified by the cause; they were sullied by no cruelties, no crimes; the chariot-wheels of his triumphs have been followed by no curses; his laurels are entwined with the amaranths of righteousness, and upon his death-bed he might remember his victories among his good works."

What is worse than want of depth and fineness of intonation in a period, is all gross excess of colour, because excess of colour is connected with graver faults in the region of the intellectual conscience. Macaulay is a constant sinner in this respect. The wine of truth is in his cup a brandied draught, a hundred degrees above proof, and he too often replenishes the lamp of knowledge with naphtha instead of fine oil. It is not that he has a spontaneous passion for exuberant decoration, which he would have shared with more than one of the greatest

names in literature. On the contrary, we feel that the exaggerated words and dashing sentences are the fruit of deliberate travail, and the petulance or the irony of his speech is mostly due to a driving predilection for strong effects. His memory, his directness, his aptitude for forcing things into firm outline, and giving them a sharply defined edge,—these and other singular talents of his all lent themselves to this intrepid and indefatigable pursuit of effect. And the most disagreeable feature is that Macaulay was so often content with an effect of an essentially vulgar kind, offensive to taste, discordant to the fastidious ear, and worst of all, at enmity with the whole spirit of truth. By vulgar we certainly do not mean homely, which marks a wholly different quality. No writer can be more homely than Mr. Carlyle, alike in his choice of particulars to dwell upon, and in the terms or images in which he describes or illustrates them, but there is also no writer further removed from vulgarity. Nor do we mean that Macaulay too copiously enriches the tongue with infusion from any Doric dialect. For such raciness he had little taste. What we find in him is that quality which the French call brutal. The description, for instance, in the essay on Hallam, of the licence of the Restoration, seems to us a coarse and vulgar picture, whose painter took the most garish colours he could find on his palette, and then laid them on in untempered crudity. And who is not sensible of the vulgarity and coarseness of the account of Boswell? "If he had not been a great fool he would not have been a great writer . . . he was a dunce, a parasite, and a cox-

comb," and so forth, in which the shallowness of the analysis of Boswell's character matches the puerile rudeness of the terms. Here again, is a sentence about Montesquieu. "The English at that time," Macaulay says of the middle of the eighteenth century, "considered a Frenchman who talked about constitutional checks and fundamental laws as a prodigy not less astonishing than the learned pig or musical infant." And he then goes on to describe the author of one of the most important books that ever were written, as "specious but shallow, studious of effect, indifferent to truth—the lively President," and so forth, stirring in any reader who happens to know Montesquieu's influence, a singular amazement. We are not concerned with the judgment upon Montesquieu, nor with the truth as to contemporary English opinion about him, but a writer who devises an antithesis to such a man as Montesquieu in learned pigs and musical infants, deliberately condescends not merely to triviality or levity, but to flat vulgarity of thought, to something of mean and ignoble association. Though one of the most common, this is not Macaulay's only sin in the same unfortunate direction. He too frequently resorts to vulgar gaudiness. For example, there is in one place a certain description of an alleged practice of Addison's. Swift had said of Esther Johnson that "whether from easiness in general, or from her indifference to persons, or from her despair of mending them, or from the same practice which she most liked in Mr. Addison, I cannot determine; but when she saw any of the company very warm in a wrong opinion, she was more inclined

to confirm them in it than to oppose them. It prevented noise, she said, and saved time." [1] Let us behold what a picture Macaulay draws on the strength of this passage. "If his first attempts to set a presuming dunce right were ill-received," Macaulay says of Addison, "he changed his tone, assented with civil leer, and lured the flattered coxcomb deeper and deeper into absurdity." To compare this transformation of the simplicity of the original into the grotesque heat and overcharged violence of the copy, is to see the homely maiden of a country village transformed into the painted flaunter of the city.

One more instance. We should be sorry to violate any sentiment of τὸ σεμνόν about a man of Macaulay's genius, but what is a decorous term for a description of the doctrine of Lucretius's great poem, thrown in parenthetically, as the "silliest and meanest system of natural and moral philosophy!" Even disagreeable artifices of composition may be forgiven, when they serve to vivify truth, to quicken or to widen the moral judgment, but Macaulay's hardy and habitual recourse to strenuous superlatives is fundamentally unscientific and untrue. There is no more instructive example in our literature than he, of the saying that the adjective is the enemy of the substantive.

[1] Forster's *Swift*, i. 265.

LXXXIX

EMERSON

A GREAT interpreter of life ought not himself to need interpretation, least of all can he need it for contemporaries. When time has wrought changes of fashion, mental and social, the critic serves a useful turn in giving to a poet or a teacher his true place, and in recovering ideas and points of view that are worth preserving. Interpretation of this kind Emerson cannot require. His books are no palimpsest, "the prophet's holograph, defiled, erased, and covered by a monk's." What he has written is fresh, legible, and in full conformity with the manners and the diction of the day, and those who are unable to understand him without gloss and comment are in fact not prepared to understand what it is that the original has to say. Scarcely any literature is so entirely unprofitable as the so-called criticism that overlays a pithy text with a windy sermon. For our time at least Emerson may best be left to be his own expositor.

Nor is Emerson, either, in the case of those whom the world has failed to recognise, and whom therefore it is the business of the critic to make known and to define. It is too soon to say in what particular niche among the teachers of the race posterity will place him; enough that in our own generation he has already been accepted as one of the wise masters, who, being called to high thinking for generous ends, did not fall below his vocation, but, steadfastly pursuing the pure search for truth, without propounding a

system or founding a school or cumbering himself overmuch about applications, lived the life of the spirit, and breathed into other men a strong desire after the right governance of the soul. All this is generally realised and understood, and men may now be left to find their way to the Emersonian doctrine without the critic's prompting. Though it is only the other day that Emerson walked the earth and was alive and among us, he is already one of the privileged few whom the reader approaches in the mood of settled respect, and whose names have surrounded themselves with an atmosphere of religion.

It is not particularly profitable, again, to seek for Emerson one of the labels out of the philosophic handbooks. Was he the prince of Transcendentalists, or the prince of Idealists? Are we to look for the sources of his thought in Kant or Jacobi, in Fichte or Schelling? How does he stand towards Parmenides and Zeno, the Egotheism of the Sufis, or the position of the Megareans? Shall we put him on the shelf with the Stoics or the Mystics, with Quietist, Pantheist, Determinist? If life were long, it might be worth while to trace Emerson's affinities with the philosophic schools; to collect and infer his answers to the everlasting problems of psychology and metaphysics; to extract a set of coherent and reasoned opinions about knowledge and faculty, experience and consciousness, truth and necessity, the absolute and the relative. But such inquiries would only take us the further away from the essence and vitality of Emerson's mind and teaching. In philosophy proper Emerson made no contribution of his own,

but accepted, apparently without much examination of the other side, from Coleridge after Kant, the intuitive, *à priori* and realist theory respecting the sources of human knowledge, and the objects that are within the cognisance of the human faculties. This was his starting-point, and within its own sphere of thought he cannot be said to have carried it any further. What he did was to light up these doctrines with the rays of ethical and poetic imagination. As it has been justly put, though Emersonian transcendentalism is usually spoken of as a philosophy, it is more justly regarded as a gospel.[1]

XC

THE QUALITY OF EMERSON'S POEMS

TAKEN as a whole, Emerson's poetry is of that kind which springs, not from excitement of passion or feeling, but from an intellectual demand for intense and sublimated expression. We see the step that lifts him straight from prose to verse, and that step is the shortest possible. The flight is awkward and even uncouth, as if nature had intended feet rather than wings. It is hard to feel of Emerson, any more than Wordsworth could feel of Goethe, that his poetry is inevitable. The measure, the colour, the imaginative figures, are the product of search, not of spontaneous movements of sensation and reflection combining in a harmony that is delightful to the ear. They are the

[1] Frothingham's *Transcendentalism in New England; a History*– a judicious, acute, and highly interesting piece of criticism.

outcome of a discontent with prose, not of that high-strung sensibility which compels the true poet into verse. This must not be said without exception. *The Threnody*, written after the death of a deeply loved child, is a beautiful and impressive lament. Pieces like *Musquetaquid*, the *Adirondacs*, the *Snow-storm*, *The Humble-Bee*, are pretty and pleasant bits of pastoral. In all we feel the pure breath of nature, and

> The primal mind
> That flows in streams, that breathes in wind.

There is a certain charm of *naivetê*, that recalls the unvarnished simplicity of the Italian painters before Raphael. But who shall say that he discovers that "spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling," which a great poet has made the fundamental element of poetry? There are too few melodious progressions; the melting of the thought with natural images and with human feeling is incomplete; we miss the charm of perfect assimilation, fusion, and incorporation; and in the midst of all the vigour and courage of his work, Emerson has almost forgotten that it is part of the poet's business to give pleasure. It is true that pleasure is sometimes undoubtedly to be had from verse that is not above mediocrity, and Wordsworth once designed to write an essay examining why bad poetry pleases. Poetry that pleases may be bad, but it is equally true that no poetry which fails to please can be really good. Some one says that gems of expression make Emerson's essays oracular and his verse prophetic. But, to borrow Horace's well-known phrase, 'tis not enough that poems should be sublime;

dulcia sunto,—they must be touching and sympathetic. Only a bold critic will say that this is a mark of Emerson's poems. They are too naked, unrelated, and cosmic ; too little clad with the vesture of human associations. Light and shade do not alternate in winning and rich relief, and as Carlyle found it, the radiance is "thin piercing," leaving none of the sweet and dim recesses so dear to the lover of nature. We may, however, well be content to leave a man of Emerson's calibre to choose his own exercises. It is best to suppose that he knew what he was about when he wandered into the fairyland of verse, and that in such moments he found nothing better to his hand. Yet if we are bidden to place him among the poets, it is enough to open Keats at the *Ode to a Nightingale*, or Shelley at *The Cloud*, the *Skylark*, or the *Sensitive Plant*, or Wordsworth at *Tintern Abbey*, or Goethe at *Das Gottliche*, or Victor Hugo in the *Contemplations*. Then in spite of occasional formality of rhythm and artifice in ornament, we cannot choose but perceive how tuneful is their music, how opulent the resources of their imagination, how various, subtle, and penetrating their affinity for the fortunes and sympathies of men, and next how modest a portion of all these rare and exquisite qualifications reveals itself in the verse of Emerson.

XCI

EMERSON'S INSENSIBILITY TO THE SAD MUSIC OF HUMANITY

PASCAL bade us imagine a number of men in chains and doomed to death; some of them each day butchered in sight of the others; those who remained watching their own lot in that of their fellows, and awaiting their turn in anguish and helplessness. Such, he cried, is the pitiful and desperate condition of man. But nature has other cruelties more stinging than death. Mill, himself an optimist, yet declares the course of natural phenomena to be replete with everything which, when committed by human beings is most worthy of abhorrence, so that "one who endeavoured in his actions to imitate the natural course of things would be universally seen and acknowledged to be the wickedest of men." To man himself, moreover, "the most criminal actions are not more unnatural than most of the virtues." We need not multiply from poets and divines, from moralists and sages, these grim pictures. The sombre melancholy, the savage moral indignation, the passionate intellectual scorn, with which life and the universe have filled strong souls, some with one emotion and some with another, were all to Emerson in his habitual thinking unintelligible and remote. He admits, indeed, that "the disease and deformity around us certify that infraction of natural, intellectual, and moral laws, and often violation on violation to breed such compound misery." The way of

Providence, he says in another place, is a little rude, through earthquakes, fever, the sword of climate, and a thousand other hints of ferocity in the interiors of nature. Providence has a wild rough incalculable road to its end, and "it is of no use to try to white-wash its huge mixed instrumentalities, or to dress up that terrific benefactor in a clean shirt and white neckcloth of a student of divinity." But he only drew from the thought of these cruelties of the universe the practical moral that "our culture must not omit the arming of the man." He is born into the state of war, and will therefore do well to acquire a military attitude of soul. There is perhaps no better moral than this of the Stoic, but greater impressiveness might have marked the lesson, if our teacher had been more indulgent to the man's sense of tragedy in that vast drama in which he plays his piteous part.

XCII

TWO WAYS OF EXAMINING CHARACTER

THERE is a tolerably obvious distinction between two principal ways of examining character. One is a musing, subjective method of delineation, in which the various shades and windings seem to reveal themselves with a certain spontaneity, and we follow many recesses and depths in the heart of another, such as only music stirs into consciousness in ourselves. Besides this rarer poetic method, there is what may be styled the diplomatist's method; it classifies

characters objectively, according to the kinds of outer conduct in which they manifest themselves, and according to the best ways of approaching and dealing with them. The second of these describes the spirit in which Vauvenargues observed men. He is French, and not German, and belongs to the eighteenth century, and not to the seventeenth or the nineteenth. His *Characters*, very little known in this country, are as excellent as any work in this kind that we are acquainted with, or probably as excellent as such work can be. They are real and natural, yet while abstaining as rigorously as Vauvenargues everywhere does from grotesque and extravagant traits, they avoid equally the vice of presenting the mere bald and sterile flats of character, which he that runs may read. As we have said, he had the quality possessed by so few of those who write about men: he watched men, and drew from the life. In a word, he studied concrete examples and interrogated his own experience—the only sure guarantee that one writing on his themes has anything which it is worth our while to listen to. Among other consequences of this reality of their source is the agreeable fact that these pictures are free from that clever bitterness and easy sarcasm, by which crude and jejune observers, thinking more of their own wit than of what they observe, sometimes gain a little reputation. Even the coxcombs, self-duping knaves, simpletons, braggarts, and other evil or pitiful types whom he selects, are drawn with unstrained and simple conformity to reality. The pictures have no moral label pinned on to them. Yet Vauvenargues took life seriously

enough, and it was just because he took it seriously, that he had no inclination to air his wit or practise a verbal humour upon the stuff out of which happiness and misery are made.

XCIII

TURGOT'S POWER OF GRAVE SUSPENSE

DEJECTION, however, is perhaps not the most proper word for the humour of reserved and grave suspense, natural in those rare spirits who have recognised how narrow is the way of truth and how few there be that enter therein, and what prolonged concurrence of favouring hazards with gigantic endeavour is needed for each smallest step in the halting advancement of the race. With Turgot this was not the result of mere sentimental brooding. It had a deliberate and reasoned foundation in historical study. He was patient and not hastily sanguine as to the speedy coming of the millennial future, exactly because history had taught him to measure the laggard paces of the past. The secret of the intense hopefulness of that time lay in the mournfully erroneous conviction that the one condition of progress is plenteous increase of light. Turgot saw very early that this is not so. "*It is not error*," he wrote, in a saying that every champion of a new idea should have ever in letters of flame before his eyes, "*which opposes the progress of truth: it is indolence, obstinacy, the spirit of routine, everything that favours inaction.*" [1]

[1] *Œuv.* ii. 672.

The others left these potent elements of obstruction out of calculation and account. With Turgot they were the main facts to be considered, and the main forces to be counteracted. It is the mark of the highest kind of union between sagacious, firm, and clear-sighted intelligence, and a warm and steadfast glow of social feeling, when a man has learnt how little the effort of the individual can do either to hasten or direct the current of human destiny, and yet finds in effort his purest pleasure and his most constant duty. If we owe honour to that social endeavour which is stimulated and sustained by an enthusiastic confidence in speedy and full fruition, we surely owe it still more to those, who knowing how remote and precarious and long beyond their own days is the hour of fruit, yet need no other spur nor sustenance than bare hope, and in this strive and endeavour and still endeavour. Here lies the true strength, and it was the possession of this strength and the constant call and strain upon it, which gave Turgot in mien and speech a gravity that revolted the frivolous or indifferent, and seemed cold and timorous to the enthusiastic and urgent. Turgot had discovered that there was a law in the history of men, and he knew how this law limited and conditioned progress.

XCIV

CONDORCET

Of the illustrious thinkers and writers who for two generations had been actively scattering the seed of

revolution in France, only Condorcet survived to behold the first bitter ingathering of the harvest. Those who had sown the wind were no more ; he only was left to see the reaping of the whirlwind, and to be swiftly and cruelly swept away by it. Voltaire and Diderot, Rousseau and Helvétius, had vanished, but Condorcet both assisted at the Encyclopædia and sat in the Convention ; the one eminent man of those who had tended the tree, who also came in due season to partake of its fruit ; at once a precursor, and a sharer in the fulfilment. In neither character has he attracted the goodwill of any of those considerable sections and schools into which criticism of the Revolution has been mainly divided. As a thinker he is roughly classed as an Economist, and as a practical politician he figured first in the Legislative Assembly, and then in the Convention. Now, as a rule, the political parties that have most admired the Convention have had least sympathy with the Economists, and the historians who are most favourable to Turgot and his followers, are usually most hostile to the actions and associations of the great revolutionary chamber successively swayed by a Vergniaud, a Danton, a Robespierre. Between the two, Condorcet's name has been allowed to lie hidden for the most part in a certain obscurity, or else has been covered with those taunts and innuendoes, which partisans are wont to lavish on men of whom they do not know exactly whether they are with or against them.

XCV

TWO CURRENTS OF THOUGHT IN FRANCE

Two movements of thought went on in France during the middle of the eighteenth century, which have been comparatively little dwelt upon by historians; their main anxiety has been to justify the foregone conclusion, so gratifying alike to the partisans of the social reaction and to the disciples of modern transcendentalism in its many disguises, that the eighteenth century was almost exclusively negative, critical, and destructive. Each of these two currents was positive in the highest degree, and their influence undeniably constructive, if we consider that it was from their union into a common channel, a work fully accomplished first in the mind of Condorcet, that the notion of the scientific treatment of history and society took its earliest start.

The first of the two movements, and that which has been most unaccountably neglected, consisted in the remarkable attempts of Quesnay and his immediate followers to withdraw the organisation of society from the sphere of empiricism, and to substitute for the vulgar conception of arbitrary and artificial institutions as the sole foundation of this organisation, the idea that there is a certain Natural Order, conformity to which in all social arrangements is the essential condition of their being advantageous to the members of the social union. Natural Order in the minds of this school was no metaphysical figment evolved from uninstructed consciousness, but a set of circumstances

to be discovered by continuous and methodical observation. It consisted of physical law and moral law. Physical law is the regulated course of every physical circumstance in the order evidently most advantageous to the human race. Moral law is the rule of every human action in the moral order, conformed to the physical order evidently most advantageous to the human race. This order is the base of the most perfect government, and the fundamental rule of all positive laws; for positive laws are only such laws as are required to keep up and maintain the natural order that is evidently most advantageous to the race.[1]

XCVI

ON PHYSICAL SCIENCE

It will be inferred from De Maistre's general position that he was no friend to physical science. Just as moderns see in the advance of the methods and boundaries of physical knowledge the most direct and sure means of displacing the unfruitful subjective methods of old, and so of renovating the entire field of human thought and activity, so did De Maistre see, as his school has seen since, that here was the stronghold of his foes. "Ah, how dearly," he exclaimed, "has man paid for the natural sciences!" Not but that Providence designed that man should know something about them; only it must be in due order. The ancients were not permitted to attain to much or even any sound knowledge of physics, indis-

[1] Quesnay; *Droit Naturel*, ch. v. *Les Physiocrates*, i. 52.

putably above us as they were in force of mind, a fact shown by the superiority of their languages which ought to silence for ever the voice of our modern pride. Why did the ancients remain so ignorant of natural science ? Because they were not Christian. "When all Europe was Christian, when the priests were the universal teachers, when all the establishments of Europe were Christianised, when theology had taken its place at the head of all instruction, and the other faculties were ranged around her like maids of honour round their queen, the human race being thus prepared, then the natural sciences were given to it." Science must be kept in its place, for it resembles fire which, when confined in the grates prepared for it, is the most useful and powerful of man's servants; scattered about anyhow, it is the most terrible of scourges. Whence the marked supremacy of the seventeenth century, especially in France ? From the happy accord of religion, science, and chivalry, and from the supremacy conceded to the first. The more perfect theology is in a country the more fruitful it is in true science; and that is why Christian nations have surpassed all others in the sciences, and that is why the Indians and Chinese will never reach us, so long as we remain respectively as we are. The more theology is cultivated, honoured, and supreme, then, other things being equal, the more perfect will human science be: that is to say, it will have the greater force and expansion, and will be the more free from every mischievous and perilous connection.[1]

[1] See the *Examen de la Philosophie de Bacon*, vol. ii. 58 *et seq.*

XCVII

GUICCIARDINI'S SELF-CONSOLATION

GUICCIARDINI was reasonably free from the discouragement and dejection, with which satiety of life is apt to affect men's judgment and temper. He was nearing that period of his age, "*dove ciascun dovrebbe Calar le vele, e raccoglier le sarte*"—when every lofty soul, like the mariner drawing near the port, should lower sails and gather in the ropes. Though men are often spoiled by success in the world, still more are spoiled by failure. Guicciardini was wise enough to look to what he had done, rather than at what he had missed. What he seeks, and what he attains, is rather a reasoned fortitude than that serenity, that "great lesson of suavity," as Dante calls it, which brings a man to face his end without grief or bitterness. He did not pretend to like the falling of the curtain, but he consoled himself by thinking for how many important parts he had been cast by Fortune, and how well he had played them all. He was without that morbid ambition as it has been called, and a very morbid ambition it is, which pretends to treat all grief, anger, mortification, chagrin, as weaknesses to be ashamed of. He makes no foolish attempt to cure his wound either by a spurious rhetoric that places things out of perspective and proportion, or by a spurious philosophy that pretends to turn pain into pleasure by juggling with words as if they were things. Various are the attitudes of men towards the outside unseen

divinity,—Fortune, Chance, Necessity, Force of Circumstance—when it overthrows them. Some defy, some whimper, some fall stunned, some break their hearts once for all, others silently obey the grim ordering of events and with courage gather up the shattered pieces. The ancient literature of consolation contains some famous pieces, from Seneca, the friend of Nero, down to Boethius, the friend of Theodoric.[1] If we would measure the differences of times and men, it is well worth while to turn to that grave and beautiful piece in our own literature, so full of enlightenment, liberality, wisdom, tenderness, and piety, where Bishop Burnet concludes his history. "I have," he says, "considering my sphere, seen a great deal of all that is most shining and tempting in this world: the pleasures of sense I did soon nauseate; intrigues of state and the conduct of affairs have something in them that is more specious, and I was for some years deeply immersed in these, though still with hopes of reforming the world, and of making mankind wiser and better; but I have found that which is crooked cannot be made straight." And then he goes on his way to his devout and lofty moral. So at a moment when all his counsels had come to nought, when his patron, the Holy Father, was a prisoner in the castle of Saint Angelo, and Rome was suffering all the violence and horror of prolonged sack at the hands of ferocious Spaniard and barbaric German, Guicciardini tried his hand at self-consolation.[2]

[1] See M. Martha's *Consolations dans l'Antiquité*—a chapter in his admirable *Études Morales sur l'Antiquité*.

[2] September 1527. *Op. Ined.* x. 103-33.

Politely despatching with summary mention the comforting assurances of theologians and philosophers, as physic that no patient would voluntarily choose to take, "I will speak to thee," he says to himself, "in a lower key than all that, and more according to the nature of men and the world." It comes to this after all. Human enterprises are ever apt to miscarry; he knew this when he embarked upon the voyage; the wreck was no special fault of his, for popes, kings, and emperors were the principals, and he no more than an instrument; his arguments for the war against the Emperor may have been an error of judgment, but it is not fair to expect a man to carry into the council-chamber, besides merely human reasonings, the prognosticating judgments of astrologers and soothsayers; in fine, 'tis time mends all, and men will see that he was blameless. Such is the strain of his autobiographic meditation. Then he recovers the self-respect of which he is in search, by appeal to his past: "Ask all the places where thou hast been, the peoples over whom thou hast been set to rule, the armies that have been under thy orders. They will own that thou art a man of talent, resolute in taking decisions, abundant in resource, expeditious in act." Wholly free from the insincerities and inflations of the professing cynic, stoic, or anchorite, Guicciardini's consolation is rational and worth reading. Nevertheless at the end of it perhaps an impartial person would commend to statesmen in misfortune not all this argumentation, explanation, consolation, sophistication, but the simple concision of Thucydides—

"It befell me to be an exile from my country for twenty years after my command at Amphipolis." And no more.

XCVIII

TWO SIDES OF A THING

THE worst of maxims, aphorisms, and the like, from the sayings of Solomon and Sirach the son of Jesus downward, is that for every occasion in life or perplexity in conduct there is a brace of them; and of the brace, one points one way and the other down a path exactly opposite. The fingerpost of experience has many arms at every cross-road. One observer tells the disciple that in politics perseverance always wins; another that men who take the greatest trouble to succeed, are those most sure to miss. To-day, the one essential seems to be boldness of conception; to-morrow, the man of detail is master of the hour. To-day the turn of things inclines a man to say that in politics nothing matters; to-morrow some other turn teaches him that in politics everything matters. The instructor in statecraft and the guide to the Politic Man must be Janus and look more ways than one, and to this demand Guicciardini was equal.

XCIX

PLACE DISCOVERS A MAN'S CAPACITY

GUICCIARDINI is fond of that saying of the ancients, *Magistratus virum ostendit*, office shows the man.

"Nothing reveals the quality of men like giving them authority and things to do. Place discovers a man's capacity and his character. How many people know how to talk, and do not know how to act; how many on benches and in the market-place seem excellent, yet when put into employment turn out mere phantoms (*riescono ombre*)."

The political path is thickly strewn with these historic humiliations, the men whom everybody would have thought *capaces imperii, nisi imperassent.* Eminent place, La Bruyère said, makes the great man greater than he is, the small man it makes less. Some hold in our own day, that if you would know the real qualities of a public man, you must find out—if you can—what is thought of him, not by his constituents, not by his fellow-members, but by the permanent officials who have served under him. The general estimate formed of him in the House of Commons is no doubt unerring, but the House does not see him at such close quarters, and in a popular assembly the plausible may go further than the substantial. Only the permanent official can tell you for certain whether his chief is quick or slow, idle or diligent; whether he allows himself to see two sides to a question; how far he is free from the vanity of supposing that he knows everything, and how far he has the fine talent of the good learner; whether he has the indispensable gift of making up his mind and holding to it; what sort of a judge he is of probabilities; whether he is sure in hand and foot, cool or flurried, considerate or selfish, straightforward or tortuous,

a man of initiative and resource. It may be that not only does office, as Guicciardini says, show the man to others; it may possibly, if he has time in which to think of such things, reveal him to himself, to his own lively surprise.

C

THE VITAL QUESTION ABOUT THE HISTORIAN

AFTER all, the vital question about the historian is whether he tells the truth. He ought to be statesman, reasoner, critic, drudge. His gifts are sagacity, clearness, order. These he needs, whether he be historic artist, seeking to delight great audiences, or scientific student, content to explore, to disentangle, to clear the ground. What we require, says Ranke, is naked truth without ornament; thorough exploration of detail, no inventions, no brain-spinnings (*hirngespinnst*). In other words, History is to descend from her place among the Muses.

CI

MILL'S INFLUENCE

BENTHAM founded a great school, James Mill inspired a political group, Dugald Stewart impressed a talented band with love of virtue and of truth. John Mill possessed for a time a more general ascendency than any of these. Just as Macaulay's Essays fixed literary and historical subjects for the average reader, so the writings of Mill set the problems and

defined the channels for people with a taste for political thinking and thinking deeper than political. He opened all the ground, touched all the issues, posed all the questions in the spheres where the abstract intellects of men must be most active. It is true, Mill's fame and influence are no longer what they were. How should they be ? As if perpetuity of direct power or of personal renown could fall to any philosopher's lot, outside the little group consecrated by tradition. Books outside of the enchanted realm of art and imagination become spent forces ; men who were the driving agents of their day sink into literary names, and take a faded place in the catalogue of exhausted influences.

The philosophic teacher's fame, like the statesman's or the soldier's—like the great navigator's, inventor's, or discoverer's—*e color d'erba,* is like the grass, whose varying hue

> Doth come and go—by that same sun destroyed
> From whose warm ray its vigour first it drew.

New needs emerge. Proportions change. Fresh strata are uncovered. Theories once charged with potency evaporate. So a later generation must play umpire. How should Mill be better off than Grotius or Montesquieu, Descartes or Locke, or Jean Jacques, or any of the others who in their day shook the globe, or lighted up some single stage of the world's dim journey ? As is well put for our present case, a work great in itself and of exclusive authorship is not the only way in which original power manifests itself. " A multitude of

small impressions," says Bain, the most sinewy of Mill's allies, "may have the accumulated effect of a mighty whole. Who shall sum up Mill's collective influence as an instructor in politics, ethics, logic, and metaphysics? No calculus can integrate the innumerable little pulses of knowledge and of thought, that he has made to vibrate in the minds of his generation."

CII

THE STYLE OF MILL

In point of literary style—a thing on which many coxcombries have sprung up since Mill's day—although both his topics and his temperament denied him a place among the greatest masters, yet his writing had for the younger men of his generation a grave power well fitted for the noble task of making men love truth and search for it. There is no ambition in his style. He never forced his phrase. Even when anger moves him, the ground does not tremble, as when Bossuet or Burke exhorts, denounces, wrestles, menaces, and thunders. He has none of the incomparably winning graces by which Newman made mere siren style do duty for exact, penetrating, and coherent thought; by which, moreover, he actually raised his Church to what would not so long before have seemed a strange and incredible rank in the mind of Protestant England. Style has worked many a miracle before now, but none more wonderful than Newman's. Mill's journey from Bentham,

Malthus, Ricardo, to Coleridge, Wordsworth, Comte, and then on at last to some of those Manichean speculations that so perplexed or scandalised his disciples, was almost as striking, though not so picturesquely described, as Newman's journey from Evangelicalism to Rome. These graces were none of Mill's gifts, nor could he have coveted them. He did not impose; he drew, he led, he quickened with a living force and fire the commonplace that truth is a really serious and rather difficult affair, worth persistently pursuing in every path where duty beckons. He made people feel, with a kind of eagerness evidently springing from internal inspiration, that the true dignity of man is mind.

CIII

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

WHAT is democracy? Sometimes it is the name for a form of government by which the ultimate control of the machinery of government is committed to a numerical majority of the community. Sometimes, and incorrectly, it is used to denote the numerical majority itself, the poor or the multitude existing in a State. Sometimes, and still more loosely, it is the name for a policy directed exclusively or mainly to the advantage of the labouring class. Finally, in its broadest, deepest, most comprehensive, and most interesting sense, Democracy is the name for a certain general condition of society, having historic origins, springing from circumstances and the nature

of things; not only involving the political doctrine of popular sovereignty, but representing a cognate group of corresponding tendencies over the whole field of moral, social, and even of spiritual life within the democratic community. Few writers have consistently respected the frontier that divides democracy as a certain state of society, from democracy as a certain form of government. Mill said of the admirable Tocqueville, for instance, that he was apt to ascribe to Democracy consequences that really flowed from Civilisation. Mr. Lecky [in his *Democracy and Liberty*] is constantly open to the same criticism.

Whether we think of democracy in the narrower or the wider sense—whether as another name for universal suffrage, or as another name for a particular stage of civilisation—it equally stands for a remarkable revolution in human affairs. In either sense it offers a series of moral and political questions of the highest practical importance and the most invigorating theoretical interest. It has shaken the strength and altered the attitude of the churches, has affected the old subjection of women and modified the old conceptions of the family and of property, has exalted labour, has created and dominated the huge enginery of the Press, has penetrated in a thousand subtle ways into the whole region of rights, duties, human relations, and social opportunity. In vain have men sought a single common principle for this vast movement. Simplification of life; the sovereignty of the people, and the protection of a community by itself; the career to the talents; equality and brotherhood; the substitution of

industrialism for militarism ; respect for labour :— such are some of the attempts that have been made to seize in a phrase the animating spirit of the profound changes through which the civilised world has for a century and more been passing, not only in the imposing institutions of the external world, but in the mind and heart of individual man.

We can hardly imagine a finer or more engaging, inspiring, and elevating subject for inquiry, than this wonderful outcome of that extraordinary industrial, intellectual, and moral development which has awakened in the masses of modern society the consciousness of their own strength, and the resolution, still dim and torpid, but certain to expand and to intensify, to use that strength for new purposes of their own. We may rejoice in democracy, or we may dread it. Whether we like it or detest it, and whether a writer chooses to look at it as a whole or to investigate some particular aspect of it, the examination ought to take us into the highest region of political thought, and it undoubtedly calls for the best qualities of philosophic statesmanship and vision.

CIV

THE SCIENCE OF HISTORY

TALK of history being a science as loudly as ever we like, the writer of it will continue to approach his chests of archives with the bunch of keys in his hand. When examined, all these adjurations really mean little more—and this is a great deal—than that

sources, documents, authorities are sometimes good and sometimes bad, sometimes first-rate and sometimes second-rate; that the student should know the difference; that he should be systematic and minute and definite and precise; that he should not regard a statement as certain unless he has scrutinised the evidence. All admirable and indispensable and scientific rules, but hardly constituting a brand-new science; or banishing "the time-honoured association of history with literature," from which the reflective or ethical writer is warned off; or reducing Clio, the muse, to the level of the kitchen drudge who supplies her meals, and cashiering the architect in favour of the honest bricklayer and the stonemason. A science means a good deal more than this, and even something different from this. Dumas wittily said that Lamartine's famous book on the Girondins raised history to the dignity of romance. Lamartine doubtless exalted the arts of literature rather high, as did the illustrious Dumas himself; but after all it does a book no harm to be readable.

CV

DEMOCRACY AND THE REACTION AGAINST IT

THE story is an old one. In these high matters let us be sure that nothing is as new as people think. Names are new. Light catches aspects heretofore unobserved. Temperature rises and falls. Yet the elements of the cardinal controversies of human society are few, and they are curiously fixed. Though

the ages use ideas differently, the rival ideas themselves hold on in their pre-appointed courses. Democracy is not new, and reaction against it is no newer. The questions so vigorously and acutely sketched by Mr. Hobhouse are old friends with fresh faces and changed apparel. To go no further back than the sixteenth century, we may trace in the most important of the deep controversies raised by him a familiar outline of the conflict between the principles of Machiavelli on the one hand, and on the other the principles of Bodin and all the vast crowd of anti-Machiavellian writers. Terms alter, but the issue is constant—force against right; reason of State against maxims of ethics; policy against justice and truth; serpent against dove, fox against lion; narrow and local expediency against the broad and the eternal; private morals the test or not the test of public morals.

CVI

A NEW AGE

It is no mere platitude that we have reached the threshold of a new age. Democracy, nationality, socialism, the constitution of the modern State, the standing of the Churches—all have come within the attraction of forces heretofore unknown. Science applied to material arts has stimulated production, facilitated transport, multiplied and shortened the channels of communication, made gold as mobile as quicksilver. In different words, the habitable globe

has undergone consolidation that only half a century ago would have seemed a miracle. Yet this consolidation, however it may have tended towards liberty and political equality, has by no means tended towards fraternity. The industrial revolution has changed the shape and softened the methods of international rivalry, but hard rivalry remains. It is, again, making civilisation urban, and in England, they say, 70 per cent. of our people live in towns. It has, among other cardinal results, magnified by a hundred eyes and arms that power of high finance which has been called "the most subtle, ubiquitous, and potent of modern political forces."[1] What passes for public opinion all over Europe is penetrated by unseen, unsuspected, and not over-scrupulous influences. Your Demos, they say, is only a giant marionette, whose wires are pulled from Vienna, Berlin, Paris, New York, the City of London. Demos is not a living creature, with heart, brain, conscience, or even arms and hands to be called its own; it is a puppet of banks and stock-exchanges. This surprising transformation is much more than reaction, much more than simple ebb after flow. Nor can outer changes such as these have swept over the fabric of the world, without carrying changes in their train to match, in all the hopes and fears and aims and affections, in all the catalogue of thoughts on right and duty and relation to extra-mundane things, and the rest of the deep elements on which at last the reality of the individual man is moulded. Here is far more than the mere swing of reaction.

[1] Sir Courtenay Ilbert's *Romanes Lecture on Montesquieu*, p. 40.

What is democracy? When we are told, for instance, that the establishment of democracy is the great social fact of the Western world between 1830 and, say, 1875, has this been something or nothing more than a political fact? What are the moral bearings of it; can there be a political fact without them? Is democracy only a form of government, or is it a state of society and a name for all those social agencies of which form of government is no more than one? Is it only decentralisation, a shifting of the centre of administrative gravity, or a sublime baptismal conversion to a new faith? Is it only the sovereignty of the people, or one of the secrets of general civilisation? Do you mean simply escape from feudalism, and the establishment of trial by jury, responsibility of the executive, spiritual independence, no taxation without representation? Do you mean a doctrine or a force; constitutional parchment or a glorious evangel; perfected machinery for the wire-puller, the party tactician, the spoilsman, and the boss, or the high and stern ideals of a Mazzini or a Tolstoi?

No answer, at once concise and comprehensive, to this leading question seems attainable. Democracy, said Mazzini, is "the progress of all through all, under the leadership of the best and the wisest." The words are eloquent, but they demand analysis, and they would hardly stand it without much elucidation. Every syllable hides a pitfall. The ideal may be exalted and may be just, but the facts of life, of nature, and of history are fatally against it. Are we to seek the democratic principle in Bentham's

formula, that " everybody is to count for one and nobody for more than one " ? Are those right who describe the true democratic principle as meaning that none shall have power over the people, and complain that this is perversely taken to mean that none shall be able to restrain or elude the people ?

CVII

WHAT IS PROGRESS ?

WHAT is Progress ? It is best to be slow in the complex arts of politics. To hurry to define is rash. If we want a platitude, there is nothing like a definition. Perhaps most definitions hang between platitude and paradox. There are said to be ten thousand definitions of Religion. Poetry must count almost as many, and Liberty or Happiness hardly fewer. Define it as we may, faith in Progress has been the mainspring of Liberalism in all its schools and branches. To think of Progress as a certainty of social destiny, as the benignant outcome of some eternal cosmic law, has been indeed a leading Liberal superstition—the most splendid and animated of superstitions, if we will, yet a superstition after all. It often deepens into a kind of fatalism, radiant, confident, and infinitely hopeful, yet fatalism still, and, like fatalism in all its other forms, fraught with inevitable peril, first to the effective sense of individual responsibility, and then to the successful working of principles and institutions of which that responsibility is the vital sap. Of this fatalism it is not presumptuous to

call America the reigning instance at our present time. The young are apt to be too sure. "Half of history," said Doudan, "is made up of unexpected events that force the stream into a different course; and, like one of Mrs. Radcliffe's novels, 'tis at a door hidden in the wall, that the important personages in the drama make their entries and their exits."

CVIII

WHAT WE ALL CAN DO

THE boisterous old notion of hero-worship, which has been preached by so eloquent a voice in our age, is after all now seen to be a half-truth, and to contain the less edifying and the less profitable half of the truth. The world will never be able to spare its hero, and the man with the rare and inexplicable gift of genius will always be as commanding a figure as he has ever been. What we see every day with increasing clearness is that not only the wellbeing of the many, but the chances of exceptional genius, moral or intellectual, in the gifted few, are highest in a society where the *average* interest, curiosity, capacity, are all highest. The moral of this for you and for me is plain. We cannot, like Beethoven or Handel, lift the soul by the magic of divine melody into the seventh heaven of ineffable vision and hope incommensurable; we cannot, like Newton, weigh the far-off stars in a balance, and measure the heavings of the eternal flood; we cannot, like Voltaire, scorch up what is cruel and false by a word as a flame, nor, like Milton

or Burke, awaken men's hearts with the note of an organ-trumpet; we cannot, like the great saints of the churches and the great sages of the schools, add to those acquisitions of spiritual beauty and intellectual mastery which have, one by one, and little by little, raised man from being no higher than the brute to be only a little lower than the angels. But what we can do—the humblest of us in this great hall—is by diligently using our own minds and diligently seeking to extend our own opportunities to others, to help to swell that common tide, on the force and the set of whose currents depends the prosperous voyaging of humanity. When our names are blotted out, and our place knows us no more, the energy of each social service will remain, and so too, let us not forget, will each social disservice remain, like the unending stream of one of nature's forces. The thought that this is so may well lighten the poor perplexities of our daily life, and even soothe the pang of its calamities; it lifts us from our feet as on wings, opening a larger meaning to our private toil and a higher purpose to our public endeavour; it makes the morning as we awake to it welcome, and the evening like a soft garment as it wraps us about; it nerves our arm with boldness against oppression and injustice, and strengthens our voice with deeper accents against falsehood, while we are yet in the full noon of our days—yes, and perhaps it will shed some ray of consolation, when our eyes are growing dim to it all, and we go down into the Valley of the Dark Shadow.

CIX

THE DEATH OF MILL

THE tragic commonplaces of the grave sound a fuller note as we mourn for one of the greater among the servants of humanity. A strong and pure light is gone out, the radiance of a clear vision and a beneficent purpose. One of those high and most worthy spirits who arise from time to time to stir their generation with new mental impulses in the deeper things, has perished from among us. The death of one who did so much to impress on his contemporaries that physical law works independently of moral law, marks with profounder emphasis the ever ancient and ever fresh decree that there is one end to the just and the unjust, and that the same strait tomb awaits alike the poor dead whom nature or circumstance imprisoned in mean horizons, and those who saw far and felt passionately and put their reason to noble uses. Yet the fulness of our grief is softened by a certain greatness and solemnity in the event. The teachers of men are so few, the gift of intellectual fatherhood is so rare, it is surrounded by such singular gloriousness. The loss of a powerful and generous statesman, or of a great master in letters or art, touches us with many a vivid regret. The Teacher, the man who has talents and has virtues, and yet has a further something which is neither talent nor virtue, and which gives him the mysterious secret of drawing men after him, leaves a deeper sense of emptiness than this; but lamentation is at once soothed and

elevated by a sense of sacredness in the occasion. Even those whom Mr. Mill honoured with his friendship, and who must always bear to his memory the affectionate veneration of sons, may yet feel their pain at the thought that they will see him no more, raised into a higher mood as they meditate on the loftiness of his task and the steadfastness and success with which he achieved it. If it is grievous to think that such richness of culture, such full maturity of wisdom, such passion for truth and justice, are now by a single stroke extinguished, at least we may find some not unworthy solace in the thought of the splendid purpose that they have served in keeping alive, and surrounding with new attractions, the difficult tradition of patient and accurate thinking in union with unselfish and magnanimous living.

CX

"SEARCH WITH MANY SIGHS"

CHERCHER en gémissant—search with many sighs—that was Pascal's notion of praiseworthy living and choosing the better part. Search, and search with much travail, strikes us as the chief intellectual ensign and device of that eminent man whose record of his own mental nurture and growth we have all been reading. Everybody endowed with energetic intelligence has a measure of the spirit of search poured out upon him. All such persons act on the Socratic maxim that the life without inquiry is a life to be lived by no man. But it is the rare distinction of a very few to accept

the maxim in its full significance, to insist on an open mind as the true secret of wisdom, to press the examination and testing of our convictions as the true way at once to stability and growth of character, and thus to make of life what it is so good for us that it should be, a continual building up, a ceaseless fortifying and enlargement and multiplication of the treasures of the spirit. To make a point of "examining what was said in defence of all opinions, however new or however old, in the conviction that even if they were errors there might be a substratum of truth underneath them, and that in any case the discovery of what it was that made them plausible would be a benefit to truth," [1]—to thrust out the spirit of party, of sect, of creed, of the poorer sort of self-esteem, of futile contentiousness, and so to seek and again seek with undeviating singleness of mind the right interpretation of our experiences—here is the genuine seal of intellectual mastery and the true stamp of a perfect rationality.

The men to whom this is the ideal of the life of the reason, and who have done anything considerable towards spreading a desire after it, deserve to have their memories gratefully cherished even by those who do not agree with all their positive opinions. We need only to reflect a little on the conditions of human existence; on the urgent demand which material necessities inevitably make on so immense a proportion of our time and thought; on the space which is naturally filled up by the activity of absorbing affections; on the fatal power of mere tradition

[1] Mill's *Autobiography*, 242.

and report over the indifferent, and the fatal power of inveterate prejudice over so many even of the best of those who are not indifferent.

CXI

LIMITATIONS OF MILL'S "AUTOBIOGRAPHY"

If we are now and then conscious in the book of a certain want of spacing, of changing perspectives and long vistas; if we have perhaps a sense of being too narrowly enclosed; if we miss the relish of humour or the occasional relief of irony; we ought to remember that we are busy not with a work of imagination or art, but with the practical record of the formation of an eminent thinker's mental habits and the succession of his mental attitudes. The formation of such mental habits is not a romance, but the most arduous of real concerns. If we are led up to none of the enkindled summits of the soul, and plunged into none of its abysses, that is no reason why we should fail to be struck by the pale flame of strenuous self-possession, or touched by the ingenuousness and simplicity of the speaker's accents. A generation continually excited by narratives, as sterile as vehement, of storm and stress and spiritual shipwreck, might do well, if it knew the things that pertained to its peace, to ponder this unvarnished history—the history of a man who, though he was not one of the picturesque victims of the wasteful torments of an uneasy spiritual self-consciousness, yet

laboured so patiently after the gifts of intellectual strength, and did so much permanently to widen the judgments of the world.

CXII

THE POSITIVE PHILOSOPHY

THE first and greatest aim of the Positive Philosophy is to advance the study of society into the third of the three stages,—to remove social phenomena from the sphere of theological and metaphysical conceptions, and to introduce among them the same scientific observation of their laws which has given us physics, chemistry, physiology. Social physics will consist of the conditions and relations of the facts of society, and will have two departments,—one statical, containing the laws of order; the other dynamical, containing the laws of progress. While men's minds were in the theological state, political events, for example, were explained by the will of the gods, and political authority based on divine right. In the metaphysical state of mind, then, to retain our instance, political authority was based on the sovereignty of the people, and social facts were explained by the figment of a falling away from a state of nature. When the positive method has been finally extended to society, as it has been to chemistry and physiology, these social facts will be resolved, as their ultimate analysis, into relations with one another, and instead of seeking causes in the old sense of the word, men will only examine the conditions of social existence.

When that stage has been reached not merely the greater part, but the whole, of our knowledge will be impressed with one character—the character, namely, of positivity or scientificalness; and all our conceptions in every part of knowledge will be thoroughly homogeneous. The gains of such a change are enormous. The new philosophical unity will now in its turn regenerate all the elements that went to its own formation. The mind will pursue knowledge without the wasteful jar and friction of conflicting methods and mutually hostile conceptions; education will be regenerated; and society will reorganise itself on the only possible solid base—a homogeneous philosophy.

The *Positive Philosophy* has another object besides the demonstration of the necessity and propriety of a science of society. This object is to show the sciences as branches from a single trunk,—is to give to science the ensemble or spirit of generality hitherto confined to philosophy, and to give to philosophy the rigour and solidity of science. Comte's special object is a study of social physics, a science that before his advent was still to be formed; his second object is a review of the methods and leading generalities of all the positive sciences already formed, so that we may know both what system of inquiry to follow in our new science, and also where the new science will stand in relation to other knowledge.

The first step in this direction is to arrange scientific method and positive knowledge in order, and this brings us to another cardinal element in the Comtist system, the classification of the sciences. In the front of the inquiry lies one main division, that,

namely, between speculative and practical knowledge. With the latter we have no concern. Speculative or theoretic knowledge is divided into abstract and concrete. The former is concerned with the laws that regulate phenomena in all conceivable cases; the latter is concerned with the application of these laws. Concrete science relates to objects or beings; abstract science to events. The former is particular or descriptive; the latter is general. Thus, physiology is an abstract science; but zoology is concrete. Chemistry is abstract: mineralogy is concrete. It is the method and knowledge of the abstract sciences that the Positive Philosophy has to reorganise in a great whole.

CXIII

IDEALS AND REALISATION

THE most dogmatic agree that truth is prodigiously hard to find. Yet what rouses intenser anger than balanced opinion? It would be the ruin of the morning paper. It takes fire out of conversation. It may destroy the chance of a seat in the Cabinet, and, if you are not adroit, may weary constituents. The reason is simple. For action, for getting things done, the balanced opinion is of little avail or no avail at all. "He that leaveth nothing to chance," said the shrewd Halifax, "will do few things ill, but he will do very few things." As King Solomon put it, "He that considereth the wind shall not sow, and he that looketh to the clouds shall not reap." Moderation is sometimes only a fine name for indecision.

The partisan temperament is no gift in a judge, and it is well for everybody to see that most questions have two sides, though it is a pity in a practical world never to be sure which side is right, and to remain as "a cake that is not turned." You even need the men of heroic stamp with whom "a hundred thousand facts do not prevail against one idea." Nations are lucky when the victorious idea happens to have at its back three or four facts that weigh more than the hundred thousand put together. Some well-trained observers find history abounding in volcanic outbreaks of fire and flame, seeming only to leave behind hardened lava and frozen mud. Only too true. Only too familiar is the exaggerated and mis-shapen rationalism that shuts out imagination, distrusts all sentiment, despises tradition, and makes short work alike of the past, and of anything like collective or united faith and belief in the present. But to be over-impatient with what may prove by and bye to be fertilizing Nile floods, is pure foolishness. They will subside, and a harvest well worth saving remain for the hand of the reaper.

CXIV

COMMON FAULTS OF ARDENT SPIRITS

ARDENT spirits have common faults in an expectant age. We know them all. They are so apt to begin where they should end. Pierced by thought of the ills in the world around them, they are overwhelmed

by a noble impatience to remove, to lessen, to abate. Before they have set sail, they insist that they already see some new planet swimming into their ken, they already touch the promised land. An abstract *a priori* notion, formed independently of experience, independently of evidence, is straightway clothed with all the sanctity of absolute principle. Generous aspiration, exalted enthusiasm, is made to do duty for reasoned scrutiny. They seize every fact or circumstance that makes their way, they are blind to every other. Inflexible preconceptions hold the helm. They exaggerate. Their sense of proportion is bad.

CXV

PUBLIC OPINION

Even the consecrated name of Public Opinion,—queen of the world, as it has been so chivalrously called—has many values. One constitutional writer in whom learning has been by no means fatal to wit—and neither law nor politics is without considerable points of humour—puts it that the opinion of Parliament is the opinion of yesterday, and the opinion of judges is that of the day before yesterday. That is, the judges go by precedent and old canons of interpretation, while Parliament makes laws, imposes taxes, regulates foreign relations, in response to movements outside.

In arguing for or against an institution, who draws due distinctions between its formal and legal

character, and its actual work in practice? Or makes allowance for the spirit of those who carry it on? Or for the weight of its traditional associations? In politics, is it the voice of the electorate? Are there any better grounds for regarding either a majority or a plurality of votes, than that it is a good working political rule? Does the rule work well enough in general practice, to make new expedients—Plébiscites, Referendums, and the rest—pieces of supererogation, calculated to shred away the concentrated force of a governing representative assembly? A very interesting writer of our own time [1] emphasizes the non-rational element in politics, —impulses, instinct, reaction. Mr. Graham Wallas insists that the empirical art of politics consists largely in the creation of opinion by the deliberate exploitation of non-conscious non-rational inference. This at least is true that empirical practitioners find it hard to forecast the decisive elements. The press is no safe barometer. In at least three remarkable parliamentary elections since 1874, the result has been an immense surprise to those who had regarded only the line of the most widely read journals in the most important areas: the journals went on one side, the great majority of electors voted the other. Lord Beaconsfield did not expect his sweeping repulse in 1880. Of Palmerston it was said by Clarendon that he mistook popular applause for real opinion. Nothing is so hard, either to reckon or to identify. The idealist is angry or despondent when he finds the public deaf. Literary satire likens

[1] *Human Nature in Politics*, by Graham Wallas, 1908.

popular indifference towards new ideas, to the dogs barking at a stranger. Or the satirist bethinks himself of the ass who prefers a bundle of hay to a dozen gold pieces. It would be easy to make a good case both for the two honest animals and for the public, and in truth the satire is idle. No doubt ripe judgments and sensibly trained minds are not always received with open arms. The hard and strenuous pre-occupations of life naturally first bespeak the common eye. But the ripe temper, if apt and patient, slowly soaks its way, and well-stamped coins find their currency. Representative government exists to-day in a hundred different forms, depending on a hundred differences in social state and history, and nobody claims for public opinion in all or any of them either sanctity or infallibility. But to make a mock of it, is merely to quarrel with human life. We all know the shortcomings in political opinion and character—the fatal contentment with simple answers to complex questions; the readiness, as Hobbes put it, to turn against reason, if reason is against you; violent overestimate of petty things; vehement agitation one day, reaction as vehement the other way the next; money freely laid on a flashing favourite this week, deep curses on what has proved the wrong horse the week after; haste; moral cowardice; futility. But if anybody supposes that these mischiefs are peculiar to parliaments or democracy, he must be strangely ill-read in the annals of military despotism, absolute personal power, centralized bureaucracy, exalted ceremonial courts.

CXVI

THE HISTORIC METHOD

TRULY has it been said of the historic method, that among other of its vast influences, it reduces the element of individual accident to its due proportions; it conceives of national character and national circumstances as the creative forces that they are. An ironical lawyer assures us that it would be better to be convicted of petty larceny than to be found wanting in "historic-mindedness." What is the historic method? Its sway is now universal in the field of social judgment and investigation. It warns us that we cannot explain or understand, without allowing for origins and the genetical side of the agents and conditions with which we have all to deal. It substitutes for dogmas deduced from abstract regions, search for two things. The first, the correlation of leading facts and social ideas with one another in a given community at a given time. The second, the evolution of order succeeding to order in common beliefs, tastes, customs, diffusion of wealth, laws, and all the arts of life. Stripped of formality, this only expands the familiar truth that laws and institutions are not made but grow, and what is true of them is true of ideas, language, manners, which are in effect their source and touchstone.

It is easy to see that the ascendancy of the historic method has its drawbacks. Study of all the successive stages in beliefs, institutions, laws, forms of art, only too soon grows into a substitute for direct criticism of all these things upon their merits and in them-

selves. Inquiry what the event actually was, vital and indispensable as that of course must be, and what its significance and interpretation, becomes secondary to inquiry how it came about. Too exclusive attention to dynamic aspects, weakens the energetic duties of the static. More than one school thus deem the predominance of historic-mindedness excessive. It means, they truly say, in its very essence, veto of the absolute, persistent substitution of the relative. Your method is non-moral, like any other scientific instrument. So is Nature in one sense, red in tooth and claw, only careful for survival of the strongest. There is no more conscience in your comparative history than there is in comparative anatomy. You arrange ideals in classes and series, but a classified ideal loses its vital spark and halo. Every page abounds in ironies. Even figures of high mark turn out political somnambulists. Talk of "eternal political truths," or "first principles of government," has no meaning. Stated summarily, is not your history one prolonged "becoming" (*fieri*, *werden*), an endless sequence of action, reaction, generation, destruction, renovation, "a tale of sound and fury signifying nothing." All is flux, said Heraclitus long centuries ago; no man goes twice down the same stream; new waters are in constant flow; they run down, they gather again; all is overflow and fall. Such argument as this, I know, may be hard pressed, and it is in truth a protest for the absolute that cannot be spared to many active causes. But that relative tests and standards are the keys both to real knowledge of

history, and to fair measure of its actors, is a doctrine not likely to lose its hold.

CXVII

THE DAY OF SPECIALIZATION

THE temper of our present time is adverse to generalization. Harnack says that in 1700 the most universal or encyclopaedic mind was Leibnitz, and in 1800 it was Goethe. I suppose Leonardo da Vinci for 1500, and nobody would dispute that in 1600 it was Bacon—the greatest intellect that ever combined power in thought with responsible practice in affairs of state. Court affairs at Weimar were little more than playground politics. To whom would competent authorities give the palm in 1900? If we are slow to answer, the reason is that advance of specialization over the whole field of knowledge has made the encyclopaedic mind an anachronism. The day of the circumnavigator is over—the men who strive to round the whole sphere of mind, to complete the circuit of thought and knowledge, and to touch at all the ports. We may find comfort in the truth that though excess of specialization is bad, to make sciolism into a system is worse. In reading history it is our common fault to take too short measure of the event, to mistake some early scene in the play as if it were the fifth act, and so conceive the plot all amiss. The event is only comprehended in its fullest dimensions, and for that the historic recorder, like or unlike the actor before him, needs insight and imagination. French Revolution from Fall of the

Bastille to Waterloo; English Revolution from Eliot, Pym, Hampden, Oliver, to Naseby, and from Naseby to William and Mary; American Union from the Philadelphia State House in 1776, to the Appomattox Court House in 1865; Democratic Ordering in England from the Reform Act of 1832 to the Parliament Act in 1911; Ireland from the enfranchisement of the Roman Catholics in 1793—to some date still uncertain. How desperately chimerical would the end of all these immense transactions have seemed to men who across long tracts of time had started them. They are all political; but the same observation would be just as true of the world's march in the sphere of ideas, methods, moral standards, religious creeds.

CXVIII

THE ENGLISH TONGUE AS POLITICAL VERNACULAR

EVOLUTION, for reasons easily understood, is the most overworked word in all the language of the hour. But we cannot do without it, and those are right who say that in the evolution of politics nothing has been more important than the successive emergence into the practical life of States and institutions, of such moral entities as Justice, Freedom, Right. Of these glorious and sacred aspirations in substantial form, history made the English tongue their vernacular. Whether Burke in his best pieces, or Aristotle in his *Politics*, shows the wider knowledge of human nature, learned men do not decide. At least the philosopher of small city-states, even with the brain

of an Aristotle, could not be expected to have any idea of that representative government which at home here is the governing political fact of to-day, and in other lands is the political ideal. It was Locke in the seventeenth century who in connection with the settlement of the monarchy that we are decorously adjured to call a revolution and not a rebellion, first set out, as has been said, constitutional government in terms of thought, and furnished the mainspring of political philosophy for long ages after.[1] Frederick the Great says that his illumination and emancipation came from Locke, though we cannot be sure that our careful and candid sage would have found the career of his Prussian disciple a pattern for princes. From him both Montesquieu and Rousseau, the famous heads of two opposed schools and rival methods, drew their inspiration. Countless are the governing systems all over the globe that have found their model here, and we may record with no ignoble pride that the tongue of our English masters of political wisdom is spoken by 160 millions, as against 130 of German, 100 of Russian, 70 of French,[2] and 50 of Spanish. Mark the change from

[1] Prof. Sorley in *Camb. Hist. of Eng. Lit.* viii.

[2] Here is the estimate of a competent authority as to the English-speaking population of the globe—over forty-five millions in the United Kingdom; about twelve millions in Canada and Australia; at least five millions in various parts of British Africa; in India 1,672,000 literate in English, and rather less than half a million whose English is vernacular, and it is the official language of the annual Congress; say a million in other British possessions. If we take into account the various forms of pigeon English spoken in British possessions and elsewhere, one might make the total sixty-five millions. Finally, the modest addition of something under 100 millions in the United States.

Bacon, who sent his *Advancement of Learning* to Prince Charles in a new Latin dress, because a book could only live in the "general language," and English books cannot be "citizens of the world." Cromwell as Protector could only talk to ambassadors in dog-Latin. I do not forget that among 90 or 100 millions of our triumphant figure, the King's writ does not run; for these expanding millions live, not under our bluff Union Jack, but under Stars and Stripes. Still less can we forget that French is the most oecumenical of all living tongues; so sociable, so exact, so refined, copious, and subtle, in its diversity of shades in every field, grave and gay; so apt alike for what is trivial and frivolous, and for high affairs of thought or business.

The only parallel to the boundless area of the habitable globe conquered by our tongue, is held by some to be Arabic. They tell us that though Arabic in Islamic lands, for some three or four centuries became the medium for an active propagation of ideas, and though by the Koran it retains its hold in its own area, and keeps in its literary as distinct from its spoken form the stamp of thirteen centuries ago, yet there is no real analogy or comparison with the diffusion of English. Latin is a better analogy. It was spoken pretty early in the towns of Spain, Gaul, Britain, and somewhat later in the provinces on the Danube. In the East it spread more slowly, but by the Antonines and onwards the use of Latin was pretty complete, even in northern Africa. Greek was common throughout the Empire as the language of commerce in the

fourth century. St. Augustine says, "Pains were taken that the Imperial State should impose not only its political yoke, but its own tongue, upon the conquered peoples, *per pacem societatis*." This is what is slowly coming to pass in India. Though to-day only a handful, a million or so, of the population use our language, yet English must tend to spread from being the official tongue to be a general unifying agent. Any Englishman who adds to the glory of our language and letters, will deserve Caesar's grand compliment to Cicero, declaring it a better claim to a laurel crown to have advanced the boundaries of Roman genius, than the boundaries of Roman rule. Whether Caesar was sincere or insincere, it is a noble truth for us as well as for old Rome.

CXIX

WHAT IS A NATION?

THOUGH no term in politics is of more frequent use than Nation, it is not easy to define. There are almost as many accounts of it, as we have found in other terms of the political dialect. John Bright was thinking of kinder and humaner things than definition, when he spoke his famous sentence of such moving simplicity—the polar star of civilised statesmen—that the nation in every country dwells in the cottage. What constitutes a nation; what marks it from a Nationality, from a Society, from a State? The question is not idle or academic. It generates active heat in senates and on platforms,

for example, at this moment, whether this or that portion of our United Kingdom is either nation or nationality. When the idea was mooted of France seeking compensation after the Prussian victory at Sadowa, important men denounced it as "blasphemy against the principle of nationalities." Let us theorise for a moment. Here is what the dictionary has to tell us of a Nation: "An extensive aggregate of persons, so closely associated with each other by common descent, language, or history, as to form a distinct race or people, usually organized as a separate political state, and occupying a definite territory." This is adequate enough, and consonant with usage. But, then, Belgium is a political State and yet its Walloon and Flemish provinces are not common in descent, tongue, or history, and their dissidence is at this very day something of an active issue. Austro-Hungary is a great State, though they speak twenty-four languages in the Austrian army. Another authority finds in usage,—*quem penes arbitrium est et jus et norma loquendi*,—that "wherever a community has both political independence and a distinctive character recognisable in its members, as well as in the whole body, we call it a nation." For a test to be applied all over the world, this is perhaps too vague. Freeman lays it down in his own imperative way, that the question what language they speak, goes further than any other one question towards giving us an idea of what we call the nationality of a people. We may say, again, that the feeling of nationality is due to identity of descent, common language, common religion, common pride in past

incidents. But no single element in the list makes a decisive test. Language will not answer the purpose; for Switzerland has three languages, yet is one nation. In South America there are two kindred languages; mostly common descent, common pride in their wresting of independence from Europe, common religious faith. Yet there are sixteen communities more or less entitled to the rank of nations, and the traveller tells us there is no sense of a common Spanish-American nationality. Is Nationality to be decided by the political character of territory, or by the people who inhabit it? In older days the first was the prevailing theory. The second prevails to-day and is one of the marks of modern system, as we may discern in Balkan perplexities. Devotion to a dynasty has made nations. So has passion for a creed. So, perhaps, most of all, that *ingenita erga patriam caritas*, the natural fondness for the land where we are born.

CXX

PROGRESS NO AUTOMATON

On one thing, at any rate, optimist and pessimist agree, that progress is no automaton, spontaneous and self-propelling. It depends on the play of forces within the community and external to it. It depends on the room left by the State for the enterprise, energy, and initiative of the individual. It depends on the absence from the general mind at a given time, of the sombre feeling, *Quota pars omnium*

sumus, how small a fraction is a man's share in the huge universe of unfathomable things. It depends on no single element in social being, but on the confluence of many tributaries in a great tidal stream of history; and those tides, like the ocean itself, ebbing and flowing in obedience to the motions of an inconstant moon. Though Greek is not compulsory with you here, we may go back for the last poetic word on all this, to the ode in the Greek play where the chorus recounts with glorious enumeration how of all the many wonders of the world, the most wondrous is Man; he makes a path across the white sea, works the land, captures or tames animals and birds for his daily use; he has devised language and from language thought, and all the moods that mould a State; he finds a help against every evil of his lot, save only death; against death and the grave he has no power. No progress, at any rate, in harmony of words or strength of imagination in the four-and-twenty centuries since Sophocles, dims the force and beauty of these ancient lines.[1]

[1] *Antigone*, 332-64. Jebb, p. 76.

CXXI

"THE MIND IS THE MAN"

WHAT a withering mistake it is if we let indolence of mood tempt us into regarding all ecclesiastical or theological dispute as barren wrangles, all political dispute as egotistic intrigues. Even the common shades and subdivisions of party—Right, Left, Right

Centre, Left Centre and the rest—are more than jargon of political faction. They have their roots, sometimes deep, sometimes very shallow, in varying sorts of character. In forms hard and narrow, still if we have candour and patience to dig deep enough, they mark broad eternal elements in human nature; sides taken in the standing quarrels of the world; persistent types of sympathy, passion, faith, and principle, that constitute the fascination, instruction, and power of command in history.

Everybody who knows anything knows that it is waste of our short lives to insist on ideal perfection. Popular government, or any other for that matter, is no chronometer, with delicate apparatus of springs, wheels, balances, and escapements. It is a rough heavy bulk of machinery, that we must get to work as we best can. It goes by rude force and weight of needs, greedy interests and stubborn prejudice; it cannot be adjusted in an instant, or it may be a generation, to spin and weave new material into a well-finished cloth. There is a virtuous and not uninfluential school, and Mill leaned in their direction, who think that there exists in every community a grand reserve of wise, thoughtful, unselfish, long-sighted men and women, who, if you could only devise electoral machinery ingenious enough, if they had only parliamentary chance and power enough, would save the State. That such a reserve should exist, should acquire and exert its influence, should spread the light, is felicity indeed. More than felicity, it is an essential. It must be the main text of every exhortation to a university. But this is not to say

that the State will be fortified in its tasks by special electoral artifices, with a scent of algebra and decimals about them. These are not easily intelligible either in principle or working to plain men; they are more likely to irritate than to appease, to throw grit instead of oil among the huge rolling shafts and grinding wheels of public government.

CXXII

THE SYMBOL OF THE FRENCH ENCYCLOPÆDIA

THE Encyclopædia was virtually a protest against the old organisation, no less than against the old doctrine. Broadly stated, the great central moral of it all was this: that human nature is good, that the world is capable of being made a desirable abiding-place, and that the evil of the world is the fruit of bad education and bad institutions. This cheerful doctrine now strikes on the ear as a commonplace and a truism. A hundred years ago in France it was a wonderful gospel, and the beginning of a new dispensation. It was the great counter-principle to asceticism in life and morals, to formalism in art, to absolutism in the social ordering, to obscurantism in thought. Every social improvement since has been the outcome of that doctrine in one form or another. The conviction that the character and lot of man are indefinitely modifiable for good, was the indispensable antecedent to any general and energetic endeavour to modify the conditions that surround him. The omnipotence of early instruction, of laws, of the method of

social order, over the infinitely plastic impulses of the human creature—this was the maxim which brought men of such widely different temperament and leanings to the common enterprise. Everybody can see what wide and deep-reaching bearings such a doctrine possessed; how it raised all the questions connected with psychology and the formation of character; how it went down to the very foundation of morals; into what fresh and unwelcome sunlight it brought the articles of the old theology; with what new importance it clothed all the relations of real knowledge and the practical arts; what intense interest it lent to every detail of economics and legislation and government.

CXXIII

DIDEROT'S WORK

And so our sketch of the great book must at length end. Let us make one concluding remark. Is it not surprising that a man of Diderot's speculative boldness and power should have failed to rise from the mechanical arrangement of thought and knowledge, up to some higher and more commanding conception of the relation between himself in the eighteenth century, or ourselves in the nineteenth, and all those great systems of thought, method, and belief, which in various epochs and over different spaces of the globe have given to men working answers to the questions that their leading spirits were moved to put to themselves and to the iron universe around

them? We constantly feel how near Diderot is to the point of view that would have brought light. We feel how very nearly ready he was to see the mental experiences of the race in east and west, not as superstition, degradation, grovelling error, but as aspects of intellectual effort and aspiration richly worthy of human interest and scientific consideration, and in their aim as well as in their substance all of one piece with the newest science and the last voices of religious or anti-religious development. Diderot was the one member of the party of Philosophers who was capable of grasping such a thought. If this guiding idea of the unity of the intellectual history of man, and the organic integrity of thought, had happily come into Diderot's mind, we should have had an Encyclopædia indeed; a survey and representation of all the questions and answers of the world, such as would in itself have suggested what questions are best worth putting, and at the same time have furnished its own answers.

For this the moment was not yet. An urgent social task lay before France and before Europe; it could not be postponed until the thinkers had worked out a scheme of philosophic completeness. The thinkers did not seriously make any effort after this completeness. The Encyclopædia was the most serious attempt, and it did not wholly fail. As I replace in my shelves this mountain of volumes, "dusky and huge, enlarging on the sight," I have a presentiment that their pages will seldom again be disturbed by me or by others. They served a great purpose a hundred years ago. They are now a

monumental ruin, clothed with all the profuse associations of history. It is no Ozymandias of Egypt, king of kings, whose wrecked shape of stone and sterile memories we contemplate. We think rather of the gray and crumbling walls of an ancient stronghold, reared by the endeavour of stout hands and faithful, whence in its own day and generation a band once went forth against barbarous hordes, to strike a blow for humanity and truth.

CXXIV

FRENCH BOOKSELLERS IN THE XVIII CENTURY

It would shed an instructive light upon authorship and the characters of famous men, if we could always know the relations between a writer and his booksellers. Diderot's point of view in considering the great modern enginery and processes of producing and selling books, was invariably, like his practice, that of a man of sound common sense and sterling integrity. We have seen in the previous chapter something of the difficulties of the trade in those days. The booksellers were a close guild of three hundred and sixty members, and the printers were limited to thirty-six. Their privileges brought them little fortune. They were of the lowest credit and repute, and most of them were hardly better than beggars. It was said that not a dozen out of the three hundred and sixty could afford to have more than one coat for his back. They were bound hand and foot by vexatious rules, and their market was

gradually spoiled by a band of men whom they hated as interlopers, but whom the public had some reason to bless. No bookseller nor printer could open an establishment outside of the quarter of the University, or on the north side of the bridges. The restriction, which was as old as the introduction of printing into France, had its origin in the days when the visits of the royal inspectors to the presses and bookshops were constant and rigorous, and it saved the time of the officials to have all their business close to their hand. Inasmuch, however, as people insisted on having books, and as they did not always choose to be at the pains of making a long journey to the region of the booksellers' shops, hawkers sprang into existence. Men bought books or got them on credit from the booksellers, and carried them in a bag over their shoulders to the houses of likely customers, just as a pedlar now carries laces and calico, cheap silks and trumpery jewellery, round the country villages. Even poor women filled their aprons with a few books, took them across the bridges, and knocked at people's doors. This would have been well enough in the eyes of the guild, if the hawkers had been content to buy from the legally patented booksellers. But they began secretly to turn publishers in a small way on their own account. Contraband was here, as always, the natural substitute for free trade. They both issued pirated editions of their own, and they became the great purchasers and distributors of the pirated editions that came in vast bales from Switzerland, from Holland, from the Pope's country of Avignon. To their craft or courage the public owed its copies

of works whose circulation was forbidden by the government. The Persian Letters of Montesquieu was a prohibited book, but, for all that, there were a hundred editions of it before it had been published twenty years, and every schoolboy could find a copy on the quays for a dozen halfpence. Bayle's Thoughts on the Comet, Rousseau's Emilius and Heloïsa, Helvétius L'Esprit, and a thousand other forbidden pieces were in every library, both public and private. The Social Contract, printed over and over again in endless editions, was sold for a shilling under the vestibule of the king's own palace. When the police were in earnest, the hawker ran horrible risks, as we saw a few pages further back; for these risks he recompensed himself by his prices. A prohibition by the authorities would send a book up within four-and-twenty hours from half a crown to a couple of louis. This only increased the public curiosity, quickened the demand, led to clandestine reprints, and extended the circulation of the book that was nominally suppressed. When the condemnation of a book was cried through the streets, the compositors said, " Good, another edition ! " There was no favour that an unknown author could have asked from the magistrates so valuable to him as a little decree condemning his work to be torn up and burnt at the foot of the great staircase of the Palace of Justice.[1]

[1] Diderot's *Lettre sur le Commerce de la Librairie* (1767), *Œuv.* xviii.

CXXV

WHAT INTERESTS THE PUBLIC IN MR. GLADSTONE

IT is true that what interests the world in Mr. Gladstone is even more what he was, than what he did; his brilliancy, charm and power; the endless surprises; his dualism or more than dualism; his vicissitudes of opinion; his subtleties of mental progress; his strange union of qualities never elsewhere found together; his striking unlikeness to other men in whom great and free nations have for long periods placed their trust. I am not sure that the incessant search for clues through this labyrinth would not end in analysis and disquisition, that might be no great improvement even upon political history.

CXXVI

GLADSTONE—A MAN OF ACTION

WHETHER in Gladstone's diary or in his letters, in the midst of Herodotus and Butler and Aristotle and the rest of the time-worn sages, we are curiously conscious of the presence of a spirit of action, affairs, excitement. It is not the born scholar eager in search of knowledge for its own sake; there is little of Milton's "quiet air of delightful studies"; and none of Pascal's "labouring for truth with many a heavy sigh." The end of it all is, as Aristotle said it should be, not knowing but doing:—honourable

desire of success, satisfaction of the hopes of friends, a general literary appetite, conscious preparation for private and public duty in the world, a steady progression out of the shallows into the depths, a gaze beyond garden and cloister, *in agmen, in pulverem, in clamorem*, to the dust and burning sun and shouting of the days of conflict.

CXXVII

THE ENGLISH CHURCH BETWEEN 1828 AND 1845

THE changes in the political constitution in 1828, in 1829, and in 1832 carried with them a deliberate recognition that the church was not the nation; that it was not identical with the parliament who spoke for the nation; that it had no longer a title to compose the governing order; and—a more startling disclosure still to the minds of churchmen—that laws affecting the church would henceforth be made by men of all churches and creeds, or even men of none. This hateful circumstance it was that inevitably began in multitudes of devout and earnest minds to produce a revolution in their conception of a church, and a resurrection in curiously altered forms of that old ideal of Milton's austere and lofty school—the ideal of a purely spiritual association that should leave each man's soul and conscience free from "secular chains" and "hireling wolves."

Strange social conditions were emerging on every side. The factory system established itself on a startling scale. Huge aggregates of population

collected with little regard to antique divisions of diocese and parish. Colonies over the sea extended in boundaries and numbers, and churchmen were zealous that these infant societies should be blessed by the same services, rites, ecclesiastical ordering and exhortation, as were believed to elevate and sanctify the parent community at home. The education of the people grew to be a formidable problem, the field of angry battles and campaigns that never end. Trade, markets, wages, hours, and all the gaunt and haggard economics of the labour question, added to the statesman's load. Pauperism was appalling. In a word, the need for social regeneration both material and moral was in the spirit of the time. Here were the hopes, vague, blind, unmeasured, formless, that had inspired the wild clamour for the bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill. The whig patricians carried away the prizes of great office, though the work had been done by men of a very different stamp. It was the utilitarian radicals who laid the foundations of social improvement in a reasoned creed. With admirable ability, perseverance, unselfishness, and public spirit, Bentham and his disciples had regenerated political opinion, and fought the battle against debt, pauperism, class-privilege, class-monopoly, abusive patronage, a monstrous criminal law, and all the host of sinister interests.[1] As in every reforming age, men approached the work from two sides. Evangelical religion divides with rationalism the glory of more than one humanitarian struggle. Brougham, a more potent force than we now realise,

[1] See Sir Leslie Stephen's *English Utilitarians*, ii. p. 42.

plunged with the energy of a Titan into a thousand projects, all taking for granted that ignorance is the disease and useful knowledge the universal healer, all of them secular, all dealing with man from the outside, none touching imagination or the heart. March-of-mind became to many almost as wearisome a cry as wisdom-of-our-ancestors had been. According to some eager innovators, dogma and ceremony were to go, the fabrics to be turned into mechanics' institutes, the clergy to lecture on botany and statistics. The reaction against this dusty dominion of secularity kindled new life in rival schools. They insisted that if society it to be improved and civilisation saved, it can only be through improvement in the character of man, and character is moulded and inspired by more things than are dreamed of by societies for useful knowledge. The building up of the inward man in all his parts, faculties, and aspirations, was seen to be, what in every age it is, the problem of problems. This thought turned the eyes of many—of Mr. Gladstone first among them—to the church, and stirred an endeavour to make out of the church what Coleridge describes as the sustaining, correcting, befriending opposite of the world, the compensating counterforce to the inherent and inevitable defects of the state as a state. Such was the new movement of the time between 1835 and 1845.

CXXVIII

THE TRACTARIAN MOVEMENT

THE Tractarian movement is by this time one of the most familiar chapters in our history, and it has had singular good fortune in being told by three masters of the most winning, graphic, and melodious English prose of the century to which the tale belongs.[1] Whether we call it by the ill name of Oxford counter-reformation or the friendlier name of catholic revival, it remains a striking landmark in the varied motions of English religious thought and feeling for the three-quarters of a century since the still unfinished journey first began. In its early stages, the movement was exclusively theological. Philanthropic reform still remained with the evangelical school that so powerfully helped to sweep away the slave trade, cleansed the prisons, and aided in humanising the criminal law. It was they who "helped to form a conscience, if not a heart, in the callous bosom of English politics," while the very foremost of the Oxford divines was scouting the fine talk about black men, because they "concentrated in themselves all the whiggery, dissent, cant and abomination that had been ranged on their side." [2] Nor can we forget

[1] The *Apologia* of its leader; Froude, *Short Studies*, vol. iv.; and Dean Church's *Oxford Movement*, 1833-45, a truly fascinating book—called by Mr. Gladstone a great and noble book. "It has all the delicacy," he says, "the insight into the human mind, heart, and character, which were Newman's great endowment; but there is a pervading sense of soundness about it which Newman, great as he was, never inspired."

[2] See Dr. Fairbairn's *Catholicism, Roman and Anglican*, p. 292. Pusey speaks of our "paying twenty millions for a theory about slavery" (Liddon, *Life of Pusey*, iii. p. 172).

that Shaftesbury, the leader in that beneficent crusade of human mercy and national wisdom which ended in the deliverance of women and children in mines and factories, was also a leader of the evangelical party.

The Tractarian movement, as all know, opened, among other sources, in antagonism to utilitarian liberalism. Yet J. S. Mill, the oracle of rationalistic liberalism in Oxford and other places in the following generation, had always much to say for the Tractarians. He used to tell us that the Oxford theologians had done for England something like what Guizot, Villemain, Michelet, Cousin had done a little earlier for France; they had opened, broadened, deepened the issues and meanings of European history; they had reminded us that history is European; that it is quite unintelligible if treated as merely local. He would say, moreover, that thought should recognise thought and mind always welcome mind; and the Oxford men had at least brought argument, learning, and even philosophy of a sort, to break up the narrow and frigid conventions of reigning system in church and college, in pulpits and professorial chairs. They had made the church ashamed of the evil of her ways, they had determined that spirit of improvement from within "which, if this sect-ridden country is ever really to be taught, must proceed *pari passu* with assault from without." [1]

One of the ablest of the Oxford writers talking of the non-jurors, remarks how very few of the movements that are attended with a certain romance, and thus bias us for a time in their favour, will stand full

[1] *Dissertations*, i. p. 444.

examination ; they so often reveal some gross offence against common sense.[1] Want of common sense is not the particular impression left by the Tractarians, after we have put aside the plausible dialectic and winning periods of the leader, and proceed to look at the effect, not on their general honesty but on their intellectual integrity, of their most peculiar situation and the methods which they believed that situation to impose. Nobody will be so presumptuous or uncharitable as to deny that among the divines of the Oxford movement were men as pure in soul, as fervid lovers of truth, as this world ever possessed. On the other hand it would be nothing short of a miracle in human nature, if all that dreadful tangle of economies and reserves, so largely practised and for a long time so insidiously defended, did not familiarise a vein of subtlety, a tendency to play fast and loose with words, a perilous disposition to regard the non-natural sense of language as if it were just as good as the natural, a willingness to be satisfied with a bare and rigid logical consistency of expression, without respect to the interpretation that was sure to be put upon that expression by the hearer and the reader. The strain of their position in all these respects made Newman and his allies no exemplary school. Their example has been, perhaps rightly, held to account for something that was often under the evil name of sophistry suspected and disliked in Mr. Gladstone himself, in his speeches, his writings, and even in his public acts.

It is true that to the impartial eye Newman is no

[1] J. B. Mozley's *Letters*, p. 234.

worse than teachers in antagonistic sects; he is, for instance, no subtler then Maurice. The theologian who strove so hard in the name of anglican unity to develop all the catholic elements and hide out of sight all the calvinistic, was not driven to any hardier exploits of verbal legerdemain, than the theologian who strove against all reason and clear thinking to devise common formulæ that should embrace both catholic and calvinistic explanations together, or indeed anything else that anybody might choose to bring to the transfusing alchemy of his rather smoky crucible. Nor was the third, and at that moment the strongest, of the church parties at Oxford and in the country, well able to fling stones at the other two. What better right, it was asked, had low churchmen to shut their eyes to the language of rubrics, creeds, and offices, than the high churchmen had to twist the language of the articles?

The confusion was grave and it was unfathomable. Newman fought a skilful and persistent fight against liberalism, as being nothing else than the egregious doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion, and that one creed is as good as another. Dr. Arnold, on the other hand, denounced Newmanism as idolatry; declared that if you let in the little finger of tradition, you would soon have in the whole monster, horns and tail and all; and even complained of the English divines in general, with the noble exceptions of Butler and Hooker, that he found in them a want of believing or disbelieving anything because it was true or false, as if that were a question that never

occurred to them.[1] The plain man, who was but a poor master either of theology or of the history of the church of England, but who loved the prayer-book and hated confession, convents, priest-craft, and mariolatry, was wrought to madness by a clergyman who should describe himself, as did R. H. Froude, as a catholic without the popery, and a church of England man without the protestantism. The plain man knew that he was not himself clever enough to form any distinct idea of what such talk meant. But then his helplessness only deepened his conviction that the more distinct his idea might become, the more intense would his aversion be, both to the thing meant and to the surpliced conjuror who, as he bitterly supposed, was by sophistic tricks trying hard to take him in.

Other portents were at the same time beginning to disturb the world. The finds and the theories of geologists made men uncomfortable, and brought down sharp anathemas. Wider speculations on cosmic and creative law came soon after, and found their way into popular reading.[2] In prose literature, in subtler forms than the verse of Shelley, new dissolving elements appeared that were destined to go far. Schleiermacher, between 1820 and 1830, opened the sluices of the theological deep, whether to deluge or to irrigate. In 1830 an alarming note was sounded in the publication by a learned clergyman of a history of the Jews. We have seen how Mr. Gladstone was horrified by it. Milman's book

[1] Stanley's *Life of Arnold*, ii. p. 56 *n*.

[2] The *Vestiges of Creation* appeared in 1844.

was the beginning of a new rationalism within the fold. A line of thought was opened that seemed to make the history of religious ideas more interesting than their truth. The special claims of an accepted creed were shaken by disclosing an unmistakeable family likeness to creeds abhorred. A belief was deemed to be accounted for and its sanctity dissolved, by referring it historically to human origins, and showing it to be only one branch of a genealogical trunk. Historic explanation became a graver peril than direct attack.

CXXIX

MR. GLADSTONE'S CHARACTERISTICS

It is the business of biography to depict a physiognomy and not to analyse a type. In our case there is all the more reason to think of this, because type hardly applies to a figure like Mr. Gladstone's, without any near or distant parallel, and composed of so many curious dualisms and unforeseen affinities. Truly was it said of Fénelon, that half of him would be a great man, and would stand out more clearly as a great man than does the whole, because it would be simpler. So of Mr. Gladstone. We are dazzled by the endless versatility of his mind and interests as man of action, scholar, and controversial athlete; as legislator, administrator, leader of the people; as the strongest of his time in the main branches of executive force, strongest in persuasive force; supreme in the exacting details of national finance;

master of the parliamentary arts; yet always living in the noble visions of the moral and spiritual idealist. This opulence, vivacity, profusion, and the promise of it all in these days of early prime, made an awakening impression even on his foremost contemporaries. The impression might have been easier to reproduce, if he had been less infinitely mobile. "I cannot explain my own foundation," Fénelon said; "it escapes me; it seems to change every hour." How are we to seek an answer to the same question in the history of Mr. Gladstone?

His physical vitality—his faculties of free energy, endurance, elasticity—was a superb endowment to begin with. We may often ask for ourselves and others: How many of a man's days does he really live? However men may judge the fruit it bore, Mr. Gladstone lived in vigorous activity every day through all his years. Time showed that he was born with a frame of steel. Though, unlike some men of heroic strength,—Napoleon for example—he often knew fatigue and weariness, yet his organs never failed to answer the call of an intense and persistent Will. As we have already seen, in early manhood his eyes gave him much trouble, and he both learned by heart and composed a good deal of verse by way of sparing them. He was a great walker, and at this time he was a sportsman, as his diary has shown. "My object in shooting, ill as I do it, is the invigorating and cheering exercise, which does so much for health (1842)." One day this year (Sept. 13, '42) while out shooting, the second barrel of a gun went off while he was reloading, shattering the forefinger of his left

hand. The remains of the finger the surgeons removed. "I have hardly ever in my life," he says, "had to endure serious bodily pain, and this was short." In 1845, he notes, "a hard day. What a mercy that my strength, in appearance not remarkable, so little fails me." In the autumn of 1853 he was able to record, "Eight or nine days of bed illness, the longest since I had the scarlet fever at nine or ten years old." It was the same all through. His bodily strength was in fact to prove extraordinary, and was no secondary element in the long and strenuous course now opening before him.

Not second to vigour of physical organisation—perhaps, if we only knew all the secrets of mind and matter, even connected with this vigour—was strength and steadfastness of Will. Character, as has been often repeated, is completely fashioned will, and this superlative requirement, so indispensable for every man of action in whatever walk and on whatever scale, was eminently Mr. Gladstone's. From force of will, with all its roots in habit, example, conviction, purpose, sprang his leading and most effective qualities. He was never very ready to talk about himself, but when asked what he regarded as his master secret, he always said, "*Concentration.*" Slackness of mind, vacuity of mind, the wheels of the mind revolving without biting the rails of the subject, were insupportable. Such habits were of the family of faintheartedness, which he abhorred. Steady practice of instant, fixed, effectual attention, was the key alike to his rapidity of apprehension and to his powerful memory. In the orator's temperament

exertion is often followed by a reaction that looks like indolence. This was never so with him. By instinct, by nature, by constitution, he was a man of action in all the highest sense of a phrase too narrowly applied and too narrowly construed. The currents of daimonic energy seemed never to stop, the vivid susceptibility to impressions never to grow dull. He was an idealist, yet always applying ideals to their purposes in act. Toil was his native element; and though he found himself possessed of many inborn gifts, he was never visited by the dream so fatal to many a well-laden argosy, that genius alone does all. There was nobody like him when it came to difficult business, for bending his whole strength to it, like a mighty archer stringing a stiff bow.

Sir James Graham said of him in these years that Gladstone could do in four hours what it took any other man sixteen to do, and he worked sixteen hours a day. When I came to know him long years after, he told me that he thought when in office in the times that our story is now approaching, fourteen hours were a common tale. Nor was it mere mechanic industry; it was hard labour, exact, strenuous, engrossing, rigorous. No Hohenzollern soldier held with sterner regularity to the duties of his post. Needless to add that he had a fierce regard for the sanctity of time, although in the calling of the politician it is harder than in any other to be quite sure when time is well spent, and when wasted. His supreme economy here, like many other virtues, carried its own defect, and coupled with his constitutional eagerness and his quick susceptibility,

it led at all periods of his life to some hurry. The tumult of business, he says one year in his diary, "follows and whirls me day and night." He speaks once in 1844 of "a day restless as the sea." There were many such. That does not mean, and has nothing to do with "proud precipitance of soul," nor haste in forming pregnant resolves. Here he was deliberate enough, and in the ordinary conduct of life even minor things were objects of scrutiny and calculation, far beyond the habit of most men. For he was lowlander as well as highlander. But a vast percentage of his letters from boyhood onwards contain apologies for haste. More than once when his course was nearly run, he spoke of his life having been passed in "unintermittent hurry," just as Mill said, he had never been in a hurry in his life until he entered parliament, and then he had never been out of a hurry.

CXXX

GLADSTONE'S CALLING

We are not to think of him as prophet, seer, poet, founder of a system, or great born man of letters like Gibbon, Macaulay, Carlyle. Of these characters he was none, though he had warmth and height of genius to comprehend the value of them all, and—what was more curious—his oratory and his acts touched them and their work in such a way that men were always tempted to apply to him standards that belonged to them. His calling was a different one,

and he was wont to appraise it lower. His field lay "in working the institutions of his country." Whether he would have played a part as splendid in the position of a high ruling ecclesiastic, if the times had allowed such a personage, we cannot tell; perhaps he had not "imperious immobility" enough. Nor whether he would have made a judge of the loftier order; perhaps his mind was too addicted to subtle distinctions, and not likely to give a solid adherence to broad principles of law. A superb advocate? An evangelist, as irresistible as Wesley or as Whitefield? What matters it? All agree that more magnificent power of mind was never placed at the service of the British Senate.

CXXXI

GLADSTONE AND AMBITION

When all has been said of a man's gifts, the critical question still stands over, how he regards his responsibility for using them. Once in a conversation with Mr. Gladstone, some fifty years from the epoch of this present chapter, we fell upon the topic of ambition. "Well," he said, "I do not think that I can tax myself in my own life with ever having been much moved by ambition." The remark so astonished me that, as he afterwards playfully reported to a friend, I almost jumped up from my chair. We soon shall reach a stage in his career when both remark and surprise may explain themselves. We shall see that if ambition means love of power or fame for the sake

of glitter, decoration, external renown, or even dominion and authority on their own account—and all these are common passions enough in strong natures as well as weak—then his view of himself was just. I think he had none of it. Ambition in a better sense, the motion of a resolute and potent genius to use strength for the purposes of strength, to clear the path, dash obstacles aside, force good causes forward —such a quality as that is the very law of the being of a personality so vigorous, intrepid, confident, and capable as his.

CXXXII

LORD PALMERSTON

After a long spell of peace, earnestness, and political economy, the nation was for a time in a mood for change, and Palmerston convinced it that he was the man for its mood. He had his full share of shrewd common sense, yet was capable of infinite recklessness. He was good-tempered and a man of bluff cheerful humour. But to lose the game was intolerable, and it was noticed that with him the next best thing to success was quick retaliation on a victorious adversary—a trait of which he was before long to give the world an example that amused it. Yet he had no capacity for deep and long resentments. Like so many of his class, he united passion for public business to sympathy with social gaiety and pleasure. Diplomatists found him firm, prompt, clean-cut, but apt to be narrow, teasing, obstinate, a prisoner to

his own arguments, and wanting in the statesman's first quality of seeing the whole and not merely the half. Metternich described him as an audacious and passionate marksman, ready to make arrows out of any wood. He was a sanguine man who always believed what he desired; a confident man who was sure that he must be right in whatever he chose to fear. On the economic or the moral side of national life, in the things that make a nation rich and the things that make it scrupulous and just, he had only limited perception and moderate faith. Where Peel was strong and penetrating, Palmerston was weak and purblind. He regarded Bright and Cobden as displeasing mixtures of the bagman and the preacher. In 1840 he had brought us within an ace of war with France. Disputes about an American frontier were bringing us at the same period within an ace of war with the United States. When Peel and Aberdeen got this quarrel into more promising shape, Palmerston characteristically taunted them with capitulation. Lord Grey refused help in manufacturing a whig government in December 1845, because he was convinced that at that moment Palmerston at the foreign office meant an American war. When he was dismissed by Lord John Russell in 1852, a foreign ruler on an insecure throne observed to an Englishman, "This is a blow to me, for so long as Lord Palmerston remained at the foreign office, it was certain that you could not procure a single ally in Europe."

Yet all this policy of high spirits and careless dictatorial temper had its fine side. With none of the

grandeur of the highest heroes of his school—of Chatham, Carteret, Pitt—without a spark of their heroic fire or their brilliant and steadfast glow, Palmerston represented, not always in their best form, some of the most generous instincts of his countrymen. A follower of Canning, he was the enemy of tyrants and foreign misrule. He had a healthy hatred of the absolutism and reaction that were supreme at Vienna in 1815; and if he meddled in many affairs that were no affairs of ours, at least he intervened for freedom. The action that made him hated at Vienna and Petersburg won the confidence of his countrymen. They saw him in Belgium and Holland, Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, the fearless champion of constitutions and nationality. Of Aberdeen, who had been Peel's foreign minister, it was said that at home he was a liberal without being an enthusiast; abroad he was a zealot, in the sense most opposed to Palmerston. So, of Palmerston it could be said that he was conservative at home and revolutionist abroad. If such a word can ever be applied to such a thing, his patriotism was sometimes not without a tinge of vulgarity, but it was always genuine and sincere.

CXXXIII

GLADSTONE AS FINANCIER

WHEN it is asked, with no particular relevancy, what original contribution of the first order was made by Mr. Gladstone to the science of national finance, we

may return the same answer as if it were asked of Walpole, Pitt, or Peel. It was for Adam Smith from his retreat upon the sea-beach of distant Kirkcaldy to introduce new and fruitful ideas though he too owed a debt to French economists. The statesman's business is not to invent ideas, in finance, but to create occasions and contrive expedients for applying them. "What an extraordinary man Pitt is," said Adam Smith; "he understands my ideas better than I understand them myself." Originality may lie as much in perception of opportunity as in invention. Cobden discovered no new economic truths that I know of, but his perception of the bearings of abstract economic truths upon the actual and prospective circumstances of his country and the world, made him the most original economic statesman of his day. The glory of Mr. Gladstone was different. It rested on the practical power and tenacity with which he opened new paths, and forced the application of sound doctrine over long successions of countless obstacles.

If we probe his fame as financier to the core and marrow, it was not his power as orator, it was not his ingenuity in device and expedient, it was his unswerving faith in certain fixed aims, and his steadfast and insistent zeal in pursuing them, that built up the splendid edifice. Pitt performed striking financial feats, especially in the consolidation of duties, in reformed administration, and in the French treaty of 1786. But ill-fortune dragged him into the vortex of European war, and finance sank into the place of a secondary instrument, an art for devising aliments,

some of them desperate enough, for feeding the war-chest of the nation. Sir Robert Walpole, Mr. Gladstone wrote, "had not to contend with like difficulties, and I think his administration should be compared with the early years of Pitt, in which way of judging he would come off second, though a man of cool and sagacious judgment, while morally he stood low." [1]

CXXXIV

DISRAELI

Mr. Disraeli became prime minister. For the moment, the incident was more dramatic than important; it was plain that his tenure of office could not last long. He was five years older (perhaps more) than Mr. Gladstone; his parliamentary existence had been four or five years shorter. During the thirty-one years of his life in the House of Commons, up to now he had enjoyed three short spells of office (from 1852 to 1868), covering little more than as many years. He had chosen finance for his department, but his budgets made no mark. In foreign affairs he had no policy of his own beyond being Austrian and papal rather than Italian, and his criticisms on the foreign policy of Palmerston and Russell followed the debating needs of the hour. For legislation in the constructive sense in which it interested and attracted Mr. Gladstone, he had

[1] From a letter to his son Herbert, March 10, 1876, containing some interesting remarks on Pitt's finance.

no taste and little capacity. In two achievements only had he succeeded, but in importance they were supreme. Out of the wreckage left by Sir Robert Peel twenty-two years before he had built up a party. In the name of that party, called conservative, he had revolutionised the base of our parliamentary constitution. These two extraordinary feats he had performed without possessing the full confidence of his adherents, or any real confidence at all on the part of the country. That was to come later. Meanwhile the nation had got used to him. He had culture, imagination, fancy, and other gifts of a born man of letters; the faculty of slow reflective brooding was his, and he often saw both deep and far; he was artificial, but he was no pharisee, and he was never petty. His magniloquence of phrase was the expression of real size and spaciousness of character; as Goethe said of St. Peter's at Rome, in spite of all the rococo, there was *etwas grosses*, something great. His inexhaustible patience, his active attention and industry, his steadfast courage, his talent in debate and the work of parliament; his genius in espying, employing, creating political occasions, all made him, after prolonged conflict against impediments of every kind, one of the imposing figures of his time. This was the political captain with whom Mr. Gladstone had contended for some sixteen years past, and with whom on a loftier elevation for both, he was to contend for a dozen years to come.

CXXXV

GLADSTONE'S LETTERS

SOME have said that to peruse the papers of a prime minister must lower one's view of human nature. Perhaps this may partly depend upon the prime minister, partly on the height of our expectations from our fellow-creatures. If such a survey is in any degree depressing, there can be no reason why it should be more so than any other large inspection of human life. In the Octagon as in any similar repository we come upon plenty of baffled hopes, chagrin in finding a career really ended, absurd over-estimates of self, over-estimates of the good chances of the world, vexation of those who have chosen the wrong path at the unfair good luck of those who have chosen the right. We may smile, but surely in good-natured sympathy, at the zeal of poor ladies for a post for husbands of unrecognised merit, or at the importunity of younger sons with large families but inadequate means. Harmless things of this sort need not turn us into satirists or cynics.

All the riddles of the great public world are there —why one man becomes prime minister, while another who ran him close at school and college ends with a pension from the civil list; why the same stable and same pedigree produce a Derby winner and the poor cab-hack; why one falls back almost from the start, while another runs famously until the corner, and then his vaulting ambition dwindles to any place of "moderate work and decent emolu-

ment"; how new competitors swim into the field of vision; how suns rise and set with no return, and vanish as if they had never been suns but only ghosts or bubbles; how in these time-worn papers successive generations of active men run chequered courses, group following group, names blazing into the fame of a day, then like the spangles of a rocket expiring. Men write accepting posts, all excitement, full of hope and assurance of good work, and then we remember how quickly clouds came and the office ended in failure and torment. In the next pigeon-hole just in the same way is the radiant author's gift of his book that after all fell still-born. One need not be prime minister to know the eternal tale of the vanity of human wishes, or how men move,

> Thundering like ramping hosts of warrior horse
> To throw that faint thin line upon the shore.[1]

CXXXVI

THE MIDLOTHIAN SPEECHES

ORATORY ever since the days of Socrates, and perhaps long before, has been suspected as one of the black-arts; and both at the time and afterwards Mr. Gladstone's speeches in his first Midlothian campaign were disparaged, as I have just said, as sentiment rather than politics, as sophistry not sound reason, as illusory enchantment not solid and subsisting truth. We are challenged to show passages destined to immortality. With all admiration for the effulgent

[1] George Meredith.

catalogue of British orators, and not forgetting Pitt on the slave trade, or Fox on the Westminster scrutiny, or Sheridan on the begums of Oude, or Plunket on the Catholic question, or Grattan, or Canning, or Brougham, we may perhaps ask whether all the passages that have arrived at this degree of fame and grandeur, with the exception of Burke, may not be comprised in an extremely slender volume. The statesman who makes or dominates a crisis, who has to rouse and mould the mind of senate or nation, has something else to think about than the production of literary masterpieces. The great political speech, which for that matter is a sort of drama, is not made by passages for elegant extract or anthologies, but by personality, movement, climax, spectacle, and the action of the time. All these elements Midlothian witnessed to perfection.

CXXXVII

GLADSTONE'S SPEECHES CHARACTERISED

LET the conclusion be good or let it be bad, all was in groundwork and in essence strictly on the plane and in the tongue of statesmanship, and conformable to Don Pedro's rule, "What need the bridge much broader than the flood?"[1] It was Demosthenes, not Isocrates. It was the orator of concrete detail, of inductive instances, of energetic and immediate object; the orator confidently and by sure touch startling into watchfulness the whole spirit of civil

[1] *Much Ado*, Act I. Sc. i.

duty in a man; elastic and supple, pressing fact and figure with a fervid insistence that was known from his career and character to be neither forced nor feigned, but to be himself. In a word, it was a man —a man impressing himself upon the kindled throngs by the breadth of his survey of great affairs of life and nations, by the depth of his vision, by the power of his stroke. Physical resources had much to do with the effect; his overflowing vivacity, the fine voice and flashing eye and a whole frame in free, ceaseless, natural and spontaneous motion. So he bore his hearers through long chains of strenuous periods, calling up by the marvellous transformations of his mien a strange succession of images—as if he were now a keen hunter, now some eager bird of prey, now a charioteer of fiery steeds kept well in hand, and now and again we seemed to hear the pity or dark wrath of a prophet, with a mighty rushing wind and the fire running along the ground.

CXXXVIII

GLADSTONE'S HOME RULE SPEECH IN 1886

More striking than the audience, was the man; more striking than the multitude of eager onlookers from the shore was the rescuer with deliberate valour facing the floods ready to wash him down; the veteran Ulysses, who after more than half a century of combat, service, toil, thought it not too late to try a further "work of noble note." In the hands of such a master of the instrument, the theme might

easily have lent itself to one of those displays of exalted passion which the House had marvelled at in more than one of Mr. Gladstone's speeches on the Turkish question, or heard with religious reverence in his speech on the Affirmation bill in 1883. What the occasion now required was that passion should burn low, and reasoned persuasion hold up the guiding lamp. An elaborate scheme was to be unfolded, an unfamiliar policy to be explained and vindicated. Of that best kind of eloquence which dispenses with declamation, this was a fine and sustained example. There was a deep, rapid, steady, onflowing volume of argument, exposition, exhortation. Every hard or bitter stroke was avoided. Now and again a fervid note thrilled the ear and lifted all hearts. But political oratory is action, not words,—action, character, will, conviction, purpose, personality. As this eager muster of men underwent the enchantment of periods exquisite in their balance and modulation, the compulsion of his flashing glance and animated gesture, what stirred and commanded them was the recollection of national service, the thought of the speaker's mastering purpose, his unflagging resolution and strenuous will, his strength of thew and sinew well tried in long years of resounding war, his unquenched conviction that the just cause can never fail. Few are the heroic moments in our parliamentary politics, but this was one.

CXXXIX

VOLTAIRE

WHEN the right sense of historical proportion is more fully developed in men's minds, the name of Voltaire will stand out like the names of the great decisive movements in the European advance, like the Revival of Learning, or the Reformation. The existence, character, and career of this extraordinary person constituted in themselves a new and prodigious era. The peculiarities of his individual genius changed the mind and spiritual conformation of France, and in a less degree of the whole of the West, with as far-spreading and invincible an effect as if the work had been wholly done, as it was actually aided, by the sweep of deep-lying collective forces. A new type of belief, and of its shadow, disbelief, was stamped by the impression of his character and work into the intelligence and feeling of his own and the following times. We may think of Voltairism in France somewhat as we think of Catholicism or the Renaissance or Calvinism. It was one of the cardinal liberations of the growing race, one of the emphatic manifestations of some portion of the minds of men, which an immediately foregoing system and creed had either ignored or outraged.

Christianity originally and generically at once awoke and satisfied a spiritual craving for a higher, purer, less torn and fragmentary being, than is permitted to sons of men on the troubled and corrupt earth. It disclosed to them a gracious, benevolent,

and all-powerful being, who would one day redress all wrongs and recompense all pain, and who asked no more from them meanwhile than that they should prove their love of him whom they had not seen, by love of their brothers whom they had seen. Its great glory was to have raised the moral dignity and self-respect of the many to a level which had hitherto been reached only by a few. Calvin, again, like some stern and austere step-son of the Christian God, jealous of the divine benignity and abused open-handedness of his father's house, with word of merciless power set free all those souls that were more anxious to look the tremendous facts of necessity and evil and punishment full in the face, than to reconcile them with any theory of the infinite mercy and loving-kindness of a supreme creator. Men who had been enervated or helplessly perplexed by a creed that had sunk into ignoble optimism and self-indulgence, became conscious of new fibre in their moral structure, when they realised life as a long wrestling with unseen and invincible forces of grace, election, and fore-destiny, the agencies of a being whose ways and dealings, whose contradictory attributes of unjust justice and loving vindictiveness, it was not for man, who is a worm and the son of a worm, to reconcile with the puny logic of human words, or the shallow consistency of human ideas. Catholicism was a movement of mysticism, and so in darker regions was the Calvinism which in so many important societies displaced it. Each did much to raise the measure of worth and purify the spiritual self-respect of mankind, and each also discouraged and depressed the liberal play

of intelligence, the cheerful energizing of reason, the bright and many-sided workings of fancy and imagination. Human nature, happily for us, ever presses against this system or that, and forces ways of escape for itself into freedom and light. The scientific reason urgently seeks instruments and a voice; the creative imagination unconsciously takes form to itself in manifold ways, of all of which the emotions can give good account to the understanding. Hence the glorious suffusion of light which the ardent desire of men brought over the face of Europe in the latter half of the fifteenth century. Before Luther and Calvin in their separate ways brought into splendid prominence their new ideals of moral order, more than two generations of men had almost ceased to care whether there be any moral order or not, and had plunged with the delight of enchantment among ideas of grace and beauty, whose forms were old on the earth, but which were full of seemingly inexhaustible novelty and freshness to men, who had once begun to receive and to understand all the ever-living gifts of Grecian art and architecture and letters. If the Reformation, the great revival of northern Europe, was the enfranchisement of the individual from bondage to a collective religious tradition that had lost its virtue, the Renaissance, the earlier revival of southern Europe, was the admission to participate in the noblest collective tradition of free intellect which the achievements of the race could then hand down.

Voltairism may stand for the name of the Renaissance of the eighteenth century, for that name takes in all the serious haltings and shortcomings of

this strange movement, as well as all its terrible fire, swiftness, sincerity, and strength. The rays from Voltaire's burning and far-shining spirit no sooner struck upon the genius of the time, seated dark and dead like the black stone of Memnon's statue, than the clang of the breaking chord was heard through Europe, and men awoke in new day and more spacious air. The sentimentalist has proclaimed him a mere mocker. To the critic of the schools, ever ready with compendious label, he is the revolutionary destructive. To each alike of the countless orthodox sects his name is the symbol for the prevailing of the gates of hell. Erudition figures him as shallow and a trifler; culture condemns him for pushing his hatred of spiritual falsehood much too seriously; Christian charity feels constrained to unmask a demon from the depths of the pit. The plain men of the earth, who are apt to measure the merits of a philosopher by the strength of his sympathy with existing sources of comfort, would generally approve the saying of Dr. Johnson, that he would sooner sign a sentence for Rousseau's transportation than that of any felon who had gone from the Old Bailey these many years, and that the difference between him and Voltaire was so slight, that "it would be difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them." Those of all schools and professions who have the temperament which mistakes strong expression for strong judgment, and violent phrase for grounded conviction, have been stimulated by antipathy against Voltaire to a degree that in any of them with latent turns for humour must now and then have even stirred a kind of reacting

sympathy. The rank vocabulary of malice and hate, that noisome fringe of the history of opinion, has received many of its most fulminant terms from critics of Voltaire, along with some from Voltaire himself, who unwisely did not always refuse to follow an adversary's bad example.

CXL

VOLTAIRE—A STUPENDOUS POWER

VOLTAIRE was a stupendous power, not only because his expression was incomparably lucid, or even because his sight was exquisitely keen and clear, but because he saw many new things, after which the spirits of others were unconsciously groping and dumbly yearning. Nor was this all. Fontenelle was both brilliant and far-sighted, but he was cold, and one of those who love ease and a safe hearth, and carefully shun the din, turmoil, and danger, of the great battle. Voltaire was ever in the front and centre of the fight. His life was not a mere chapter in a history of literature. He never counted truth a treasure to be discreetly hidden in a napkin. He made it a perpetual war-cry and emblazoned it on a banner that was many a time rent, but was never out of the field.

This is the temper which, when the times are auspicious, and the fortunes of the fight do not hurry the combatant to dungeon or stake, raises him into a force instead of leaving him the empty shadow of a literary name. There is something in our nature which leads men to listen coolly to the most eager

hints and pregnant innuendoes of scepticism, on the lips of teachers who still in their own persons keep adroitly away from the fiery darts of the officially orthodox. The same something, perhaps a moral relish for veritable proofs of honesty, perhaps a quality of animal temperament, drives men to grasp even a crudity with fervour, when they see it wielded like a battle-axe against spiritual oppression. A man is always so much more than his words, as we feel every day of our lives; what he says has its momentum indefinitely multiplied, or reduced to nullity, by the impression that the hearer for good reasons or bad happens to have formed of the spirit and moral size of the speaker.

CXLI

VOLTAIRE'S STRAIGHTFORDWARDNESS

It is at least certain that he hated tyranny, that he refused to lay up his hatred privily in his heart, and insisted on giving his abhorrence a voice, and tempering for his just rage a fine sword, very fatal to those who laid burdens too hard to be borne upon the conscience and life of men. Voltaire's contemporaries felt this. They were stirred to the quick by the sight and sound and thorough directness of those ringing blows. The strange and sinister method of assault upon religion which we of a later day watch with wondering eyes, and which consists in wearing the shield and device of a faith, and industriously shouting the cry of a church, the more effectually to reduce the faith to a vague futility, and its outward ordering

to a piece of ingeniously reticulated pretence; this method of attack might make even the champions of prevailing beliefs long for the shrewd thrusts, the flashing scorn, the relentless fire, the downright grapples, with which the hated Voltaire pushed on his work of "crushing the Infamous." If he was bitter, he was still direct. If he was often a mocker in form, he was always serious in meaning and laborious in matter. If he was unflinching against theology, he always paid religion respect enough to treat it as the most important of all subjects. The contest was real, and not our present pantomimic stage-play, in which muffled phantoms of debate are made to gesticulate inexpressible things in portentously significant silence. The battle was demoralized by its virulence. True; but is this worse than to have it demoralized by cowardice of heart and understanding, when each controversial man-at-arms is eager to have it thought that he wears the colours of the other side, when the theologian would fain pass for rationalist, and the free-thinker for a person with his own orthodoxies if you only knew them, and when philosophic candour and intelligence are supposed to have hit their final climax in the doctrine that everything is both true and false at the same time?

CXLII

EVERY AGE SHOULD NOT MARK A REVOLUTION

Nor assuredly is it well for men that every age should mark either a revolution, or the slow inward agitation

that prepares the revolution, or that doubters and destroyers should divide between them all admiration and gratitude and sympathy. The violent activity of a century of great change may end in a victory, but it is always a sacrifice. The victory may more than recompense its cost. The sacrifice may repay itself a thousand-fold. It does not always repay itself, as the too neglected list of good causes lost, and noble effort wasted, so abundantly shows. Nor in any case is sacrifice ever an end. Faith and order and steady strong movement are the conditions which everything wise is directed to perfect and consolidate. But for this process of perfection we need first the meditative, doubting, critical type, and next, the dogmatic destroyer. "In counsel it is good to see dangers," Bacon said; "and in execution not to see them, except they be very great." There are, as history instructs us, eras of counsel and eras of execution; the hour when those do best who walk most warily, feeling with patience and sagacity and painstaking for the new ways, and then the hour of march and stout-hearted engagement.

CXLIII

THE TEMPER OF THE MAN OF THE WORLD

He had just as little part or lot in the complaisant spirit of the man of the world, who from the depths of his mediocrity and ease presumes to promulgate the law of progress, and as dictator to fix its speed. Who does not know this temper of the man of the

world, that worst enemy of the world? His inexhaustible patience of abuses that only torment others; his apologetic word for beliefs that may perhaps not be so precisely true as one might wish, and institutions that are not altogether to useful as some might think possible; his cordiality towards progress and improvement in a general way, and his coldness or antipathy to each progressive proposal in particular; his pygmy hope that life will one day become somewhat better, punily shivering by the side of his gigantic conviction that it might well be infinitely worse.

CXLIV

THE UNSCIENTIFIC AGE

It is well enough to say that in unscientific ages, like the twelfth century for instance, the burner of books and the tormentor of those who wrote them, did not feel either that he was doing an injustice to man or a mischief to truth. It is hard to deny that St. Bernard was a good man, nor is it needful that we should deny it; for good motives, owing to our great blindness and slow enlightenment, have made grievous havoc in the world. But the conception of justice towards heretics did not exist, any more than it existed in the mind of a low type of white man towards a black man, or than the conception of pity exists in the mind of a sportsman towards his prey. These were ages of social cruelty, as they were ages of intellectual repression. The debt of each to his neighbour was as little felt, as the debt of all to the common faculties and

intelligence. Men owed nothing to man, but everything to the gods. All the social feeling and intellectual effort and human energizing which had made the high idea of God possible and real, seemed to have expended themselves in a creation which instantly swallowed them up and obliterated their recollection. The intelligence which by its active straining upwards to the light had opened the way for the one God, became itself forthwith identified with the chief of the devils. He who used his reason was the child of this demon. Where it is a duty to worship the sun, it is pretty sure to be a crime to examine the laws of heat. The times when such was the universal idea of the rights of the understanding, were also the times when human life was cheapest, and the tiny bowl of a man's happiness was spilt upon the ground with least compunction.

CXLV

VOLTAIRE'S ACTIVITY

In short, whatever men do and think was real and alive to Voltaire. Whatever had the quality of interesting any imaginable temperament, had the quality of interesting him. There was no subject which any set of men have ever cared about, which, if he once had mention of it, Voltaire did not care about likewise. And it was just because he was so thoroughly alive himself, that he filled the whole era with life. The more closely one studies the various movements of that time, the more clear it becomes

that, if he was not the original centre and first fountain of them all, at any rate he made many channels ready and gave the sign. He was the initial principle of fermentation throughout that vast commotion. We may deplore, if we think fit, as Erasmus deplored in the case of Luther, that the great change was not allowed to work itself out slowly, calmly, and without violence and disruption. These graceful regrets are powerless, and on the whole they are very enervating. Let us make our account with the actual, rather than seek excuses for self-indulgence in pensive preference for something that might have been. Practically in these great circles of affairs, what only might have been is as though it could not be; and to know this may well suffice for us. It is not in human power to choose the kind of men who rise from time to time to the supreme control of momentous changes. The force which decides this immensely important matter is as though it were chance. We cannot decisively pronounce any circumstance whatever an accident, yet history abounds with circumstances which in our present ignorance of the causes of things are as if they were accidents.

CXLVI

THE MANY

THE many need an extreme type. They are struck by what is flashing and colossal, for they follow imagination and sympathy, and not the exactly disciplined intelligence. They know their own wants,

and have dumb feeling of their own better aspirations. Their thoughts move in the obscurity of things quick but unborn, and by instinct they push upwards in whatever direction the darkness seems breaking. They are not critics nor analysts, but when the time is ripening they never fail to know the word of freedom and of truth, with whatever imperfections it may chance to be spoken. No prophet all false has ever yet caught the ear of a series of generations. No prophet all false has succeeded in separating a nation into two clear divisions. Voltaire has in effect for a century so divided the most emancipated of western nations. This is beyond the power of the mere mocker who perishes like the flash of lightning; he does not abide as a centre of solar heat.

CXLVII

VOLTAIRE'S TASK

VOLTAIRE'S task was different and preparatory. It was to make popular the genius and authority of reason. The foundations of the social fabric were in such a condition that the touch of reason was fatal to the whole structure, which instantly began to crumble. Authority and use oppose a steadfast and invincible resistance to reason, so long as the institutions which they protect are of fair practicable service to a society. But after the death of Lewis XIV., not only the grace and pomp, but also the social utility of spiritual and political absolutism passed obviously away. Spiritual absolutism was unable to maintain even a decent

semblance of unity and theological order. Political absolutism by its material costliness, its augmenting tendency to repress the application of individual energy and thought to public concerns, and its pursuit of a policy in Europe which was futile and essentially meaningless as to its ends, and disastrous and incapable in its choice of means, was rapidly exhausting the resources of national well-being and viciously severing the very tap-root of national life. To bring reason into an atmosphere so charged, was, as the old figure goes, to admit air to the chamber of the mummy. And reason was exactly what Voltaire brought; too narrow, if we will, too contentious, too derisive, too unmitigatedly reasonable, but still reason. And who shall measure the consequence of this difference in the history of two great nations; that in France absolutism in church and state fell before the sinewy genius of stark reason, while in England it fell before a respect for social convenience, protesting against monopolies, benevolences, ship-money? That in France speculation had penetrated over the whole field of social inquiry, before a single step had been taken towards application, while in England social principles were applied, before they received any kind of speculative vindication? That in France the first effective enemy of the princ ples of despotism was Voltaire, poet, philosopher, historian, critic; in England, a band of home y squires?

CXLVIII

VOLTAIRISM AN INTELLECTUAL, NOT ASCETIC, MOVEMENT

One of the most striking features of the revolution wrought by Voltaire is that it was the one great revolt in history which contained no element of asceticism, and achieved all its victories without resort to an instrument so potent, inflexible, and easy, but so gravely dangerous. Such revolts are always reactions against surrounding corruption and darkness. They are the energetic protests of the purer capacities and aspirations of human nature ; and as is the inevitable consequence of vehement action of this sort, they seem for a while to insist on nothing less than the extirpation of those antagonistic parts which are seen to have brought life into such debasement. With this stern anger and resolve in their hearts, men have no mind to refine, explain, or moderate, and they are forced by one of the strangest instincts of our constitution into some system of mortification, which may seem to clear the soul of the taint of surrounding grossness. In such exalted mood, there is no refuge but in withdrawal from the common life into recesses of private conscience, and in severest purification of all desires. There are not many types of good men even in the least ascetic or least reactionary epochs, to whom this mood, and its passion for simplicity, self-applied rigour, minute discipline, firm regulation, and veritable continence of life, do not now and again

recur, in the midst of days that march normally on a more spacious and expansive theory.

There was, however, no tinge of ascetic principle in Voltairism. Pascal had remarked that relaxed opinions are naturally so pleasing to men, that it is wonderful they should ever be displeasing. To which Voltaire had thus retorted: "On the contrary, does not experience prove that influence over men's minds is only gained by offering them the difficult, nay the impossible, to perform or believe? Offer only things that are reasonable, and all the world will answer, We knew as much as that. But enjoin things that are hard, impracticable; paint the deity as ever armed with the thunder; make blood run before the altars; and you will win the multitude's ear, and everybody will say of you, He must be right, or he would not so boldly proclaim things so marvellous." [1] Voltaire's ascendency sprung from no appeal to those parts of human nature in which ascetic practice has its foundation. On the contrary, full exercise and play for every part was the key of all his teaching, direct and indirect. He had not Greek serenity and composure of spirit, but he had Greek exultation in every known form of intellectual activity, and this audacious curiosity he made general.

Let us remember that Voltairism was primarily and directly altogether an intellectual movement, for this reason, that it was primarily and directly a reaction against the subordination of the intellectual to the moral side of men, carried to an excess that was at length fraught with fatal mischief. Are our

[1] Rem. sur les Pensées de M. Pascal. *Œuvres*, xliii. p. 68.

opinions true, provably answering to the facts of the case, consistent with one another; is our intelligence radiant with genuine light and knowledge; and are we bent more than all else on testing and improving and diffusing this knowledge and the instruments for acquiring it? The system to which this was the powerful counter-formula, even in its least dark shapes, always reserved a large class of most important facts from the searching glare of that scrutiny which Voltairism taught men to direct upon every proposition that was presented to them.

CXLIX

DEFENCE OF VOLTAIRE'S WANT OF "CALM BREADTH OF VISION"

LET the scientific spirit move people to speak as it lists about Voltaire's want of respect for things held sacred, for the good deeds of holy men, for the sentiment and faith of thousands of the most worthy among his fellows. Still there are times when it may be very questionable whether, in the region of belief, one with power and with fervid honesty ought to spare the abominable city of the plain, just because it happens to shelter five righteous. There are times when the inhumanity of a system stands out so red and foul, when the burden of its iniquity weighs so heavy, and the contagion of its hypocrisy is so laden with mortal plague, that no awe of dilettante condemnation nor minute scruple as to the historic or the relative can stay the hand of the man whose direct

sight and moral energy have pierced the veil of use, and revealed the shrine of the infamous thing. The most noble of the holy men said long ago that "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves." The history of the churches is in one of its most conspicuous aspects the history of a prolonged outrage upon these words by arrogant and blasphemous persons, pretending to draw a sacred spirit from the very saint who uttered them. We may well deplore that Voltaire's attack, and every other attack of the same sort, did not take the fair shape prescribed by the apostle to the servant of the Lord, of gentleness, patience, and the instruction of a sweet and firm example. But the partisans of the creed in whose name more human blood has been violently shed than in any other cause whatever, these, I say, can hardly find much ground of serious reproach in a few score epigrams. Voltaire had no calm breadth of wisdom. It may be so. There are moments which need not this calm breadth of wisdom, but a two-edged sword, and when the deliverers of mankind are they who "come to send fire on the earth."

CL

THE THIRTY-THIRD YEAR OF LIFE

He was in the thirty-third year of his age, that earlier climacteric, when the men with vision first feel conscious of a past, and reflectively mark its shadow.

It is then that they either press forward eagerly with new impulse in the way of their high calling, knowing the limitations of circumstance and hour, or else fainting draw back their hand from the plough, and ignobly leave to another or to none the accomplishment of the work. The narrowness of the cribbed deck that we are doomed to tread, amid the vast space of an eternal sea with fair shores dimly seen and never neared, oppresses the soul with a burden that sorely tries its strength, when the fixed limits first define themselves before it. Those are the strongest who do not tremble beneath this gray ghostly light, but make it the precursor of an industrious day.

CLI

THE QUALITY OF BRITISH LIBERTY

POLITICAL liberty, however, has not only a meaning of abstention, but a meaning of participation. If in one sense it is a sheer negative, and a doctrine of rights, in another sense it is thoroughly positive, and a gospel of duties. The liberty which has really made England what it so delighted and stimulated and inflamed Voltaire to find her, has been quite as much of the second kind as of the first; that liberty which consists in a national habit of independent and watchful interest in the transaction of the national affairs by the persons most concerned in them; in a general consciousness of the duty of having some opinion on the business of the state; in a recognition on the part of the government that the balance of this opinion

is necessary as a sanction to any policy, to which the effective force of the state is applied. It is true that this public participation in public concerns has sometimes been very dark and blind, as it has often been in the highest degree enlightened, but for good or for evil it has been the root of the matter.

CLII

FUTILITY OF SEARCHING FOR LOGICAL RELATION BETWEEN THE BEGINNING OF A MOVEMENT AND ITS END

It is futile to ask for a precise logical chain of relations between the beginning of a movement and its end; and there is no more direct and logical connection between the right of private judgment and an experiential doctrine of psychology, than there is between experiential psychology and deism. Nobody now thinks that the effect is homogeneous with its cause, or that there is any objective resemblance between a blade of wheat and the moisture and warmth which fill and expand it. All we can see is that the proclamation of the rights of free judgment would tend to substitute reason for authority, and evidence for tradition, as the arbiters of opinion; and that the political expression of this change in the civil wars of the middle of the seventeenth century would naturally deepen the influence of the new principle, and produce the Lockian rationalism of the end of that century, which almost instantaneously extended from the region of metaphysics into the region of theology.

CLIII

THE TASK OF A CRITIC

On the whole, the critic's task is perhaps less to classify a type of character as good or bad, as worthy of so much praise or so much censure, than to mark the material out of which a man has his life to make, and the kind of use and form to which he puts his material. To begin with, the bald division of men into sheep and goats is in one sense so easy as not to be worth performing, and in another sense it is so hard as only to be possible for some being with supernatural insight. And even were the qualities employed in the task of a rarer kind than they are, the utility of the performance is always extremely slight, compared with that other kind of criticism which dwells less on the final balance of good or evil, than on the first innate conditions of temperament, the fixed limitations of opportunity, and the complex interplay of the two with that character, which is first their creature and then their master. It is less the concern of criticism to pronounce its man absolutely rich or absolutely poor, than to count up his talents and the usury of his own which he added to them. Assuredly there ought to be little condonation of the foibles, and none at all of the moral obliquities, of the dead, because this would mean the demoralisation of the living. But it is seriously to overrate the power of bald words and written opinion, to suppose that a critic's censure of conduct which a thousand other agents, from the child's hornbook up to the obvious

and pressing dictates of social convenience, are daily and hourly prescribing, can be other than a work of supererogation, which fixes the mind on platitudes, instead of leading it on in search of special and distinctive traits.

CLIV

SLANG AND FAMILIARITY IN STYLE

UNHAPPILY, one of the many evil effects which have alloyed the revolution that Voltaire did so much to set in motion, has been both in his country and ours that purity and harmony of language, in spite of the examples of the great masters who have lived since, have on the whole declined. In both countries familiarity and slang have actually asserted a place in literature on some pretence that they are real; an assumed vulgarity tries to pass for native homeliness, and, as though a giant were more impressive for having a humped back, some men of true genius seem only to make sure of fame by straining themselves into grotesques. In a word, the reaction against a spurious dignity of style has carried men too far because the reaction against the dignified elements in the old order went too far. Style, after all, as one has always to remember, can never be anything but the reflex of ideas and habits of mind, and when respect for one's own personal dignity as a ruling and unique element in character gave way to sentimental love of the human race, often real, and often a pretence, old self-respecting modes of expression went out of fashion.

And all this has been defended by a sort of argument that might just as appropriately have been used by Diogenes, vindicating the filthiness of his tub against a doctrine of clean linen.

CLV

TWO WAYS OF REGARDING AN EPOCH

We cannot understand the issues of the Seven Years' War, nor indeed of the eighteenth century on any of its more important sides, without tolerably distinct ideas about the ages before and behind it, about the sixteenth century and the twentieth; without ideas as to the conditions of the break-up of the Catholic and the feudal organisation, and, next, as to the attitude proper to be assumed, and the methods to be followed, in dealing with the more or less anarchic circumstances in which their break-up and its sequels leave us. There are two ways of regarding these questions. You may say, as Comte says, that the ultimate type of society, perfected on a basis of positive knowledge, will in the essential features of its constitution correspond to the ancient or mediæval constitution which it replaces; because that gave the fullest possible satisfaction to those elements of human nature which are deepest and permanent, and to those social needs which must always press upon us; that anything which either seriously retards the dissolution of the old, or draws men aside from the road which leads on to the same organisation transformed, must therefore be an impediment in the way of the new

society, and a peril to civilisation. Hence, they say, the mischievousness of Protestantism, Voltairism, and all the minor manifestations of the critical spirit, because they inspire their followers with a contempt, as mistaken towards the past as it is pernicious to the future, for those fundamental principles of social stability and individual happiness, to which alone we have to look for the establishment of a better order; because they give to the unguided individual judgment the force and authority that can only come with safety from organisation and tradition, that is from a certain definite form of shaping and expressing the common judgment; and because, moreover, they tend directly and indirectly to detach effort from social aims and the promotion of the common weal, to the attainment of mean and unwholesome individual ambitions. From this point of view, we should have to regard the acquisition of colonies, for instance, which was one of the chief objects of Lord Chatham's policy, as the mischievous transfer, in the interests of commercial cupidity, of an activity, hopefulness, and power, that ought to have been devoted to the solution of the growing social difficulties of Europe; and that ought to have been bent from a profoundly mean egotism, in the nation and the traders whose interest was the key of the policy, into a generous feeling for the public order.

There is, however, another and a very different way of looking at all this. You cannot be sure, it is said, that the method of social advance is to be a return upon the old framework and the old lines; to be sure of this implies an impatient confidence that

social forms have all been exhausted, or else an unsupported assumption that the present transitory form is so full of danger to the stability of civilisation, as to make the acceptance of almost any firm order better than the prolonged endurance of a social state which, on that theory, ought hardly to be accounted much better than the social state of Bedouin Arabs. Is it not far better and safer to refrain from committing ourselves to a given type of social reconstruction, and to work forward patiently upon the only principle that can be received with entire assurance; namely, that faithful cultivation of the intelligence, and open-minded investigation of all that the intelligence may present to us, is the only certain method of not missing the surest and quickest road to the manifold improvements of which the fundamental qualities of human nature, as well as the relations of man in society, are susceptible? There is no good ground for supposing that this steadfast regard to the fruitfulness and variety of the individual intelligence tends specially to lead to the concentration of energy upon individual aims. For what lesson does free intelligence teach us more constantly or more impressively than that man standing alone is impotent, that every unsocial act or sentiment tends to overthrow that collectivity of effort to which we owe all, and, most important of all, that this collectivity is most effectively secured by the just culture of the impulses and affections? No degree nor kind of organisation could lead us further than this, and ought it not to be the prime object and chief hope of those who think about society, that this truth shall stand

rooted in every one's own reason? If it does not so stand, you have no security for your spiritual organisation, and if it does, then you have no necessity. It is to the spread of this conviction, by the ever-pressing consciousness of urgent social circumstances, that we must look to suffuse industrial and egotistic energy with a truly moral and social sentiment.

This is the point of view from which we may justly regard the violent change that was the result of the Seven Years' War, as a truly progressive step. We cannot be as reasonably sure that the old conditions of men's relations in society are in whatever new shape destined to return, as we are sure that it was a good thing to prevent a feudal and jesuitical government like Austria from retaining a purely obstructive power in Europe, and a jesuitical government like France from establishing the same obstructive kind of power in America. The advantages of the final acquisition of America by Protestantism, and the decisive consolidation of Prussia, were not without alloy. History does not present us with these clean balances. It is not at all difficult to see the injurious elements in this victory of the northern powers, and nobody would be less willing than the present writer to accept either the Prussian polity of Frederick, or the commercial polity of England and her western colonies, as offering final types of wholesome social states. But the alternative was the triumph of a far worse polity than either, the polity of the Society of Jesus.

CLVI

"IF THE OLD SOLUTIONS ARE FALLEN DUMB"

THERE are new solutions for him, if the old are fallen dumb. If he no longer believes death to be a stroke from the sword of God's justice, but the leaden footfall of an inflexible law of matter, the humility of his awe is deepened, and the tenderness of his pity made holier, that creatures who can love so much should have their days so shut round with a wall of darkness. The purifying anguish of remorse will be stronger, not weaker, when he has trained himself to look upon every wrong in thought, every duty omitted from act, each infringement of the inner spiritual law which humanity is constantly perfecting for its own guidance and advantage, less as a breach of the decrees of an unseen tribunal, than as an ungrateful infection, weakening and corrupting the future of his brothers. And he will be less effectually raised from inmost prostration of soul by a doubtful subjective reconciliation, so meanly comfortable to his own individuality, than by hearing full in the ear the sound of the cry of humanity craving sleepless succour from her children. That swelling consciousness of height and freedom with which the old legends of an omnipotent divine majesty fill the breast, may still remain; for how shall the universe ever cease to be a sovereign wonder of overwhelming power and superhuman fixedness of law? And a man will be already in no mean paradise, if at the hour of sunset a good hope can fall upon him like harmonies of music that the earth

shall still be fair, and the happiness of every feeling creature still receive a constant augmentation, and each good cause yet find worthy defenders, when the memory of his own poor name and personality has long been blotted out of the brief recollection of men for ever.

CLVII

WHY PROMINENT MEN WROTE HISTORIES IN THE XVIII CENTURY

THE activity of the foremost men of the eighteenth century in the composition of history is too remarkable a circumstance, not to deserve some attempt at explanation. There were historians in previous ages, but in the eighteenth century there was both in France, and afterwards in England, a special and extraordinary development in this direction. Partially no doubt this was due to the general movement of curiosity, the widespread desire for all kinds of knowledge, which was in the air. Men were emancipating themselves from the trammels of an authority which had not widened the limits of inquiry in the same proportion as human faculties had strengthened, and, amid the universal expansion of intelligent interest and the eager scrutiny of all the objects of knowledge which the new dawn was baring to sight, it was not possible that the order of political and social facts in former epochs should be neglected. This, however, does not sufficiently explain why such a man as Hume betook himself to the composition of history, or why Gibbon

found himself best able to attack Christianity by tracing some of the most important parts of its annals, or why Voltaire, who lived so entirely and intensely in the present, should have thought it worth while to give so much labour to presentation of the past. It is a striking fact, which must be something more than an accident, that the best secular histories which remain from this period, one of them the most striking monument in historical literature, were written by the most marked assailants of reigning superstition.

Was it not, indeed, to be expected that as the dark clouds of an absorbing consciousness of the supernatural cleared away, men of understanding would be more and more drawn towards study of human action, and that the advance of society under purely natural and positive conditions would immediately seize a foremost place among the objects of experiential inquiry ? It is too constantly maintained by persons with something of a vested interest in darkness, that those who do not worship the gods are indifferent to the happiness of men. Yet the history of intellectual progress would seem to show that it was not until the commencement of a rapid decline in the acceptance of terrorist and jealous deities and incomprehensible dogmas, that serious attention was given to some of the subjects in which a sound knowledge is among the most indispensable conditions of the advancing welfare of men. For instance, as soon as the hold of ancient versions of the supernatural was loosened over the stronger spirits, by the middle of the century there instantly took place an astonishing development of activity in the physical sciences. The interest of

historic and economic studies was at least as pressing. Becoming aware that men had made their own world, thinkers found the consideration of the process by which this world is made, and the order of society established and developed, forced upon them with an entirely new significance. The dry bones of the ancient valley of annalists and chroniclers were made to live, and the great work of the reconstruction of the past was begun, with an alertness and perseverance that has not been surpassed even in an age of far purer and juster historical intelligence. It was quite reasonable that the conviction of each act in the universe, from the crash of an empire to the fall of a sparrow to the ground, being due to an arbitrary and inscrutable decree, should prevent the rise of history from the level of annals into the region of philosophy. The decay of this theory of the government of the universe was as reasonably the cause of a new mode of looking at the long records of the race, and we find ourselves moving in a day of historical masterpieces.

CLVIII

THREE KINDS OF HISTORIANS

We may say that three kinds of men write history: the gazetteer or annalist, the statesman, and the philosopher. The annalist's business is to investigate and record events, and his highest merits are clearness, accuracy, and simplicity. The political historian seeks the superficial and immediate causes of great transactions, and he serves us by mixed penetration

and soundness of judgment. The historical philosopher is concerned only with groups of events, the changes and movements that transform communities, and with the trains of conditions that lead to such movements. The majority of historians, from the illustrious Bacon down to the compiler of a manual, illustrate the first kind. Thucydides and Tacitus, among the ancients, a Machiavelli or a Finlay, among moderns, may illustrate the second kind. As Voltaire was sometimes gazetteer and sometimes statesman, so Montesquieu took the statesman's point of view in his reflections on the decline of Rome, and that of the philosopher in the Spirit of Laws.

CLIX

STYLE AND CLASSICAL TRAINING

COBDEN is a striking instance against a favourite plea of the fanatics of Latin and Greek. They love to insist that a collegian's scholarship is the great source and fountain of a fine style. It would be nearer the truth to say that our classical training is more aptly calculated to destroy the qualities of good writing and fine speaking, than any other system that could have been contrived. Those qualities depend principally, in men of ordinary endowment, upon a certain large freedom and spontaneousness, and next upon a strong habit of observing things before words. These are exactly the habits of mind which our way of teaching, or rather of not teaching, Latin and Greek inevitably chills and represses in any one in

whom literary faculty is not absolutely irrepressible. What is striking in Cobden is that after a lost and wasted childhood, a youth of drudgery in a warehouse, and an early manhood passed amid the rather vulgar associations of the commercial traveller, he should at the age of one and thirty have stepped forth the master of a written style, which in boldness, freedom, correctness, and persuasive moderation, was not surpassed by any man then living. He had taken pains with his mind, and had been a diligent and extensive reader, but he had never studied language for its own sake.

It was fortunate for him that, instead of blunting the spontaneous faculty of expression by minute study of the verbal peculiarities of a Lysias or an Isocrates, he should have gone to the same school of active public interests and real things in which those fine orators had in their different degrees acquired so happy a union of homeliness with purity, and of amplitude with measure. These are the very qualities that we notice in Cobden's earliest pages; they evidently sprang from the writer's singular directness of eye, and eager and disinterested sincerity of social feeling, undisturbed as both these gifts fortunately were by the vices of literary self-consciousness.

CLX

COBDEN AND BRIGHT

It has often been pointed out how the two great spokesmen of the League were the complements of

one another; how their gifts differed, so that one exactly covered the ground which the other was predisposed to leave comparatively untouched. The differences between them, it is true, were not so many as the points of resemblance. If in Mr. Bright there was a deeper austerity, in both there was the same homeliness of allusion, and the same graphic plainness. Both avoided the stilted abstractions of rhetoric, and neither was ever afraid of the vulgarity of details. In Cobden as in Bright, we feel that there was nothing personal or small, and that what they cared for so vehemently were great causes. There was a resolute standing aloof from the small things of party, which would be almost arrogant, if the whole texture of what they had to say were less thoroughly penetrated with political morality and with humanity. Then there came the points of difference. Mr. Bright had all the resources of passion alive within his breast. He was carried along by vehement political anger, and, deeper than that, there glowed a wrath as stern as that of an ancient prophet. To cling to a mischievous error seemed to him to savour of moral depravity and corruption of heart. What he saw was the selfishness of the aristocracy and the landlords, and he was too deeply moved by hatred of this, to care to deal very patiently with the bad reasoning which their own self-interest inclined his adversaries to mistake for good. His invective was not the expression of mere irritation, but a profound and menacing passion. Hence he dominated his audiences from a height, while his companion rather drew them along after him as friends and equals. Cobden was by no means

incapable of passion, of violent feeling, or of vehement expression. His fighting qualities were in their own way as formidable as Mr Bright's; and he had a way of dropping his jaw and throwing back his head, when he took off the gloves for an encounter in good earnest, which was not less alarming to his opponents than the more sombre style of his colleague. Still, it was not passion to which we must look for the secret of his oratorical success. I have asked many scores of those who knew him, Conservatives as well as Liberals, what this secret was, and in no single case did my interlocutor fail to begin, and in nearly every case he ended as he had begun, with the word *persuasiveness*. Cobden made his way to men's hearts by the union which they saw in him of simplicity, earnestness, and conviction, with a singular facility of exposition. This facility consisted in a remarkable power of apt and homely illustration, and a curious ingenuity in framing the argument that happened to be wanted. Besides his skill in thus hitting on the right argument, Cobden had the oratorical art of presenting it in the way that made its admission to the understanding of a listener easy and undenied. He always seemed to have made exactly the right degree of allowance for the difficulty with which men follow a speech, as compared with the ease of following the same argument on a printed page which they may con and ponder until their apprehension is complete. Then men were attracted by his mental alacrity, by the instant readiness with which he turned round to grapple with a new objection. Prompt and confident, he was never at a loss, and he never hesitated. This is what

Mr. Disraeli meant when he spoke of Cobden's "sauciness." It had an excellent effect, because everybody knew that it sprang, not from levity or presumption, but from a free mastery of his subject.

CLXI

COBDEN'S PRACTICALITY

But it is well once more to note that what Cobden talked about and cared for was real politics, not the game of party. Politics in his sense meant the large workings of policy, not the manœuvres of Members of Parliament. When the newspaper was unfolded in the morning, that furnished him and his friends or his guests with topics for the day. Events all over the world were deliberately discussed in relation to wide and definite general principles; their bearings were worked out in the light of what Cobden conceived to be the great economical and social movements of the world. This is what makes a real school in politics. It was in the same spirit that Cobden read books and talked with bookish men. His point of view was always actual, not in the sense of the vulgar practical man, but social and political. When he read a book, he read it as all reading should be done, with a view to life and practice, and not in the way of refined self-indulgence. The *Life of Eliot* made him think of the state of the franchise in those old times, and Motley's *History of the Netherlands*, which interested him greatly, suggested to him that Queen

Elizabeth carried her aversion to European crusading in the Palmerstonian sense almost too far.[1] To the Ilyssus we may confess that Cobden was a little unjust, but the point of his good-humoured sarcasm has been much misrepresented. He was, he said in his last speech, a great advocate of culture of every kind. What he sought was that young men should be led to add to classical learning a great knowledge of modern affairs and

[1] "Why, when I read Motley's *History of the Rise of the Dutch Republic*—an admirable book, which everybody should read—when I read the history of the Netherlands, and when I see how that struggling community, with their whole country desolated by Spanish troops, and every town lighted up daily with the fires of persecution,—when I see the accounts of what passed when the envoys came to Queen Elizabeth and asked for aid, how she is huckstering for money while they are begging for help to their religion, I declare that, with all my principles of non-intervention, I am almost ashamed of old Queen Bess. And then there were Burleigh, Walsingham, and the rest, who were, if possible, harder and more difficult to deal with than their mistress. Why, they carried out in its unvarnished selfishness a national British policy; they had no other idea of a policy but a national British policy, and they carried it out with a degree of selfishness amounting to downright avarice.

"He next quotes Chatham. Do you suppose that Chatham was running about the world protecting and looking after other people's affairs? Why, he went abroad in the spirit of a commercial traveller more than any Minister we ever had. . . . At that time, Lord Chatham thought, that by making war upon France and seizing the Canadas, he was bringing custom to the English merchants and manufacturers; and he publicly declared that he made those conquests for the very purpose of giving a monopoly of those conquered markets to Englishmen at home; and he said he would not allow the colonists to manufacture a horseshoe for themselves. . . . Now, if I take Chatham's great son; if I take the second Pitt, when he entered upon wars he immediately began the conquest of colonies. When he entered upon war with France in 1793, and for three or four years afterwards, our navy was employed in little else than seizing colonies, the islands of the West Indies, etc., whether they belonged to France, Holland, or Denmark, or other nations, and he believed by that means he could make war profitable."—*Speeches*, ii. 350, 351.

the habits of serious political thought about their own time.[1]

His own industry in acquiring the knowledge that was necessary for his purpose was enormous. His pamphlets show his appetite for Blue books, and as with other sensible men it was an appetite which led him not merely to swallow but to digest and assimilate. He was a constant student of *Hansard*, and for one who seeks for purposes of action or controversy to make himself well versed in the political transactions of the present century, there is no book so well worth the labour of ransacking. Cobden was never afraid of labour that he thought would be useful; he cheerfully undertook even the drudgery of translation, and that too in a case where he did not in his heart expect to make any important mark on opinion.[2]

[1] The passage was prompted by a little slip in a leading article in the *Times*, which had made one of the greatest of American rivers run uphill a great number of miles into another river, and then these two united (the waters of which are never blended at all) were made to flow into a third river, into which, as it happens, neither of them pours a drop. How preposterous, said Cobden, that young gentlemen who know all about the geography of ancient Greece, should be unable, if asked to point out Chicago on the map, to go within a thousand miles of it. "When I was at Athens," he said, "I sallied out one summer morning to see the far-famed river, the Ilyssus, and after walking for some hundred yards up what appeared to be the bed of a winter torrent, I came up to a number of Athenian laundresses, and I found they had dammed up this far-famed classic river, and that they were using every drop of water for their linen and such sanitary purposes. I say, why should not the young gentlemen who are taught all about the geography of the Ilyssus know something about the geography of the Mississippi, the Ohio, and the Missouri?"—*Speeches*, ii. 364.

[2] In 1858 he translated M. Chevalier's pamphlet on Gold.

CLXII

THE REVOLUTION

CHRISTIANITY is the name for a great variety of changes which took place during the first centuries of our era, in men's ways of thinking and feeling about their spiritual relations to unseen powers, about their moral relations to one another, about the basis and type of social union. So the Revolution is now the accepted name for a set of changes which began faintly to take a definite practical shape first in America, and then in France, towards the end of the eighteenth century; they had been directly prepared by a small number of energetic thinkers, whose speculations represented, as always, the prolongation of some old lines of thought in obedience to the impulse of new social and intellectual conditions. While one movement supplied the energy and the principles which extricated civilisation from the ruins of the Roman empire, the other supplies the energy and the principles which already once, between the Seven Years' War and the assembly of the States General, saved human progress in face of the political fatuity of England and the political nullity of France; and they are now, amid the distraction of the various representatives of an obsolete ordering, the only forces to be trusted at once for multiplying the achievements of human intelligence stimulated by human sympathy, and for diffusing their beneficent results with an ampler hand and more far-scattering arm. Faith in a divine power, devout obedience to its supposed will, hope of ecstatic,

unspeakable reward, these were the springs of the old movement. Undivided love of our fellows, steadfast faith in human nature, steadfast search after justice, firm aspiration towards improvement, and generous contentment in the hope that others may reap whatever reward may be, these are the springs of the new.

CLXIII

ROUSSEAU'S DISTINCTION AMONG REVOLUTIONISTS

THERE are some teachers whose distinction is neither correct thought, nor an eye for the exigencies of practical organisation, but simply depth and fervour of the moral sentiment, bringing with it the indefinable gift of touching many hearts with love of virtue and the things of the spirit. The Christian organisations which saved western society from dissolution owe all to St. Paul, Hildebrand, Luther, Calvin; but the spiritual life of the west during all these generations has burnt with the pure flame first lighted by the sublime mystic of the Galilean hills. Aristotle acquired for men much knowledge and many instruments for gaining more; but it is Plato, his master, who moves the soul with love of truth and enthusiasm for excellence. There is peril in all such leaders of souls, inasmuch as they incline men to substitute warmth for light, and to be content with aspiration where they need direction. Yet no movement goes far which does not count one of them in the number of its chiefs. Rousseau took this place among those

who prepared the first act of that revolutionary drama, whose fifth act is still dark to us.

At the heart of the Revolution, like a torrid stream flowing undiscernible amid the waters of a tumbling sea, is a new way of understanding life. The social changes desired by the various assailants of the old order are only the expression of a deeper change in moral idea, and the drift of the new moral idea is to make life simpler. This in a sense is at the bottom of all great religious and moral movements, and the Revolution emphatically belongs to the latter class. Like such movements in the breast of the individual, those which stir an epoch have their principle in the same craving for disentanglement of life. This impulse to shake off intricacies is the mark of revolutionary generations, and it was the starting-point of all Rousseau's mental habits, and of the work in which they expressed themselves. His mind moved outwards from this centre, and hence the fact that he dealt principally with government and education, the two great agencies which, in an old civilisation with a thousand roots and feelers, surround external life and internal character with complexity. Simplification of religion by clearing away the overgrowth of errors, simplification of social relations by equality, of literature and art by constant return to nature, of manners by industrious homeliness and thrift,—this is the revolutionary process and ideal, and this is the secret of Rousseau's hold over a generation that was lost amid the broken maze of fallen systems.

CLXIV

ROUSSEAU'S PERSONALITY

THE personality of Rousseau has most equivocal and repulsive sides. It has deservedly fared ill in the esteem of the saner and more rational of those who have judged him, and there is none in the history of famous men and our spiritual fathers that begat us, who make more constant demands on the patience or pity of those who study his life. Yet in no other instance is the common eagerness to condense all predication about a character into a single unqualified proposition so fatally inadequate. If it is indispensable that we should be for ever describing, naming, classifying, at least it is well, in speaking of such a nature as his, to enlarge the vocabulary beyond the pedantic formulas of unreal ethics, and to be as sure as we know how to make ourselves, that each of the sympathies and faculties which together compose our power of spiritual observation, is in a condition of free and patient energy. Any less open and liberal method, which limits our sentiments to absolute approval or disapproval, and fixes the standard either at the balance of common qualities which constitutes mediocrity, or at the balance of uncommon qualities which is divinity as in a Shakespeare, must leave in a cloud of blank incomprehensibleness those singular spirits who come from time to time to quicken the germs of strange thought and shake the quietness of the earth.

We may forget much in our story that is grievous

or hateful, in reflecting that if any man now deems a day basely passed in which he has given no thought to the hard life of garret and hovel, to the forlorn children and trampled women of wide squalid wildernesses in cities, it was Rousseau who first in our modern time sounded a new trumpet note for one more of the great battles of humanity. He makes the poor very proud, it was truly said. Some of his contemporaries followed the same vein of thought, as we shall see, and he was only continuing work which others had prepared. But he alone had the gift of the golden mouth. It was in Rousseau that polite Europe first hearkened to strange voices and faint reverberation from out of the vague and cavernous shadow in which the common people move. Science has to feel the way towards light and solution, to prepare, to organise. But the race owes something to one who helped to state the problem, writing up in letters of flame at the brutal feast of kings and the rich that civilisation is as yet only a mockery, and did furthermore inspire a generation of men and women with the stern resolve that they would rather perish than live on in a world where such things can be.

CLXV

ROUSSEAU'S FIRST DISCOURSE

THE refutation of many parts of Rousseau's main contention on the principles which are universally accepted among enlightened men in modern society

is so extremely obvious that to undertake it would merely be to draw up a list of the gratulatory commonplaces of which we hear quite enough in the literature and talk of our day. In this direction, perhaps it suffices to say that the Discourse is wholly one-sided, admitting none of the conveniences, none of the alleviations of suffering of all kinds, nothing of the increase of mental stature, which the pursuit of knowledge has brought to the race. They may or may not counterbalance the evils that it has brought, but they are certainly to be put in the balance in any attempt at philosophic examination of the subject. It contains no serious attempt to tell us what those alleged evils really are, or definitely to trace them one by one, to abuse of the thirst for knowledge and defects in the method of satisfying it. It omits to take into account the various other circumstances, such as climate, government, race, and the disposition of neighbours, which must enter equally with intellectual progress into whatever demoralisation has marked the destinies of a nation. Finally it has for the base of its argument the entirely unsupported assumption of there having once been in the early history of each society a stage of mild, credulous, and innocent virtue, from which appetite for the fruit of the forbidden tree caused an inevitable degeneration. All evidence and all scientific analogy are now well known to lead to the contrary doctrine, that the history of civilisation is a history of progress and not of decline from a primary state. After all, as Voltaire said to Rousseau in a letter which only showed a superficial appreciation of the real drift of the argument, we must confess

that these thorns attached to literature are only as flowers in comparison with the other evils that have deluged the earth. "It was not Cicero nor Lucretius, nor Virgil nor Horace, who contrived the proscriptions of Marius, of Sulla, of the debauched Antony, of the imbecile Lepidus, of that craven tyrant basely surnamed Augustus. It was not Marot who produced the St. Bartholomew massacre, nor the tragedy of the Cid that led to the wars of the Fronde. What really makes, and always will make, this world into a valley of tears, is the insatiable cupidity and indomitable insolence of men, from Kouli Khan, who did not know how to read, down to the custom-house clerk, who knows nothing but how to cast up figures. Letters nourish the soul, they strengthen its integrity, they furnish a solace to it,"—and so on in the sense, though without the eloquence, of the famous passage in Cicero's defence of Archias the poet.[1] All this, however, in our time is in no danger of being forgotten, and will be present to the mind of every reader. The only danger is that pointed out by Rousseau himself: "People always think they have described what the sciences do, when they have in reality only described what the sciences ought to do."[2]

What we are more likely to forget is that Rousseau's piece has a positive as well as a negative side, and presents, in however vehement and overstated a way, a truth which the literary and speculative enthusiasm of France in the eighteenth century, as is always the case with such enthusiasm whenever it penetrates

[1] Voltaire to J. J. R. Aug. 30, 1755.

[2] *Rep. au Roi Pologne*, 105.

either a generation or an individual, was sure to make men dangerously ready to forget.[1] This truth may be put in different terms. We may describe it as the possibility of eminent civic virtue existing in people, without either literary taste or science or speculative curiosity. Or we may express it as the compatibility of a great amount of contentment and order in a given social state, with a very low degree of knowledge. Or finally, we may give the truth its most general expression, as the subordination of all activity to the promotion of social aims. Rousseau's is an elaborate and roundabout manner of saying that virtue without science is better than science without virtue; or that the well-being of a country depends more on the standard of social duty and the willingness of citizens to conform to it, than on the standard of intellectual culture and the extent of its diffusion. In other words, we ought to be less concerned about the speculative or scientific curiousness of our people than about the height of their notion of civic virtue and their firmness and persistency in realising it. It is a moralist's way of putting the ancient preacher's monition, that they are but empty in whom is not the wisdom of God. The importance of stating this is in our modern era always pressing, because there is a constant tendency on the part of energetic intellectual workers, first, to concentrate their energies on a minute specialty, leaving public affairs and interests to their

[1] In 1753 the French Academy, by way no doubt of summoning a counter-blast to Rousseau, boldly offered as the subject of their essay the thesis that "The love of letters inspires the love of virtue," and the prize was won fitly enough by a Jesuit professor of rhetoric. See Delandine, i. 42.

own course. Second, they are apt to overestimate their contributions to the stock of means by which men are made happier, and what is more serious, to underestimate in comparison those orderly, modest, self-denying, moral qualities, by which only men are made worthier, and the continuity of society is made surer. Third, in consequence of their greater command of specious expression and their control of the organs of public opinion, they both assume a kind of supreme place in the social hierarchy, and persuade the majority of plain men unsuspectingly to take so very egregious an assumption for granted. So far as Rousseau's Discourse recalled the truth as against this sort of error it was full of wholesomeness.

Unfortunately his indignation against the overweening pretensions of the verse-writer, the gazetteer, and the great band of sciolists at large, led him into a general position with reference to scientific and speculative energy, which seems to involve a perilous misconception of the conditions of this energy producing its proper results. It is easy now, as it was easy for Rousseau in the last century, to ask in an epigrammatical manner by how much men are better or happier for having found out this or that novelty in transcendental mathematics, biology, or astronomy; and this is very well as against the discoverer of small marvels who shall give himself out for the benefactor of the human race. But both historical experience and observation of the terms on which the human intelligence works, show us that we can only make sure of intellectual activity on condition of leaving it free to work all round, in every department and in

every remotest nook of each department, and that its most fruitful epochs are exactly those when this freedom is greatest, this curiosity most keen and minute, and this waste, if you choose to call the indispensable superfluity of force in a natural process waste, most copious and unsparing. You will not find your highest capacity in statesmanship, nor in practical science, nor in art, nor in any other field where that capacity is most urgently needed for the right service of life, unless there is a general and vehement spirit of search in the air. If it incidentally leads to many industrious futilities and much learned refuse, this is still the sign, and the generative element of industry which is not futile, and of learning which is something more than mere water spilled upon the ground.

We may say in fine that this first Discourse and its vindications were a dim, shallow, and ineffective feeling after the great truth, that the only normal state of society is that in which neither the love of virtue has been thrust far back into a secondary place by the love of knowledge, nor the active curiosity of the understanding dulled, blunted, and made ashamed by soft, lazy ideals of life as a life only of the affections. Rousseau now and always fell into the opposite extreme from that against which his whole work was a protest. We need not complain very loudly that while remonstrating against the restless intrepidity of the rationalists of his generation, he passed over the central truth, namely that the full and ever festal life is found in active freedom of curiosity and search taking significance, motive, force, from a warm inner pulse of human love and sympathy. It was not given

to Rousseau to see all this, but it was given to him to see the side of it for which the most powerful of the men living with him had no eyes, and the first Discourse was only a moderately successful attempt to bring his vision before Europe. It was said at the time that he did not believe a word of what he had written.[1] It is a natural characteristic of an age passionately occupied with its own set of ideas, to question either the sincerity or the sanity of anybody who declares its sovereign conceptions to be no better than foolishness. We cannot entertain such a suspicion. Perhaps the vehemence of controversy carries him rather further than he quite meant to go, when he declares that if he were a chief of an African tribe, he would erect on his frontier a gallows, on which he would hang without mercy the first European who should venture to pass into his territory, and the first native who should dare to pass out of it.[2] And there are many other extravagances of illustration, but the main position is serious enough, as represented in the emblematic vignette with which the essay was printed —the torch of science brought to men by Prometheus, who warns a satyr that it burns; the satyr, seeing fire for the first time and being fain to embrace it, is the symbol of the vulgar men who, seduced by the glitter of literature, insist on delivering themselves up to its study. Rousseau's whole doctrine hangs compactly together, and we may see the signs of its growth after leaving his hands in the crude formula of the first Discourse, if we proceed to the more audacious paradox of the second.

[1] Preface to *Narcisse*, 251. [2] *Rép. à M. Bordes*, 167.

CLXVI

EQUALITY OF MAN

An immense quantity of nonsense has been talked about the equality of man, for which those who deny that doctrine and those who assert it may divide the responsibility. It is in reality true or false, according to the doctrines with which it is confronted. As against the theory that the existing way of sharing the laboriously acquired fruits and delights of the earth is a just representation and fair counterpart of natural inequalities among men in merit and capacity, the revolutionary theory is true, and the passionate revolutionary cry for equality of external chance most righteous and unanswerable. But the issues do not end here. Take such propositions as these:—there are differences in the capacity of men for serving the community; the well-being of the community demands the allotment of high function in proportion to high faculty; the rights of man in politics are confined to a right of the same protection for his own interests as is given to the interests of others. As against these principles, the revolutionary deductions from the equality of man are false. And such pretensions as that every man could be made equally fit for every function, or that not only each should have an equal chance, but that he who uses his chance well and sociably should be kept on a level in common opinion and trust with him who uses it ill and unsociably, or does not use it at all,—the whole of this is

obviously most illusory and most disastrous, and in whatever degree any set of men have ever taken it up, to that degree they have paid the penalty.

CLXVII

THE OLD AND THE NEW ANCHORITE

It would have been a strange anachronism if the decade of the Encyclopædia and the Seven Years' War had reproduced one of those scenes which are as still resting-places amid the ceaseless forward tramp of humanity, where some holy man turned away from the world, and with adorable seriousness sought communion with the divine in mortification of flesh and solitude of spirit. Those were the retreats of firm hope and beatified faith. The hope and faith of the eighteenth century were centred in action, not in contemplation, and the few solitaries of that epoch, as well as of another nearer to our own, fled away from the impotence of their own will, rather than into the haven of satisfied conviction and clear-eyed acceptance. Only one of them—Wordsworth, the poetic hermit of our lakes—impresses us in any degree like one of the great individualities of the ages when men not only craved for the unseen, but felt the closeness of its presence over their heads and about their feet. The modern anchorite goes forth in the spirit of the preacher who declared all the things that are under the sun to be vanity, not in the transport of the saint who knew all the things

that are under the sun to be no more than the shadow of a dream in the light of a celestial brightness to come.

CLXVIII

DISTINCTION BETWEEN ROUSSEAU AND HIS SCHOOL

THIS leads to another great and important distinction to be drawn between Rousseau and the school whom in other respects he inspired. The admirable Sainte Beuve perplexes one by his strange remark, that the union of the poetry of the family and the hearth with the poetry of nature is essentially wanting to Rousseau.[1] It only shows that the great critic had for the moment forgotten the whole of the second part of the New Heloïsa, and his failure to identify Cowper's allusion to the *matinée a l'anglaise* certainly proves that he had at any rate forgotten one of the most striking and delicious scenes of the hearth in French literature.[2] The tendency to read Rousseau only in the Byronic sense is one of those foregone conclusions which are constantly tempting the critic to travel

[1] *Causeries*, xi. 195.

[2] *Nouv. Hél.*, V. iii. "You remember Rousseau's description of an English morning: such are the mornings I spend with these good people."—Cowper to Joseph Hill, Oct. 25, 1765. *Works*, iii. 269. In a letter to William Unwin (Sept. 21, 1779), speaking of his being engaged in mending windows, he says, "Rousseau would have been charmed to have seen me so occupied, and would have exclaimed with rapture that he had found the Emilius who, he supposed, had subsisted only in his own idea." For a description illustrative of the likeness between Rousseau and Cowper in their feeling for nature, see letter to Newton (Sept. 18, 1784, v. 78), and compare it with the description of Les Charmettes, making proper allowance for the colour of prose.

out of his record. Rousseau assuredly had a Byronic side, but he is just as often a Cowper done into splendid prose. His pictures are full of social animation and domestic order. He had exalted the simplicity of the savage state in his Discourses, but when he came to constitute an ideal life, he found it in a household that was more, and not less, systematically disciplined than those of the common society around him. The paradise in which his Julie moved with Wolmar and Saint Preux, was no more and no less than an establishment of the best kind of the rural middle-class, frugal, decorous, wholesome, tranquilly austere. No most sentimental savage could have found it endurable, or could himself without profound transformation of his manners have been endured in it. The New Heloïsa ends by exalting respectability, and putting the spirit of insurrection to shame. Self-control, not revolt, is its last word.

This is what separates Rousseau here and throughout from Sénancour, Byron, and the rest. He consummates the triumph of will, while their reigning mood is grave or reckless protest against impotence of will, the little worth of common aims, the fretting triviality of common rules. Franklin or Cobbett might have gloried in the regularity of Madame de Wolmar's establishment. The employment of the day was marked out with precision. By artful adjustment of pursuits, it was contrived that the men-servants should be kept apart from the maid-servants, except at their repasts. The women, namely, a cook, a housemaid, and a nurse, found their pastime in rambles with their mistress and her children, and

lived mainly with them. The men were amused by games for which their master made regulated provision, now for summer, now for winter, offering prizes of a useful kind for prowess and adroitness. Often on a Sunday night all the household met in an ample chamber, and passed the evening in dancing. When Saint Preux inquired whether this was not a rather singular infraction of puritan rule, Julie wisely answered that pure morality is so loaded with severe duties, that if you add to them the further burden of indifferent forms, it must always be at the cost of the essential.[1] The servants were taken from the country, never from the town. They entered the household young, were gradually trained, and never went away except to establish themselves.

The vulgar and obvious criticism on all this is that it is utopian, that such households do not generally exist, because neither masters nor servants possess the qualities needed to maintain these relations of unbroken order and friendliness. Perhaps not; and masters and servants will be more and more removed from the possession of such qualities, and their relations further distant from such order and friendliness, if writers cease to press the beauty and serviceableness of a domesticity that is at present only possible in a few rare cases, or to insist on the ugliness, the waste of peace, the deterioration of character, that are the results of our present system. Undoubtedly it is much easier for Rousseau to draw his picture of semi-patriarchal felicity, than for the rest of us to realise it. It was his function to press ideals of sweeter life

[1] IV. x. 260.

on his contemporaries, and they may be counted fortunate in having a writer who could fulfil this function with Rousseau's peculiar force of masterly persuasion. His scornful diatribes against the domestic police of great houses, and the essential inhumanity of the ordinary household relations, are both excellent and of permanent interest. There is the full breath of a new humaneness n them. They were the right way of attacking the decrepitude of feudal luxury and insolence, and its imitation among the great farmers-general. This criticism of the conditions of domestic service marks a beginning of true democracy, as distinguished from the mere pulverisation of aristocracy. It rests on the claim of the common people to an equal consideration, as equally useful and equally capable of virtue and vice ; and it implies the essential priority of social over political reform.

CLXIX

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

THE dominant belief of the best minds of the latter half of the eighteenth century was a passionate faith in the illimitable possibilities of human progress. Nothing short of a general overthrow of the planet could in their eyes stay the ever upward movement of human perfectibility. They differed as to the details of the philosophy of government which they deduced from this philosophy of society, but the conviction that a golden era of tolerance, enlightenment, and material prosperity was close at hand, belonged

to them all. Rousseau set his face the other way. For him the golden era had passed away from our globe many centuries ago. Simplicity had fled from the earth. Wisdom and heroism had vanished from out of the minds of leaders. The spirit of citizenship had gone from those who should have upheld the social union in brotherly accord. The dream of human perfectibility which nerved men like Condorcet, was to Rousseau a sour and fantastic mockery. The utmost that men could do was to turn their eyes to the past, to obliterate the interval, to try to walk for a space in the track of the ancient societies. They would hardly succeed, but endeavour might at least do something to stay the plague of universal degeneracy. Hence the fatality of his system. It placed the centre of social activity elsewhere than in careful and rational examination of social conditions, and in careful and rational effort to modify them. As we began by saying, it substituted a retrograde aspiration for direction, and emotion for the discovery of law. We can hardly wonder, when we think of the intense exaltation of spirit produced both by the perfectibilitarians and the followers of Rousseau, and at the same time of the political degradation and material disorder of France, that so violent a contrast between the ideal and the actual led to a great volcanic outbreak. Alas, the crucial difficulty of political change is to summon new force without destroying the sound parts of a structure which it has taken so many generations to erect. The Social Contract is the formal denial of the possibility of successfully overcoming the difficulty.

" Although man deprives himself in the civil state of many advantages which he holds from nature, yet he acquires in return others so great, his faculties exercise and develop themselves, his ideas extend, his sentiments are ennobled, his whole soul is raised to such a degree, that if the abuses of this new condition did not so often degrade him below that from which he has emerged, he would be bound to bless without ceasing the happy moment which rescued him from it for ever, and out of a stupid and blind animal made an intelligent being and a man." [1] The little parenthesis as to the frequent degradation produced by the abuses of the social condition, does not prevent us from recognising in the whole passage a tolerably complete surrender of the main position which was taken up in the two Discourses. The short treatise on the Social Contract is an inquiry into the just foundations and most proper form of that very political society, which the Discourses showed to have its foundation in injustice, and to be incapable of receiving any form proper for the attainment of the full measure of human happiness.

Inequality in the same way is no longer denounced, but accepted and defined. Locke's influence has begun to tell. The two principal objects of every system of legislation are declared to be liberty and equality. By equality we are warned not to understand that the degrees of power and wealth should be absolutely the same, but that in respect of power, such power should be out of reach of any violence, and be invariably exercised in virtue of the laws; and

[1] *Cont. Soc.*, I. viii.

in respect of riches, that no citizen should be wealthy enough to buy another, and none poor enough to sell himself. Do you say this equality is a mere chimera ? It is precisely because the force of things is constantly tending to destroy equality, that the force of legislation ought as constantly to be directed towards upholding it.[1] This is much clearer than the indefinite way of speaking which we have already noticed in the second Discourse. It means neither more nor less than that equality before the law which is one of the elementary marks of a perfectly free community.

The idea of the law being constantly directed to counteract the tendencies to violent inequalities in material possessions among different members of a society, is too vague to be criticised. Does it cover and warrant so sweeping a measure as the old *seisachtheia* of Solon, voiding all contracts in which the debtor had pledged his land or his person ; or such measures as the agrarian laws of Licinius and the Gracchi ? Or is it to go no further than to condemn such a law as that which in England gives unwilled lands to the eldest son ? We can only criticise accurately a general idea of this sort in connection with specific projects in which it is applied. As it stands, it is no more than the expression of what the author thinks a wise principle of public policy. It assumes the existence of property just as completely as the theory of the most rigorous capitalist could do ; it gives no encouragement, as the Discourse did, to the notion of an equality in being without property. There is no element of communism in a

[1] *Cont. Soc.*, II. xi. He had written in much the same sense in his article on Political Economy in the Encyclopaedia, p. 34.

principle so stated, but it suggests a social idea, based on the moral claim of men to have equality of opportunity. This ideal stamped itself on the minds of Robespierre and the other revolutionary leaders, and led to practical results in the sale of the Church and other lands in small lots, so as to give the peasant a market to buy in. The effect of the economic change thus introduced happened to work in the direction in which Rousseau pointed, for it is now known that the most remarkable and most permanent of the consequences of the revolution in the ownership of land was the erection, between the two extreme classes of proprietors, of an immense body of middle-class freeholders. This state is not equality, but gradation, and there is undoubtedly an immense difference between the two. Still its origin is an illustration on the largest scale in history of the force of legislation being exerted to counteract an irregularity that had become unbearable.[1]

[1] Robespierre disclaimed the intention of attacking property, and took up a position like that of Rousseau—teaching the poor contempt for the rich, not envy. "I do not want to touch your treasures," he cried, on one occasion, "however impure their source. It is far more an object of concern to me to make poverty honourable, than to proscribe wealth; the thatched hut of Fabricius never need envy the palace of Crassus. I should be at least as content, for my own part, to be one of the sons of Aristides, brought up in the Prytaneium at the public expense, as the heir presumptive of Xerxes, born in the mire of royal courts, to sit on a throne decorated by the abasement of the people, and glittering with the public misery." Quoted in Malon's *Exposé des Ecoles Socialistes francaises*, 15. Babœuf carried Rousseau's sentiments further towards their natural conclusion by such propositions as these: "The goal of the revolution is to destroy inequality, and to re-establish the happiness of all." "The revolution is not finished, because the rich absorb all the property, and hold exclusive power; while the poor toil like born slaves, languish in wretchedness, and are nothing in the state." *Exposé des Ecoles Socialistes francaises*, p. 29.

CLXX

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF PEOPLES

It is time to come to the central conception of the Social Contract, the dogma which made of it for a time the gospel of a nation, the memorable doctrine of the sovereignty of peoples. Of this doctrine Rousseau was assuredly not the inventor, though the exaggerated language of some popular writers in France leads us to suppose that they think of him as nothing less. Even in the thirteenth century the constitution of the Orders, and the contests of the friars with the clergy, had engendered faintly democratic ways of thinking.[1] Among others the great Aquinas had protested against the juristic doctrine that the law is the pleasure of the prince. The will of the prince, he says, to be a law, must be directed by reason; law is appointed for the common good, and not for a special or private good: it follows from this that only the reason of the multitude, or of a prince representing the multitude, can make a law.[2] A still more remarkable approach to later views was made by Marsilio of Padua, physician to Lewis of Bavaria, who wrote a strong book on his master's side, in the great contest between him and the pope (1324). Marsilio in the first part of his work not only lays down very elaborately the proposition that laws ought to be made by the "*universitas civium*"; he places this

[1] See for instance Green's *History of the English People*, i. 266.

[2] *Summa*, xc.-cviii. (1265-1273). See Maurice's *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, i. 627, 628. Also Franck's *Réformateurs et Publicistes de l'Europe*, p. 48, etc.

sovereignty of the people on the true basis (which Rousseau only took for a secondary support to his original compact), namely, the greater likelihood of laws being obeyed in the first place, and being good laws in the second, when they are made by the body of the persons affected. "No one knowingly does hurt to himself, or deliberately asks what is unjust, and on that account all or a great majority must wish such law as best suits the common interest of the citizens." [1] Turning from this to the Social Contract, or to Locke's essay on Government, the identity in doctrine and correspondence in dialect may teach us how little true originality there can be among thinkers who are in the same stage; how a metaphysician of the thirteenth century and a metaphysician of the eighteenth hit on the same doctrine; and how the true classification of thinkers does not follow intervals of time, but is fixed by differences of method. It is impossible that in the constant play of circumstances and ideas in the minds of different thinkers, the same combinations of form and colour in a philosophic arrangement of such circumstances and ideas should not recur. Signal novelties in thought are as limited as signal inventions in architectural construction. It is only one of the great changes in method, that can remove the limits of the old combinations, by

[1] *Defensor Pacis*, Pt. I., ch. xii. This, again, is an example of Marsilio's position:—Convenerunt enim homines ad civilem communicationem propter commodum et vitae sufficientiam consequendam, et opposita declinandum. Quae igitur omnium tangere possunt commodum et incommodum, ab omnibus sciri debent et audiri, ut commodum assequi et oppositum repellere possint." The whole chapter is a most interesting anticipation, partly due to the influence of Aristotle, of the notions of later centuries.

bringing new material and fundamentally altering the point of view.

In the sixteenth century there were numerous writers who declared the right of subjects to depose a bad sovereign, but this position is to be distinguished from Rousseau's doctrine. Thus, if we turn to the great historic event of 1581, the rejection of the yoke of Spain by the Dutch, we find the Declaration of Independence running, " that if a prince is appointed by God over the land, it is to protect them from harm, even as a shepherd to the guardianship of his flock. The subjects are not appointed by God for the behoof of the prince, but the prince for his subjects, without whom he is no prince." This is obviously divine right, fundamentally modified by a popular principle, accepted to meet the exigencies of the occasion, and to justify after the event a measure which was dictated by urgent need for practical relief. Such a notion of the social compact was still emphatically in the semi-patriarchal stage, and is distinct as can be from the dogma of popular sovereignty as Rousseau understood it. But it plainly marked a step on the way. It was the development of Protestant principles which produced and necessarily involved the extreme democratic conclusion. Time was needed for their full expansion in this sense, but the result could only have been avoided by a suppression of the Reformation, and we therefore count it inevitable. Bodin (1577) had defined sovereignty as residing in the supreme legislative authority, without further inquiry as to the source or seat of that authority, though he admits the vague position which even Lewis XIV. did not deny, that

the object of political society is the greatest good of every citizen or the whole state. In 1603 a Protestant professor of law in Germany, Althusen by name, published a treatise of Politics, in which the doctrine of the sovereignty of peoples was clearly formulated, to the profound indignation both of Jesuits and of Protestant jurists.[1] Rousseau mentions his name;[2] it does not appear that he read Althusen's rather uncommon treatise, but its teaching would probably have a place in the traditions of political theorising current at Geneva, to the spirit of whose government it was so congenial. Hooker, vindicating episcopacy against the democratic principles of the Puritans, had still been led, apparently by way of the ever dominant idea of a natural law, to base civil government on the assent of the governed, and had laid down such propositions as these: "Laws they are not, which public approbation hath not made so. Laws therefore human, of what kind soever, are available by consent," and so on.[3] The views of the Ecclesiastical Polity were adopted by Locke, and became the foundation of the famous essay on Civil Government, from which popular leaders in our own country drew all their weapons down to the outbreak of the French Revolution. Grotius (1625) starting from the principle that the law of nature enjoins that we should stand by our agreements, then proceeded to assume either an express, or at any rate a tacit and implied, promise

[1] See Bayle's Dict., s. v. *Althusius.*

[2] *Lettres de la Montagne*, I. vi. 388.

[3] *Eccles. Polity*, Bk. i.; bks. i.-iv. 1594; bk. v., 1597; bks. vi.-viii., 1647,—being forty-seven years after the author's death.

on the part of all who become members of a community, to obey the majority of the body, or a majority of those to whom authority has been delegated.[1] This is a unilateral view of the social contract, and omits the element of reciprocity which in Rousseau's idea was cardinal.

Locke was Rousseau's most immediate inspirer, and the latter affirmed himself to have treated the same matters exactly on Locke's principles. Rousseau, however, exaggerated Locke's politics as greatly as Condillac exaggerated his metaphysics. There was the important difference that Locke's essay on Civil Government was the justification in theory of a revolution which had already been accomplished in practice, while the Social Contract, tinged as it was by silent reference in the mind of the writer to Geneva, was yet a speculation in the air. The circumstances under which it was written gave to the propositions of Locke's piece a reserve and moderation which savour of a practical origin and a special case. They have not the wide scope and dogmatic air and literary precision of the corresponding propositions in Rousseau. We find in Locke none of those concise phrases which make fanatics. But the essential doctrine is there. The philosopher of the Revolution of 1688 probably carried its principles further than most of those who helped in the Revolution had any intention to carry them, when he said that " the legislature being only

[1] Goguet (*Origine des Lois*, i. 22) dwells on tacit conventions as a kind of engagement to which men commit themselves with extreme facility. He was thus rather near the true idea of the spontaneous origin and unconscious acceptance of early institutions.

a fiduciary power to act for certain ends, there remains still in the people a supreme power to remove or alter the legislative."[1] It may be questioned how many of the peers of that day would have assented to the proposition that the people—and did Locke mean by the people the electors of the House of Commons, or all males over twenty-one, or all householders paying rates?—could by any expression of their will abolish the legislative power of the upper chamber, or put an end to the legislative and executive powers of the crown. But Locke's statements are direct enough, though he does not use so terse a label for his doctrine as Rousseau affixed to it.

Again, besides the principle of popular sovereignty, Locke most likely gave to Rousseau the idea of the origin of this sovereignty in the civil state in a pact or contract, which was represented as the foundation and first condition of the civil state. From this naturally flowed the connected theory, of a perpetual consent being implied as given by the people to each new law. We need not quote passages from Locke to demonstrate the substantial correspondence of assumption between him and the author of the Social

[1] Of Civil Government, ch. xiii. See also ch. xi. "This legislative is not only the supreme power of the commonwealth, but sacred and unalterable in the hands where the community have once placed it; nor can any edict of anybody else, in what form soever conceived, or by what power soever backed, have the force and obligation of a law, which has not its sanction from that legislative which the public has chosen and appointed; for without this the law could not have that which is absolutely necessary to its being a law—the consent of the society; over whom nobody can have a power to make laws, but by their own consent, and by authority received from them." If Rousseau had found no neater expression for his doctrine than this, the Social Contract would assuredly have been no explosive.

Contract. They were found in every chapter.[1] Such principles were indispensable for the defence of a Revolution like that of 1688, which was always carefully marked out by its promoters, as well as by its eloquent apologist and expositor a hundred years later, the great Burke, as above all things a revolution within the pale of the law or the constitution. They represented the philosophic adjustment of popular ideas to the political changes wrought by shifting circumstances, as distinguished from the biblical or Hebraic method of adjusting such ideas, which had prevailed in the contests of the previous generation.

CLXXI

ROUSSEAU'S FAITH IN THE GOODNESS OF THINGS

One whose most intense conviction was faith in the goodness of all things and creatures as they are first produced by nature, and so long as they remain unsophisticated by the hand and purpose of man, was in some degree bound to show a way by which this evil process of sophistication might be brought to the lowest possible point, and the best of all natural creatures kept as near as possible to his high original. Rousseau, it is true, held in a sense of his own the doctrine of the fall of man. That doctrine, however, has never made people any more remiss in the search after a virtue, which if they ought to have regarded it as hopeless according to strict logic, is still indis-

[1] See especially ch. viii.

pensable in actual life. Rousseau's way of believing that man had fallen was so coloured at once by that expansion of sanguine emotion which marked his century, and by that necessity for repose in idyllic perfection of simplicity which marked his own temperament, that enthusiasm for an imaginary human creature effectually shut out the dogma of his fatal depravation. "How difficult a thing it is," Madame d'Epinay once said to him, "to bring up a child." "Assuredly it is," answered Rousseau; "because the father and mother are not made by nature to bring it up, nor the child to be brought up."[1] This cynical speech can only have been an accidental outbreak of spleen. It was a contradiction to his one constant opinion that nature is all good and bounteous, and that the inborn capacity of man for reaching true happiness knows no stint.

CLXXII

THE SAVOYARD VICAR'S DEISM AND THE SATISFACTION OF RELIGIOUS EMOTION

Deism like the Savoyard Vicar's opens no path for the future, because it makes no allowance for the growth of intellectual conviction, and binds up religion with mystery, with an object whose attributes can neither be conceived nor defined, with a Being too all-embracing to be able to receive anything from us, too august, self-contained, remote, to be able to bestow on us the humble gifts of which we have need. The

[1] *Mém. de Mdme. d'Epinay*, ii. 276, 278.

temperature of thought is slowly but without an instant's recoil rising to a point when a mystery like this, definite enough to be imposed as a faith, but too indefinite to be grasped by understanding as a truth, melts away from the emotions of religion. Then those instincts of holiness, without which the world would be to so many of its highest spirits the most dreary of exiles, will perhaps come to associate themselves less with unseen divinities, than with the long brotherhood of humanity seen and unseen. Here we shall move with an assurance that no scepticism and no advance of science can ever shake, because the benefactions which we have received from the strenuousness of human effort can never be doubted, and each fresh acquisition in knowledge or goodness can only kindle new fervour. Those who have the religious imagination struck by the awful procession of man from the region of impenetrable night, by his incessant struggle with the hardness of the material world, and his sublimer struggle with the hard world of his own egotistic passions, by the pain and sacrifice by which generation after generation has added some small piece to the temple of human freedom or some new fragment to the ever incomplete sum of human knowledge, or some fresh line to the types of strong or beautiful character,—those who have an eye for all this may indeed have no ecstasy and no terror, no heaven nor hell, in their religion, but they will have abundant moods of reverence, deep-seated gratitude, and sovereign pitifulness.

And such moods will not end in sterile exaltation, or the deathly chills of spiritual reaction. They will

bring forth abundant fruit in new hope and invigorated endeavour. This devout contemplation of the experience of the race, instead of raising a man into the clouds, brings him into the closest, loftiest, and most conscious relations with his kind, to whom he owes all that is of value in his own life, and to whom he can repay his debt by maintaining the beneficent tradition of service, by cherishing honour for all the true and sage spirits that have shone upon the earth, and sorrow and reprobation for all the unworthier souls whose light has gone out in baseness. A man with this faith can have no foul spiritual pride, for there is no mysteriously accorded divine grace in which one may be a larger participant than another. He can have no incentives to that mutilation with which every branch of the church, from the oldest to the youngest and crudest, has in its degree afflicted and retarded mankind, because the key-note of his religion is the joyful energy of every faculty, practical, reflective, creative, contemplative, in pursuit of a visible common good. And he can be plunged into no fatal and paralysing despair by any doctrine of mortal sin, because active faith in humanity, resting on recorded experience, discloses the many possibilities of moral recovery, and the work that may be done for men in the fragment of days, redeeming the contrite from their burdens by manful hope. If religion is our feeling about the highest forces that govern human destiny, then as it becomes more and more evident how much our destiny is shaped by the generation of the dead who have prepared the present, and by the purport of our hopes and the direction of

our activity for the generations that are to fill the future, the religious sentiment will more and more attach itself to the great unseen host of our fellows who have gone before us and who are to come after. Such a faith is no rag of metaphysic floating in the sunshine of sentimentalism, like Rousseau's faith. It rests on a positive base, which only becomes wider and firmer with the widening of experience and the augmentation of our skill in interpreting it. Nor is it too transcendent for practical acceptance. One of the most scientific spirits of the eighteenth century, while each moment expecting the knock of the executioner at his door, found as religious a solace as any early martyr had ever found in his barbarous mysteries, when he linked his own efforts for reason and freedom with the eternal chain of the destinies of man. "This contemplation," he wrote and felt, "is for him a refuge into which the rancour of his persecutors can never follow him; in which, living in thought with man reinstated in the rights and the dignity of his nature, he forgets man tormented and corrupted by greed, by base fear, by envy; it is here that he truly abides with his fellows, in an elysium that his reason has known how to create for itself, and that his love for humanity adorns with all purest delights."[1]

This, to the shame of those wavering souls who despair of progress at the first moment when it threatens to leave the path that they have marked out for it, was written by a man at the very close of his days, when every hope that he had ever cherished seemed to one without the eye of faith to be extin-

[1] Condorcet's *Progrès de l'Esprit Humain. Œuv.*, vi. 276.

guished in bloodshed, disorder, and barbarism. But there is a still happier season in the adolescence of generous natures that have been wisely fostered, when the horizons of the dawning life are suddenly lighted up with a glow of aspiration towards good and holy things. Commonly, alas, this priceless opportunity is lost in a fit of theological exaltation, which is gradually choked out by the dusty facts of life, and slowly smoulders away into dry indifference. It would not be so, but far different, if the Savoyard Vicar, instead of taking the youth to the mountain-top, there to contemplate that infinite unseen which is in truth beyond contemplation by the limited faculties of man, were to associate these fine impulses of the early prime with the visible, intelligible, and still sublime possibilities of the human destiny,—that imperial conception, which alone can shape an existence of entire proportion in all its parts, and leave no natural energy of life idle or athirst. Do you ask for sanctions! One whose conscience has been strengthened from youth in this faith, can know no greater bitterness than the stain cast by wrong act or unworthy thought on the high memories with which he has been used to walk, and the discord wrought in hopes that have become the ruling harmony of his days.

CLXXIII

ROUSSEAU'S "CONFESSIONS"

THE desire to protect himself against the defamation of his enemies led him at this time to compose that account of his own life, which is probably the only one of his writings that continues to be generally read. He composed the first part of the Confessions at Wootton, during the autumn and winter of 1766. The idea of giving his memoirs to the public was an old one, originally suggested by one of his publishers. To write memoirs of one's own life was one of the fancies of the time, but like all else, it became in Rousseau's hand something more far-reaching and sincere than a passing fashion. Other people wrote polite histories of their outer lives, amply coloured with romantic decorations. Rousseau with unquailing veracity plunged into the inmost depths, hiding nothing that would be likely to make him either ridiculous or hateful in common opinion, and inventing nothing that could attract much sympathy or much admiration. Though, as has been pointed out already, the Confessions abound in small inaccuracies of date, hardly to be avoided by an oldish man in reference to the facts of his boyhood, whether a Rousseau or a Goethe, and though one or two of the incidents are too deeply coloured with the hues of sentimental reminiscence, and one or two of them are downright impossible, yet when all these deductions have been made, the substantial truthfulness of what remains is made more evident with every addition to

our materials for testing them. When all the circumstances of Rousseau's life are weighed, and when full account has been taken of his proved delinquencies, we yet perceive that he was at bottom a character as essentially sincere, truthful, careful of fact and reality, as is consistent with the general empire of sensation over untrained intelligence.[1] As for the egotism of the Confessions, it is hard to see how a man is to tell the story of his own life without egotism. And it may be worth adding that the self-feeling which comes to the surface and asserts itself, is in a great many cases far less vicious and debilitating than the same feeling nursed internally with a troglodytish shyness. But Rousseau's egotism manifested itself perversely. This is true to a certain small extent, and one or two of the disclosures in the Confessions are in very nauseous matter, and are made moreover in a very nauseous manner. There are some vices whose grotesqueness stirs us more deeply than downright atrocities, and we read of certain puerilities avowed by Rousseau, with a livelier impatience than old Benvenuto Cellini quickens in us, when he confesses to a horrible assassination. This morbid form of self-feeling in only less disgusting than the allied form which clothes itself in the phrases of religious exaltation. And there is not much of it. Blot out half a dozen pages from the Confessions, and the egotism is no more perverted than in the Confessions of Augustine or of Cardan.

[1] For an instructive and, as it appears to me, a thoroughly trustworthy account of the temper in which the Confessions were written, see the 4th of the *Rêveries*.

CLXXIV

A BEAUTIFUL NATURAL SCENE

THE prospect from the little harbour of Isle Ornsay surpasses by far in form, colour, majesty, tenderness, the lines of Capri and Ischia at Naples. The weather perfect, lovely films of vapour, great sweeping bursts of sunshine, dark iron mountains, gleaming slopes of verdure, glistening crags, strange evanescent veils of cloud and luminous curtains of rain, the fresh tumbling sea. The gulls, with their hoarse cries, wheeling in great flocks; the little puffins; the strange pairs of guillemots battling with the water, ducking and diving—the hand of man or history counting for nothing in the scene. This for one thing marks it out from Naples, where is history enough, or too much. This is the Nature from which we came, to which we return. These are the scenes that might well fill the inward eye in the last hours. We are one with all this—atoms in the wild whirl. Don't let us suffer it to be blotted out by wearying thoughts about our souls—and their shortcomings. They are not for a day like this. The vision purges us of self.

CLXXV

LAST WORDS ON GLADSTONE

I CAME on a letter the other day where somebody wrote to him—and the words were true, "You have

so lived and wrought that you have kept the soul alive in England." When he died Lord Salisbury said of him, " He was a great Christian." Yes ; and I would add that he was not a Christian for nothing. He must many a time have used to himself the language of Wordsworth, one of the inspirers of his life—

> Earth is sick
> And Heaven is weary of the hollow words
> That States and Kingdoms utter when they talk
> Of truth and justice.

He, at all events, in face of the exigent demands of practical politics, did his best to bring truth and justice into the minds and hearts of his countrymen and of those with whom they had to deal. His language would not indeed be mine, but the signal truth remains that, when he saw nations stumbling into paths of wrong, he felt sure of moral retribution. He had in his soul a vision high in the heavens of the flash of an uplifted sword and the gleam of the arm of the avenging angel. The thought with which he rose in the morning and went to rest at night was of the universe as a sublime moral theatre, in which an omnipotent Dramaturgist uses kingdoms and rulers, laws and policies, to exhibit sovereign purposes for good. This was the thought that lighted up the prose of politics with a ray from the diviner mind, and exalted his ephemeral discourse into a sort of visible relation with the counsels of all time.

CLXXVI

SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT

In the autumn of 1904, with a painful shock, I learned one afternoon that Harcourt was no more. For nearly twenty years our intercourse had been constant, close, and not unimportant. He was an affluent and entertaining correspondent, and even in days of difficulty, the exchange of letters between us was unbroken. I had the pleasure, too, of many a visit on intimate terms at Malwood, a chosen spot among the glades of the New Forest, a house and garden his own cherished creation and delightful. So, too, was his abounding solicitude for the comfort of his friends. In conversation he had most copious play of topics, the power of argument without contention, wit and humour exuberant, plenty of general literary knowledge, with special knowledge of one or two periods of English political history, and of the fine and powerful world of London for his own generation. He always thought there was much force in Disraeli's saying, "The great thing in politics is the personal." Serious or gay, you had an impression of force, though it was force entirely temporal and secular. He had no pretension to the rare type of those who by accost or glance or tone awaken and stimulate. He did not make disciples nor seek them, but he made many friends, and transitory bouts apart showed himself a warm and genial comrade. It was said of Wilkes that he spoke to nobody on his daily walk from his home at Storey's Gate to the

Guildhall, who did not part from him with a smile or broad laugh. That was just as true of Harcourt. In domestic affections he was the most devoted of men. He enjoyed his pleasant ironies. Like Fox, whom he resembled also in strenuous regard for Whig principles, he had a right to say of himself, in spite of ready showers of potent sarcasm, that he was not a "good hater"; nor was it any habit of his to refuse the proffered hand. What passed for cynicism was in truth the air taken by his intellectual pride: of this quality, be it vice or virtue, he had his share. The judicious reader will not confuse pride of intellect with literary vanity, for one is compatible with a great mind and the other is not; though the immortal case of Cicero, who was both great and vain, may make us hesitate in making our dictum too positive. As militant pamphleteer Harcourt was of the first order—as good as Junius or Swift or Bolingbroke, in weight, scorn, directness, trenchant stroke. When any ecclesiastical pretensions irritated the Erastianism that was the deepest and most undying of his political tenets, his pen made prelates and their crosiers shake.

CLXXVII

FOX AND HARCOURT

Days at Malwood naturally recall St. Anne's Hill, where Fox spent his happy days of political exile disappointed, never soured. We may amuse ourselves by imaginary dialogues, manly and splendid, between

this most doughty pair of great Whigs. Was Fox right when he declared that the party system is the best security for liberty and wisdom in government; does most for the morals and happiness of mankind, and by teaching men to hold responsible counsel with other men, and to depend upon one another; is the only way in which a rational man can hope to stem the power and influence of the Crown? So much on one side. I can picture the imperious energy with which Harcourt would have explained to Mr. Fox that the power and influence for rational men to stem no longer resided in the Crown, but in the strange, subtle forces called Public Opinion; that public opinion is apt to involve fatal contentment with simple answers to complex questions; money freely laid on a flashing favourite this week, deep curses on what has proved the wrong horse the week after; the creation, through a thousand seen and unseen channels, of Great Finance—the field where Harcourt showed such splendid insight, skill, and courage. Then we may conceive the disputants next day seeking easier ground in Fox's proposition that if a man's object is public speaking, Euripides ought to be his constant study, scarcely less than Homer himself. Perhaps Harcourt would have told him that Euripides and Homer alike had long followed the power of the Crown in our modern senate. Never again will either House hear a Minister declaim the solemn hexameters of Lucretius, among the noblest in all poetry; or the verses where Virgil describes the husbandman turning up with rake and plough the rusty javelins, empty helms, and mighty bones of a forgotten battle-

field of long ago; or like Pitt in his glorious speech against the Slave Trade, inspired by the shooting of a beam of the rising sun through the windows of the House to the most beautiful and apt of recorded parliamentary impromptus in the two Latin lines:

> Nos . . . primus equis Oriens afflavit anhelis,
> Illic sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper.

This disappearance of a once admired parliamentary habit, if anybody will lay it to heart, is significant of a great many more important things than a casual change in literary taste. Not that literary taste was absent.

CLXXVIII

MR. CARNEGIE

Mr. Carnegie had proved his originality, fulness of mind, and bold strength of character, as much or more in the distribution of wealth as he had shown skill and foresight in its acquisition. We had become known to one another more than twenty years before through Matthew Arnold. His extraordinary freshness of spirit easily carried Arnold, Herbert Spencer, myself, and afterwards many others, high over an occasional crudity or haste in judgment such as befalls the best of us in ardent hours. People with a genius for picking up pins made as much as they liked of this: it was wiser to do justice to his spacious feel for the great objects in the world—for

knowledge and its spread, invention, light, improvement of social relations, equal chances to the talents, the passion of peace. These are glorious things; a touch of exaggeration in expression is easy to set right. His early effusion on the *Gospel of Wealth* excited vigorous and sympathetic interest in Mr. Gladstone, and Carnegie's name speedily came to be associated in a wide world with lively discussion. Feel for great objects has not been all. Millions of money have not been all. He is an idealist who lives and works with his ideals, and drudges over them every day of his life. He maintained the habit of applying his own mind either to the multifarious projects that flooded in upon him from outside, or to elaborating the independent notions that sprang up within him from his observant common-sense in union with the milk of human kindness. Rapidity, energy, confident enthusiasm, were the mark of his days. As he said to one of those to whom he was attached, "Don't look as if you were overwhelmed with gravity; don't let people think you have got as much as you can carry. It is not so much for a superior man that he suffices for his day's work, as that his day's work suffices for him." High spirits are to be no small part of the whole duty of man. Invincible optimism, either as to the whole world's progressive course, or the disappearance of obstacles to any wise enterprise in particular, sometimes provoked impatience in those of a less mercurial temperament. It was in fact his key to life when he said that, having retired from all other business, his business had become to do as much good as he could in the world. Optimism was more

than a theory in a man who had been a successful fighter through life, and had made so many others sharers in his victories.

Much too shrewd to suppose one man competent by himself to perfect and administer all the many schemes to which his name belongs, it is impossible not to admire the pains he has taken in inducing the right men to co-operate as trustees and in firing them with sympathy. Without them miscarriage would have been certain. It has been his just pride and pleasure to find men capable of his own zeal, and to give their time and attention without reward except the reward of conscience and public duty. As might have been expected, no inquiry was to be made as to what any beneficiary might think about future life or kindred dogmas. His enthusiasm for Burns and his radiant knowledge and love of Shakespeare are good testimony to his fine gaiety of heart. A strenuous disputant, yet he knows how to keep himself in order by quick, racy, and superabundant sense of humour. A man of high and wide and well-earned mark in his generation.

CLXXIX

LUCRETIUS

LUCRETIUS like Machiavelli is one of the great figures in literature who have gone through long spells of what is called immortality, bearing all the time a bad name. Singular is his story. His life was "invisible and dim." His one poem was never com-

pleted. Its duration hung upon a single manuscript. The manuscript appeared and disappeared for successive centuries. Whether his influence persisted in traces obscure and rare through the theologies and philosophies of the Middle Ages, scholars earnestly dispute. Some contend that in influence he was only second to Aristotle, and in continuous popularity only second to Virgil. Poet, savant, philosopher, he claims a place in three spheres. Nobody, I should think, reads his unique poem literally through. Mommsen finds Lucretius as savant absolutely unreadable. Others measure the poet, and insist that if you take a round figure for what you have a right to call poetry, you come to no more than 1800 lines out of 7400. More fastidious persons will have it there are only 700 really fine or memorable lines in the whole six books. About numbers this quarrel, like so many if not most quarrels of taste, is trivial. Even those who firmly choose to skip three-quarters still are conscious of the sound of a voice that is sublime, and the might of an imagination that soars on triumphant pinions beyond the flaming ramparts of the world. Whatever definition of poetry we may borrow from the poets themselves—whether "a speaking picture" or "invention" (Johnson) or "articulate music" (Dryden)—the tense, defiant, concentrated, scornful, fervid, daring, and majestic verse of Lucretius is unique and his own.

It is not hard to see why he should have had this bad name. He was vehemently unorthodox on sacred fundamentals—a pagan, without religion, or the feeling for it. This last is what mankind are slowest

to forgive. It is curious that, as I think, Dante finds no place for Lucretius in any of his three spheres of the other world, Inferno, Purgatory, or Paradise. Again, to readers who did not go much below the surface, he was what in our days is loosely, and somewhat promiscuously, labelled Pessimist. Pessimism—which, let us recollect, is a very different thing from misanthrophy—has many a shape, and voices beyond counting. A learned Grecian of our time has assured us that Aeschylus, though a strictly religious pagan, like Pindar, may well be called a pessimist, nay, "the very patriarch and first preacher of pessimism," and of this the Grecian finds his illustration in Prometheus, who redeems men from the low estate in which they were born, instructs them in all art and knowledge to lift them up from their sorry plight, discovers without disparagement or blame that they listen without hearing, and in the end is repaid by cruel exile in iron chains upon the frosty Caucasus. However this may be, pessimism ranges from the passionate laments of Israel; the clear-eyed melancholy of the Greek; the savage and unholy imaginations of the man like Swift, who on his birthday ever read Job's third chapter; the crystal lustre of Leopardi's unchangeable despair and lacerating irony; the transitory effusions of German *Weltschmerz*, or the effronteries of Zarathustra. Lucretius stands alone in the controversial force and energy with which the genius of negation inspires him, and transforms into sublime reasons for firm act, so long as living breath is ours, the thought that the life of a man is no more than a dream of shadow, the generation of men no

more than the generation of leaves, putting forth to air and sky, then scattered by autumn winds to earth.

His philosophy was borrowed from a Greek, but Lucretius was Roman, and the furious havoc of Rome in his day may well have awakened in him energetic thought on the problems of the world, such as may happen even to men with none of his commanding genius in any age, ancient or our own, who have the misfortune to be brought into sight of the like ruin of distracted States and insensate men.

CLXXX

HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN

CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN had none of the shining and indisputable qualities that had marked the last five holders of his exalted office. Among his colleagues were men superior to him in power of speech; in talent for grasping great masses of administrative difficulty; and up to a certain time, but not after his worth was fully measured, even in striking or interesting the popular imagination. And yet he was indispensable, the only man possible, and the time came when the popular interest in his personality rose to enviable heights, and good-will passed into cordial admiration and affection. Why? Because in many trying passages of public life he had shown unshaken courage, invincible independence even of public opinion itself, steadfast adherence to his own political principles in spite of busy and untoward dissents inside his party. In the evil days of Liberal

division during the Boer War, he had confounded the dissentient wing by plain-dealing; he lost no chance of conciliation with them; and, though a ready fighter, he was a skilful peacemaker, partly for the admirable reason that, being a man of the wise sort of modesty, he always thought more of his policy, and making it prevail, than he thought of himself. It was felt that he had the root of the whole matter in him when he declared good government to be no substitute for self-government. This was his solid reply to a current word, with much cant in it, about Efficiency. He had startled people during the Boer War by speaking of certain military doings of his countrymen as "methods of barbarism," and I recollect one of the chiefs of the other side saying to me, "I never could have believed that a man who had used that language could ever become Prime Minister of England." Yet this wonderful thing came to pass. At the dissolution he was confirmed in office by the largest parliamentary majority that any Prime Minister ever boasted. He had by patience and good judgment rallied his party; he had satisfied the vast majority of the electors; and he had never cast an inch of his political skin.

CLXXXI

LORD MINTO

Lord Minto, the new Viceroy, had all the manly traditions and honourable associations that gather round the best of youth at Eton and Trinity. In

stock he was descended from patrician Whigs, and he had his share of the intuitive political perception that belonged to that sect since its rise at the revolutionary settlement. His temperament was theirs. He had seen active service under Roberts in India; he had fought on the side of the Turks against Russia; nor, in truth, did friendly feeling for the Ottoman ever altogether leave him. As Governor-General of Canada he had acquired insight into the working technicalities of public administration in a free parliamentary system. Such habits of mind he joined to the spirit of the soldier. The Indian Viceroy is not bound to know political philosophy or juristic theory or constitutional history; he is first and foremost an administrator, and the working head of a complicated civil and military service. Nature had endowed Lord Minto with an ample supply of constancy and good-humour. His loyalty, courage, friendliness, straightforwardness, and pressing sense of public duty, were all splendid; so was his rooted contempt for those in whom he found such excellences languid. A viceroy needs to be a judge of men, whether with dark skins or white, and Lord Minto mixed tact and good common-sense and the milk of human kindness in the right proportion for discovering with what sort of man he had to deal. He liked people, though he did not always believe them, and he began by a disposition to get on with people as well as they would let him. If he found on trial what he thought good reason for distrusting a man, he did not change. His vision was not subtle, but, what is far better, it was remarkably shrewd. A bare catalogue of qualities,

however, is not all; such lists never are, nor can be. It is the summary of them, the man himself, that matters. His ancestor, the idolater of Burke, and Indian Viceroy a hundred years before, once dropped the ingenuous, but profound remark—"How curious it is to see how exactly people follow their own characters all through life." Our Lord Minto was a first-rate case. You were always sure where you would find him; there was no fear of selfishness or pettiness drawing him for a single passing moment from the straight path; his standard of political weights and measures was simple—it was true to the right facts, and it was steadfast.

CLXXXII

MARCUS AURELIUS

FREDERIC MYERS, a writer of our time distinguished in prose and verse—himself as far removed as possible from sympathy with any of the schools of the Unknowable—declared Marcus Aurelius, the crowned philosopher of ancient Rome, the friend and helper of those who would live in the spirit, to be the saint of Agnosticism. With patient and penetrating gaze he watches the recurrent motions of the universe, not sure whether it is all entanglement, confusion, dispersion; or is it unity, order, providence? Is it a well-arranged cosmos, or chaos? The secret of his riddle between gods on one hand and atoms on the other a secret remains, impossible for human faculty to find out. His moral stands good in either

case. If all is random, be not random thou: if things are ordered once for all following in due sequence, then accept necessity with reverence, trusting the external fate that rules. By other critics M. Aurelius, beautiful character as he is, has been found to have about him "something melancholy, circumscribed, and ineffectual." He has not, they say, the magic buoyancy and inspiration that might have come to him from the new-born religious faith of which he was the persecutor. If it be true that most men and women of a certain cultivation outside the churches to-day find their moral stay in the wisdom of Goethe, the gospel of M. Aurelius in the second century easily lends itself to the gospel of *Entsagen*, *Entbehren*, Renunciation, Resignation, in the nineteenth. Too boldly has it been said that if you seek the Sublime you only find it in the Hebrew, but we may admit that the Talmud here has a sublimer version of one of the overwhelming commonplaces of human existence than either Roman or German. "Life is a shadow, saith the Scripture, but is it the shadow of a tree or a tower that standeth? Nay, 'tis the shadow of a bird in its flight. Away flyeth the bird, and there is neither bird nor shadow."

At best a man's life is so short. Labour for bread fills most of his waking hours; it dulls by monotony, or exhausts by strain, or both. Who can wonder that in our daily battles the combatants constantly use the same word in totally different senses, have taken little trouble to master its full meaning, to unravel all the relevant implications that a word or

a proposition carries along with it? Yet after all loose logic is not enough to turn men into somnambulists. Needs of life and circumstance are the constant spur. One of the stiffest and strongest of utilitarian teachers in well-known words declared a man's life to be a poor thing at best, after youthful freshness and curiosity had gone by, though this did not prevent the intense vivacity of his moral inculcations of justice, labour, exertion for the public good, against self-indulgence and sloth. Under the more powerful influence of this philosopher's immediate descendant, happiness as a life of rapture was scouted. We were taught that happiness is to be found in an existence made up of few and transitory pains and various pleasures, with active predominant over passive, and above all with no livelier expectation from life than life is capable of bestowing.

CLXXXIII

CROMWELL'S FIGURE

THE figure of Cromwell has emerged from the floating mists of time in many varied semblances, from blood-stained and hypocritical usurper up to transcendental hero and the liberator of mankind. The contradictions of his career all come over again in the fluctuations of his fame. He put a king to death, but then he broke up a parliament. He led the way in the violent suppression of bishops, he trampled on the demands of presbytery, and set up a state system of his own; yet he is the idol of voluntary congregations

and the free churches. He had little comprehension of that government by discussion which is now counted the secret of liberty. No man that ever lived was less of a pattern for working those constitutional charters that are the favourite guarantees of public rights in our century. His rule was the rule of the sword. Yet his name stands first, half warrior, half saint, in the calendar of English-speaking democracy.

CLXXXIV

THE HISTORIAN AND THE STATESMAN

ONLY time tells all. In a fine figure the sublimest of Roman poets paints the struggle of warrior hosts upon the plain, the gleam of burnished arms, the fiery wheeling of the horse, the charges that thunder on the ground. But yet, he says, there is a tranquil spot on the far-off heights whence all the scouring legions seem as if they stood still, and all the glancing flash and confusion of battle as though it were blended in a sheet of steady flame.[1] So history makes the shifting things seem fixed. Posterity sees a whole. With the statesman in revolutionary times it is different. Through decisive moments that seemed only trivial, and by critical turns that he took to be indifferent, he explores dark and untried paths, groping his way through a jungle of vicissitude, ambush, stratagem, expedient; a match for fortune in all her moods; lucky if now and again he catch a glimpse of the polar star.

[1] Lucretius, ii. 323-332.

CLXXXV

PURITANISM AND CALVINISM

PURITANISM meanwhile profited by the common tendency among men of all times to set down whatever goes amiss to something wrong in government. It is in vain for the most part that sage observers like Hooker try to persuade us that "these stains and blemishes, springing from the root of human frailty and corruption, will remain until the end of the world, what form of government soever take place." Mankind is by nature too restless, too readily indignant, too hopeful, too credulous of the unknown, ever to acquiesce in this. But the English Revolution of the seventeenth century was no mere ordinary case of a political opposition. The puritans of the Cromwellian time were forced into a brave and energetic conflict against misgovernment in church and state. But it is to the honour of puritanism in all its phases that it strove with unending constancy, by the same effort to pierce inward to those very roots of "human frailty and corruption" which are always the true cause of the worst mischiefs of an unregenerate world. Puritanism came from the deeps. It was, like Stoicism, monasticism, Jansenism, even Mohammedanism, a manifestation of elements in human nature that are indestructible. It flowed from yearnings that make themselves felt in Eastern world and Western; it sprang from aspirations that breathe in men and women of many communions and faiths; it arose in instincts that seldom conquer for more than a brief

season, and yet are never crushed. An ascetic and unworldly way of thinking about life, a rigorous moral strictness, the subjugation of sense and appetite, a coldness to every element in worship and ordinance external to the believer's own soul, a dogma unyielding as cast-iron—all these things satisfy moods and sensibilities in man that are often silent and fleeting, are easily drowned in reaction, but are readily responsive to the awakening voice.

History, as Döllinger has said, is no simple game of abstractions ; men are more than doctrines. It is not a certain theory of grace that makes the Reformation ; it is Luther, it is Calvin. Calvin shaped the mould in which the bronze of puritanism was cast. That commanding figure, of such vast power yet somehow with so little lustre, by his unbending will, his pride, his severity, his French spirit of system, his gift for government, for legislation, for dialectic in every field, his incomparable industry and persistence, had conquered a more than pontifical ascendency in the protestant world. He meets us in England, as in Scotland, Holland, France, Switzerland, and the rising England across the Atlantic. He was dead (1564) a generation before Cromwell was born, but his influence was still at its height. Nothing less than to create in man a new nature was his far-reaching aim, to regenerate character, to simplify and consolidate religious faith. Men take a narrow view of Calvin when they think of him only as the preacher of justification by faith, and the foe of sacerdotal mediation. His scheme comprehended a doctrine that went to the very root of man's relations with the

scheme of universal things; a church order as closely compacted as that of Rome; a system of moral discipline as concise and as imperative as the code of Napoleon. He built it all upon a certain theory of the government of the universe, which by his agency has exerted an amazing influence upon the world. It is a theory that might have been expected to sink men crouching and paralysed into the blackest abysses of despair, and it has in fact been answerable for much anguish in many a human heart. Still Calvinism has proved itself a famous soil for rearing heroic natures. Founded on St. Paul and on Augustine, it was in two or three sentences this:—Before the foundations of the world were laid, it was decreed by counsel secret to us that some should be chosen out of mankind to everlasting salvation, and others to curse and damnation. In the figure of the memorable passage of the Epistle to the Romans, as the potter has power over the clay, so men are fashioned by antemundane will, some to be vessels of honour and of mercy, others to be vessels of dishonour and of wrath. Then the Potter has mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. On this black granite of Fate, Predestination, and Foreknowledge absolute, the strongest of the protestant fortresses all over the world were founded. Well might it have been anticipated that fatalism as unflinching as this would have driven men headlong into "desperation and wretchlessness of most unclean living." Yet that was no more the actual effect of the fatalism of St. Paul, Augustine, and Calvin than it was of the fatalism of the Stoics or of Mohammed.

On the contrary, Calvinism exalted its votaries to a pitch of heroic moral energy that has never been surpassed; and men who were bound to suppose themselves moving in chains inexorably riveted, along a track ordained by a despotic and unseen Will before time began, have yet exhibited an active courage, a resolute endurance, a cheerful self-restraint, an exulting self-sacrifice, that men count among the highest glories of the human conscience.

It is interesting to think what is the secret of this strange effect of the doctrine of fatality; for that was the doctrine over which Cromwell brooded in his hours of spiritual gloom, and on which he nourished his fortitude in days of fierce duress, of endless traverses and toils. Is it, as some have said, that people embraced a rigorous doctrine because they were themselves by nature austere, absolute, stiff, just rather then merciful? Is it, in other words, character that fixes creed, or creed that fashions character? Or is there a bracing and an exalting effect in the unrewarded morality of Calvinism; in the doctrine that good works done in view of future recompense have no merit; in that obedience to duty for its own sake which, in Calvin as in Kant, has been called one of the noblest efforts of human conscience towards pure virtue? Or, again, is there something invigorating and inspiring in the thought of acting in harmony with eternal law, however grim; of being no mere link in a chain of mechanical causation, but a chosen instrument in executing the sublime decrees of invincible power and infinite intelligence? However we may answer all the

insoluble practical enigmas that confronted the Calvinist, just as for that matter they confront the philosophic necessarian or determinist of to-day, Calvinism was the general theory through which Cromwell looked forth upon the world. That he ever argued it out, or was of a turn of mind for arguing it out, we need not suppose. Without ascending to those clouded and frowning heights, he established himself on the solid rock of Calvinistic faith that made their base.

CLXXXVI

CROMWELL'S PLACE IN HISTORY

To imply that Cromwell stands in the line of European dictators with Charles v. or Louis xiv. or Napoleon is a hyperbole that does him both less than justice and more. Guizot brings us nearer to the truth when he counts Cromwell, William iii., and Washington as chiefs and representatives of sovereign crises that have settled the destinies of nations. When we go on to ask what precisely was Cromwell's share in a mission so supreme, the answer, if we seek it away from the prepossessions of modern controversy, is not hard to discern. It was by his military genius, by the might of the legions that he created and controlled and led to victory upon victory; it was at Marston and Naseby, at Preston and Worcester, in Ireland and at Dunbar, that Cromwell set his deep mark on the destinies of England as she was, and of that vaster dominion into which the English

realm was in the course of ages to be transformed. He was chief of a party who shared his own strong perception that neither civil freedom nor political could be made secure without the sword, and happily the swordsman showed himself consummate. In speed and vigour, in dash and in prudence, in force of shock and quick steadiness of recovery; in sieges, marches, long wasting campaigns, pitched engagements; as commander of horse, as tactician, and as strategist, the modern expert ranks Cromwell among the foremost masters of the rough art of war in every branch. Above all, he created the instrument which in discipline, skill, and those highest military virtues that come of moral virtues, has never been surpassed.

In our own half-century now closing, alike in Western Europe and across the Atlantic, the torch of war has been lighted rather for Unity of race or State, than for Liberty. Cromwell struck for both. It was his armed right hand that crushed the absolutist pretensions alike of crown and mitre, and then forced the three kingdoms into the mould of a single State. It was at those decisive moments when the trembling balance hung on fortune in the battlefield, that the unconquerable captain turned the scale. After we have discussed all the minor aspects of his special policies on this occasion or the other, after we have scanned all the secondary features of his rule, this is still what in a single sentence defines the true place of Cromwell in our history.

CLXXXVII

THE INFLUENCE OF EMINENT MEN

It has been called a common error of our day to ascribe far too much to the designs and the influence of eminent men, of rulers, and of governments. The reproach is just and should impress us. The momentum of past events, the spontaneous impulses of the mass of a nation or a race, the pressure of general hopes and fears, the new things learned in the onward and diversified motions of "the great spirit of human knowledge,"—all these have more to do with the progress of the world's affairs, than the deliberate views of even the most determined and far-sighted of its individual leaders. Thirty years after the death of the Protector, a more successful revolution came about. The law was made more just, the tribunals were purified, the rights of conscience received at least a partial recognition, the press began to enjoy a freedom for which Milton had made a glorious appeal, but which Cromwell never dared concede. Yet the Declaration of Right and the Toleration Act issued from a stream of ideas and maxims, aims and methods, that were not puritan. New tributaries had already swollen the volume and changed the currents of that broad confluence of manners, morals, government, belief, on whose breast Time guides the voyages of mankind. The age of Rationalism with its bright lights and sobering shadows had begun. Some ninety years after 1688, another revolution followed in the England across the Atlantic, and the

gulf between Cromwell and Jefferson is measure of the vast distance that the minds of men had travelled. With the death of Cromwell, though the Free Churches remained as nurseries of stronghearted civil feeling, the brief life of puritan theocracy in England expired. It was a phase of a movement that left an inheritance of many noble thoughts, the memory of a brave struggle for human freedom, and a procession of strenuous master-spirits with Milton and Cromwell at their head. Political ends miscarry, and the revolutionary leader treads a path of fire. It is our true wisdom to learn how we may combine sane verdicts on the historic event, with a just estimation in the actor of those qualities of high endeavour on which, amid incessant change of formula, direction, fashion, and ideal, the world's best hopes in every age depend.

CLXXXVIII

"RECOLLECTIONS"

A PERSONAL story is soon told. In political records its main interest must lie in the points at which it chances to touch weightier things besides the familiar matters of to-day. What arms did your man carry in the serried conflicts of his time? Did he let them rust, and trust for safety to his shield? What pace did he strive to keep with the revolving forces of his age? Did unnoticed tributaries force the channels of his life, at this point or at that, to run off into barren sands? *Diu multumque vixi.* It has been my

fortune to write some pages that found and affected their share of readers; to know and work on close terms with many men wonderfully well worth knowing; to hold responsible offices in the state; to say things in popular assemblages that made a difference. Such recollections must always be open to the reproach of egotism. I hope that here at any rate it is not of the furtive sheepish kind.

From the point of egotism, again, be sure that complacency and self-content are lucky, if amid things vanished in that " other world we call the past," they do not stumble on plenty of material for self-surprise and self-reproof, and awake to the discovery, that fair names of statesman, thinker, writer, were only courtesy titles after all, without real rank, or claim to wider vogue or attention. Much of my ground obviously involves others; deeply should I regret if a single page were found unfair, or likely to wound just sensibilities. More deeply still should I deplore it, if a single page or phrase or passing mood of mine were either to dim the lamp of loyalty to Reason, or to dishearten earnest and persistent zeal for wise politics, in younger readers with their lives before them.

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