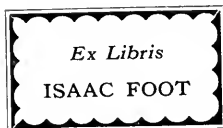






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THE COLLECTED PAPERS  
OF  
SIR A. W. WARD

VOLUME FOUR  
LITERARY (ii)

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COLLECTED PAPERS  
HISTORICAL, LITERARY, TRAVEL  
AND MISCELLANEOUS

BY

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### CORRECTIONS

- pp. 64—79 heading. For *Prose* read throughout *Verse*.  
p. 153, l. 1. For *Heinrick* read *Heinrich*.  
p. 210 note, l. 2. For *Hose* read *Hase*.  
p. 230, l. 24. For *Blunt* read *Blount*.  
p. 278 note, l. 1. For *Corubiensis* read *Cornubiensis*.  
p. 353, l. 26. For *plays* read *has its scenes*.

# COLLECTED PAPERS

## LITERARY

### 17. JOHN MILTON TERCENTENARY ORATION

(*Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1908<sup>1</sup>.)

IN the absence, for a cause which we all sincerely regret, of the President of the British Academy, it falls to me, most unworthy of so honourable a charge, to welcome, on the eve of the Tercentenary of John Milton's birth, the friends who have assembled to honour his immortal memory. There are others—historians and critics of acknowledged eminence—who would far more fitly have occupied the place left vacant by our President's absence; and I rejoice to think that from a poet<sup>2</sup> to whose voice no English ear could fail to listen a message of approval and sympathy has reached us which will be read to you presently. But there is one—no longer among us—to whom I think we would all have readily yielded precedence on an occasion like that which unites us this evening. By the crowning achievement of his long and arduous literary life, David Masson has for ever linked his name with the memories which

<sup>1</sup> Tercentenary of the Birth of John Milton. Oration at the Inaugural Meeting, December 8th, 1908. *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1908.

<sup>2</sup> George Meredith.

possess us tonight—the memories, inseparably interwoven, of a great man and a great age.

However far, in commemorating the dawn of that “bright effluence of bright essence” which symbolises the divine gift of genius to man, we may fall short of giving expression to our sense of its significance, we are conscious that there is nothing alien to the spirit either of Milton’s life or of Milton’s art in the tribute which we pay—in the acknowledgment which we offer. To his soaring genius the thought of an undying fame and, I dare say, the desire of it, were habitual; but the appeal which he made was not to the “broad rumour” of a thoughtless world—neither the world to which he was unknown in the pure tranquillity of his youth, nor that which (with an exception here or there of thoughtful remembrance or lucid insight) hurried past the blind solitude of his declining years. Before the greatest of his works was completed, he knew to what monumental height his name would be raised unless the perversity of fate should “damp his intended wing”; and, when his work was done, his imagination, speeding into futurity with steady flight, would not have disdained that clear recognition of later ages which comes slowly to the greatest, and imperfectly even to them.

For think of him, if only for a moment, at two stages of his life separated from each other by the length of a human generation, and, as it may seem on a rapid survey, distinct as regards both intellectual purpose and personal aspiration. It was not, as an assumed analogy between the story of his life and that of the life of another of the world’s greatest poets (Goethe) might seem to suggest, Milton’s sojourn in Italy which separated, as by a golden

bar, the earlier from the later half of his career; for the influence, enriching and refining, of classical antiquity had been strongest on him in the first thirty years of his life, and it lingered with him to the last, though under the control of a yet more potent influence. It was rather the anticipation of his return to England—where a new responsibility, as he believed, awaited him—which caused him, as it were, to recast the framework of his plan of life and work. But think of him, if you will, towards the close of the first, and again towards the close of the second, period of the race which it was his to run. Picture him first, if you like, in the spring of 1638, shortly before leaving the rural seclusion of Horton—

By slow Meander's margent green

And in the violet-embroidered vale—

to begin his travels beyond seas. He had crossed the threshold of maturity; behind him lay, far but not forgotten, the days of his unchildish childhood; the grave but not joyless experiences of his London home and school—the house of a father of whom the son could say that between them they held Phoebus Apollo “not in part but in whole”; the school which cherished the ideals of its illustrious founder and drank in with sound learning a pure Christianity. Behind him, too, lay the seven years of his residence at Cambridge, who (the thought is unavoidable, and perhaps most so to some of us whom some day she will fold to sleep in her motherly arms) might peradventure have kept him to her altogether. I feel sure that no small proportion of my hearers were, like myself, allowed to share in the solemnities—not less graceful than dignified—which, when last June was “clothing in fresh attire” the flowers in Christ's

Gardens, Milton's College dedicated to the memory of her illustrious son. And we may well take it from the present Master of the College (I only wish he had been willing to tell you so himself to-night), that no transient tempests had obscured an appreciation of the eager but not uncritical student's deserts in the Society of Christ's; and that he might well have become one of themselves, had not his resolute ambition, combined as it was with a rare mental balance, left the chance aside. "There was," says Dr Peile, "a great work before him; he must be thoroughly prepared." What greater wealth, Milton exclaims, could his father have bestowed upon him than the opportunities for this ample preparation? And so it had come to pass that, in the following five studious years at Horton, he had grown into that fullness of promise which a sudden summons—"whether the Muse or Love" be the summoner, and to him both had called—can at once quicken into performance. "My hasting days," he had written, "on being arrived at the age of twenty-three"—

fly on with full career,  
But my late spring no bud or blossom show'th.

Yet, in this very year, he had set his hand to *Arcades*, and, three years later, he had completed *Comus*, a poem in which the sublimity of his genius already shines forth with unrivalled splendour, while in his hands language passes into combinations—"musical, as is Apollo's lute." It is at this time that I ask you to think of him, on the eve of his Italian journey, in the beauty of early manhood—with "fair large front and eye sublime," and hyacinthine locks hanging in clusters "round from his parted forelock"—riding over from Horton to Eton,



there to seek the acquaintance and advice of the aged Provost, whose fame was in the mouths of many men, and in the palaces and along the waterways of many cities. Sir Henry Wotton, as Cowley afterwards wrote, was before long to go on "his fourth" and last "embassie"; "the seignory and sovereignty of time" were over him, and death was not far distant. But the old man's mind was clear, and his intellectual sympathies were active; and the praise of *Comus*, which he sent to Milton after his visit—plainly confessing that he had never before seen anything resembling its delicacy of expression in our language—was, so far as we know, the first which had yet reached the poet from any—may I borrow the phraseology of a later age, for poets were criticised before reviews existed—from any authoritative quarter. The commendation was not rejected by Milton. Seven years afterwards, he printed Sir Henry Wotton's generous letter in the first edition of his *Collected Poems*, and he referred to it with just pride, nine years later, in the *Defensio Secunda*.

The tribute of judicious praise which Milton had received with pleasure in the season when his "inward ripeness" first revealed itself to him and others, came rarely to him in the still years which preceded his peaceful death. But he then needed no stimulus, and asked for no encouragement. He was not forgotten by the few, and ready to hold converse with them on what he had achieved; but "all passion was spent"; the labours which without that passion could not have been sustained were over, and the sightless eyes were gazing upon things invisible to mortal sight. It is true that, in the year before his death, he once more had recourse to

the weapon of controversy which he had in earlier days dedicated to Liberty's defence; but its edge seemed blunted, and his Toleration pamphlet of 1673 was a compromise—though not a compromise with conviction—such as the waves of a nation's historical progress must in the end break down. How different had been the resolve—not the resolve of a moment or for a moment—with which already in Italy, and after his return from Italy, he had girded himself for the struggle. Voices have not been wanting to charge him with obliquity of judgment in turning aside from divine poesy to barren controversy. Turning aside—barren controversy! He knew its barrenness, its frequent futility, and the weariness of soul which is the common meed of those who “embark in a troubled sea of noises and hoarse disputes.” “But, were it the meanest under-service, if God by His secretary Conscience enjoin it, it were sad for me if I should draw back.” Yet, though he thus resolved, he had, as we know, a settled plan of campaign, as I may truly call it, for the struggle into which he had undertaken to enter. The Church, to which he had from his childhood been destined, by his own desires not less than by the wishes of his parents and friends, had his first thoughts as he went forth into the fray; but from her claims, as they presented themselves to him, he before long turned to respond to an even broader appeal—that of a cause for which many have lived and been ready to die, whose pen, like his, was their sword, yet who, nevertheless, may be reckoned among its self-sacrificing witnesses. To Liberty he came forward to testify under all the chief aspects of the national life; and, if a bitter sense

of personal humiliation, such as his proud soul could not bear, led him to invert the due sequence of their treatment, the history of controversial literature contains no parallel to the onslaught, in a single year, on the *aes triplex* of social coercion—the marriage-laws; the stifling stupor of the English educational system which had long plodded on with hardly a glance upward towards great ideals; and that self-satisfied inquisitorial process by means of which Church and State had long sought, and were now once more seeking, to strangle before it was born into the light of day the reasonable expression of human thought. Freedom was here, as elsewhere, the cause for which Milton strove, and the love of which fired his zeal; but we, at least, shall not be likely to forget his subsidiary argument that freedom is necessary to good letters, and that many a slavish tradition as to the dependence of authorship is contradicted by his pronouncement that the product of wits “damped” by tyranny is “flattery and fustian.”

But the height of the conflicts in which Milton shared had not been reached till, undismayed by the tragic events of which England, and his London in particular, had been the theatre, he assumed the whole responsibility of his political and religious principles, and became the public servant of the Commonwealth. No service of man is compatible with perfect intellectual or moral freedom; and, though clothed with the semblance of offensive warfare, his political writings became henceforth of their essence defensive, while considerations of policy, rather than the impulse of advocacy, now formed the primary motive of their eloquence, and even of their many deviations from good taste and its insepar-

able accompaniment, good feeling. Not by way of apology, but lest we should mistake his actual point of view, let us remember that the *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* was not put forth till the event to which it was designed to reconcile the national mind had exercised its profoundly disturbing effect; and, again, let us concede that the answer to the King's Book (so-called) was not so much an answer to a specious venture in spurious literature as a protest against a sentiment which was still a powerful political force.

In an intensified sense, this note in Milton's later controversial writings seems characteristic of the most elaborate of them all, the *Defence on behalf of the English People*, in which, as the spokesman of both Government and nation, he had sought to make it clear that for the action of the one the other made itself in every way responsible. As a *tour de force*—I am not at this moment criticising it, but merely seeking to assign it the place which belongs to it in the story of its author's intellectual activity—it has rarely been surpassed; for Salmasius, whose *Defensio regia* it undertook to follow and refute, fundamentally, consecutively, thoroughly, was in his day the first among his peers, and his peers were those great scholars whose labours were regarded by their age as the acme of intellectual perfection. Again, I say, I am not upholding (how could I uphold?) the methods of Milton's famous tract; I am not even insisting that, together with a closeness of argument which is Milton's own, we find here a fertility of rejoinder in which he certainly shows himself to all intents and purposes a scholar not less well equipped than his opponent, and, though deficient in humour,

anything but deficient in wit. But I am reminding my hearers of the service which Milton, now the half-hidden, half-forgotten denizen of Bunhill Fields, had some twenty years earlier undertaken, and consciously undertaken, to render to the English people—believing, as he not long afterwards wrote, that the Truth, which had been defended by arms, should also be defended by reason—“which is the best and the only legitimate means of defending it.” Nor can you forget the price he had paid for the privilege of rendering that service. The eyes which he had “overplied” in the task which he had undertaken now began to fail hopelessly; and, before he had finished the pleadings in the long-protracted suit, he was totally blind.

“Who best bear His mild yoke they serve Him best,” Milton afterwards wrote in a sonnet of which we would fain know the date; since blindness had settled down upon him for five long years or more before the resignation to the will of God, which speaks from those beautiful lines, had been succeeded by an anxious interval of hiding from the hand of man. Those years had been years of happiness; for happy are they who among the great trials of life and the small—and Milton had his full share of both—without abandoning faith or hope, find in themselves the remedies of which the use refreshes, purifies, ennobles. Probably, few periods of Milton’s life had been fuller to him of such comfort as this than the four or five years in which, surrounded by men who were worthy of his converse, and with his loving second wife by his side, he had stood expectant of the realisation of national ideals destined soon to recede into a dim distance, while at times he was lifted,

an earthly guest, into the heaven of heavens. The stern nursing of adversity had not yet weaned him from pre-occupation with things of State. We may still turn over with a curious hand the State papers which he brought forth with him from the Latin Secretary's Office—whether by accident or for some special purpose, it is useless to speculate. At any rate, we find him refusing, curtly enough, the suggestion of one of his most valued associates of these days, that he should use his knowledge and his wisdom "to compile a history of our troubles; for they seem rather to require oblivion than commemoration; nor have we so much need of a person to compose a history of our troubles as happily to settle them." For the artist in him could not subdue his hand to whatever he worked in; and, as he contemplated the perturbed condition into which public affairs were coming to fall around him, he could not but share the misgivings of wise men of other days in regarding the persons and actions presented to their eyes as petty, ignoble, "below all history." Among the great projects of his life there was now but one to which an impulse at last developed into a fixed purpose decided him to return. We have good reason for concluding that it was some "two years before the King came in"—a few months after the death of Milton's second wife—that he addressed himself to the work which he promised to complete "if I have the power—and I shall have the power if God be gracious."

But, before *Paradise Lost* was more than in part written, events had happened such as assuredly have never either before or since interfered between the greatest achievement of a poet's life and himself. Milton

had been in hiding; he had been in prison; his controversial books had been burnt; and, with his individual offences otherwise unpurged, he was free under the cover of the Act of Indemnity. Let us pass by other experiences—of the vengeance taken upon the quick and the dead whom he had most honoured among men. It was through a valley thus shadowed that Milton had passed into the sunlit nook of which I spoke, where whatever hazards—plague or fire—might betide, and whatever vexations life's dull round might bring, and though the past and its memories of honour and of shame were to be unforgotten by him, his labours were to be divinely turned "to peaceful end."

*Paradise Lost*, I need hardly remind my hearers, was in no sense the fruit of Milton's old age; for so, if we desire, we may be allowed to describe *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. When *Paradise Lost* was finished, some seven years after the poet had set hand to its consecutive execution, he had not yet reached his sixtieth year; and, when he first resolved to concentrate his intellectual labours upon it, he had only recently relinquished a very varied literary activity. It is well known how the idea of composing a great poem, and then that of composing a great epic, on the particular subject of *Paradise Lost* had been present to Milton from his youth to his earlier and thence to his later manhood; and we remember the general conditions of the work on which he had, long since, in his frequent meditations determined. It was inevitable that a master of so many languages should have acquainted himself with any accessible work in which previous or contemporary authors had treated the same theme; and they—Vondel more

especially, of whom a further word immediately—had taught him, or (as I should prefer to say) the conviction which they had confirmed in him, was that it is both the function and the right of a poet to command his subject, instead of allowing it to command him. The difficulty experienced by many worthy people in discriminating very clearly between what Milton found in the Bible and what he added of his own bears witness to the harmoniousness of his workmanship; for, as a matter of fact, it is only the last of the twelve Books of the poem and part of its predecessor which can, together with the luminously expansive *Paradise Regained*, be justly described as a paraphrastic reproduction of the Scriptural narrative. But the unity of impression conveyed by the longer poem also bears witness to what I take to be of yet greater moment—the harmoniousness of the design itself on which the poet built up his work. Undoubtedly, Milton's familiarity with the Bible was such that the whole range of ornament—and it is an extraordinary range—which lies in the beauty of biblical phraseology and the organ-tones of mere biblical nomenclature was at his service as it never has been at that of any writer before or since, from Cædmon to Klopstock, and is certainly never likely to offer itself to the use of these post-Puritan ages. But what is much more is that the initiated poet's intimacy with his theme, recast as it is by his own original genius, suggests the same kind of inspiration—I say the same kind, not the same degree—as that which spoke to men through the writers of the Sacred Books themselves.

The present would in no case be a fit occasion for dwelling further on a theme which, with one



exception (that of the allegory of Sin and Death), is developed in full and natural accordance with its fundamental conception of guilt and the consequences of guilt. But there seems no reason for being overawed by the dictum of Goethe—whose admiration for the genius of Milton was strong and fervent, and who, I think, vouchsafed no indication of the exact sense in which his remark was to be taken—that the subject of *Paradise Lost*, though extremely magnificent, is inwardly unsound and hollow. There might have been some force in the application of the criticism to our other great English epic, where, as in a tapestry-covered antique hall, the eye is content with the magnificent pomp of the hangings; but in *Paradise Lost* the radiance proceeds from within. Still less need we be moved by the warning of an accomplished French critic, that the fundamental conceptions of *Paradise Lost*—in other words its theology—have become strange to us. Were *Paradise Lost* a dogmatic poem, there might be some force in the censure; but even Pope's sarcasm only directs itself to passages—I might almost say a passage—of the poem, and stands in designed contrast to a tribute to the boundless flight of Milton's genius which the conclusion of this very passage signally illustrates. Moreover, were the argument of *Paradise Lost* ten times a mythological fable, it is the poet's own matured conception of the ways of God to man, not a mere inherited belief, which his poem undertakes to justify.

But I ought not to allow myself to be tempted away from the plain purpose of this gathering. What is it—if I may presume to answer, if I may even presume to ask, such a question—what is it in the labours of which

we have been speaking, and in their consummation, that seems chiefly to move us, on the eve of the Tercentenary of Milton's Birth, to add, to the wreaths which generation after generation, and century succeeding century, have laid upon his tomb, yet one other wreath, woven though it be

From the autumnal leaves that strew the brooks  
In Vallombrosa...

In the first instance, we commemorate today the gift which was his in so marvellous a measure that to no other English writer at least, in prose or verse, it seems so distinctively to belong—the gift, too, which from the days of his youth onwards he had recognised as his, and which he had cultivated with religious assiduity, in sunshine and in shade, as the one talent which it is “death to hide,” till in the evening of his days he returned it tenfold to the giver. How can we better define that gift than by the one word “style.” “Milton,” writes Matthew Arnold in one of the very happiest of his shorter essays, “is our great artist in style, our one first-rate master in the grand style.... His importance to Englishmen, by virtue of this distinction of his, is incalculable. For the English artist in anything, if he is a true artist, the study of Milton has an indescribable attraction.” Wonderful indeed was the self-revelation of this gift to the child; wonderful the consciousness of it in the man, from which no movement of temper and no overclouding of judgment could lead him long astray; wonderful the power with which he could at the last don the whole radiant panoply and stand forth in it, peerless among his peers, in the House of Fame! His masters and teachers (who happily in-

cluded one that "honoured the Latin, but worshipped the English") had judged that, whether aught was imposed by them upon their pupil, "or betaken to of his own choice in English, or other tongue, prosing or versing, but chiefly this latter, the style, by certain vital signs it had, was likely to live." They had judged aright: the early poems had struck that note of "perfection" which (as in the terminology of those self-secluded Christian communities to which Milton's thoughts so readily turned) implied the constant presence, the controlling influence, of the Ideal. This gift, his most distinctive gift, had continued operative when he had, seemingly once for all, exchanged the chariot of Apollo for a vehicle to which something of the dust of earth is so ready to cling. The danger was near—apart from a different kind of temptation which for the moment I pass by—that the Latinists, from whose mastery a freer method of training had emancipated the English verse in which *Comus* and *Lycidas* were written, would, though late, assert their predominance over the English prose-writer. But this predominance their influence never achieved, unless it were in his historical writings, where, as we have lately been reminded, he sought to acquire the sententious *Sallustiana brevitatis*, which he was unable to reproduce more faithfully than in the form of a certain grave quaintness. In the finest of all his earlier prose efforts, the *Areopagitica*, he sought to follow a model cast in a grander though simpler mould, seeking to adapt to English speech the intense but ample manner of Attic oratory. But, as was most clearly seen when the poetic Muse once more claimed him as her own, the genius of

Milton's style was not one which could take its form from predecessors or rivals. Even the verbal texture of what he derived from other authors was transmuted in his hands; besides that in no respect was he more original and more unique than in his prosody—but the entire nature of the service which word or phrase came to render as it gained entrance into his poetry made it his own, and contributory to a total effect quite different from that which it had been in a former phase of its existence (if I may use such a phrase) intended to aid in producing. To test the truth of such a criticism, Milton's method of appropriation—for the term is not one from which a student of his writings should shrink—should be compared with Shakespeare's, and again with Shelley's; and it will then be seen how the originality of his own style, as fully manifest in *Paradise Lost* and its successors, was such that his whole method justified itself. It is almost a pity that the notorious 18th-century detector of what he thought he might with impunity set down as plagiarisms and thefts should have mixed up so large an amount of falsehood and forgery with his audacious charge, and thus, though Johnson had been rash enough to imply approval of the outrage, should have come forth from it, in Goldsmith's phrase, as a scourged, and it might be added as a self-confessed, impostor. For a search such as the unthinking well-informed love, but which nevertheless should not be evaded, whether its object be a Milton or a Vergil, was thus diverted from its real issues. Perhaps, as I have digressed thus far from the main tenor of this brief address, I may say a single word on the subject of another critical enquiry—conducted in the spirit and

according to the laws of true scholarship—with regard to the actual indebtedness to a great contemporary dramatic poet incurred by Milton in many passages of his own matchless epic. There are, beyond doubt, many instances in which this indebtedness is not to be explained away, as there is no reason whatever why it should be ignored; but a recent consecutive rereading of *Paradise Lost* side by side with Vondel's *Lucifer* has intensified my conviction of the radical difference in conception as well as in execution between the two poems. In one of the most dramatically powerful parts of Milton's epic—in the passage descriptive of the "great consult" in Pandemonium (a genuine palace of the Caroline age) among the "infernal States" (the Dutch ring in that phrase who could mistake?), under the dominant presidency of Satan, Moloch breathing flames of fire, time-serving Belial, and the rest, already in mid-revolt against a Power provoked by their own and their leader's pride—the creation of another world, inhabited by a new race of beings, is announced as an opportunity for revenge. Far otherwise, and with far less convincing effect, Vondel represents the creation of Man as the cause of the great revolt in Heaven. I have no right to dwell on this difference without examining it more closely, and therefore I merely mention it as illustrating the rashness of those who fail to perceive that unlikeness in likeness is not the least striking among the proofs of originality.

But, to return. The real secret of Milton's style lies far deeper than any question as to the use made by him of "pearl and gold"—whether classic or barbaric—showered on his receptive genius from the stores which



and, as it seems to us, to speak thereafter no words but such as he owed to her inspiration?

Many years before Milton began to write *Paradise Lost* he had, in a single sentence, which I should have liked to see written in characters of gold on the ceiling of the hall where we are assembled—itsself long consecrate to literary pursuits and aspirations—unlocked the secret of the power supremely attested by that work and its sequel, “Sion’s songs, to all true taste excelling.” “He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem.” That elevation of soul which, when in his prose he is least himself, no pedantry of method, no adherence to the scholastic rule of responding by move upon move to every twist and turn of the adversary, no fierceness of partisanship and no fretfulness of temper, can enduringly hide; that elevation of soul which awes us in *Comus* and seems to waft to us “of pure now purer air” from *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*—where else but in this are we to seek the motive force of Milton’s genius and the chief formative element in the growth and consummation of his style?

We must proceed yet one step further, if you will take it with me, instead of resenting so needless a solicitation, and try to reach the source of that elevation of soul which I believe I have rightly described as Milton’s supreme poetic distinction. In his *Common-place Book*, where the association of ideas is from the nature of the case absolutely unforced, and comes home to us all the more naturally, he transcribes a passage from an old Latin homily headed *De viro bono*—as if he had been thinking of those *Bonshommes* of the early

Middle Ages, who led lives of blameless purity in the midst of corruption, and for the inheritors of whose traditions Milton had so ardent a sympathy in their martyrdom. "A good man," we read, "seems in a certain sense even to surpass the angels, in so far as, enwrapped in a weak and mortal body, he is engaged in a perpetual strife with the lusts of the flesh, yet aspires to lead a life resembling that of the celestials." Such an angelic nature—I do not use the word lightly—was that of Milton, like his own Samson Agonistes

a person separate to God,  
Design'd for great exploits—

silent in childhood under the sense of the call that was coming to him, obedient in manhood when that call came, but, even when darkness had gathered round the renewed solitude of his declining years, holding high in his hand the flaming sword which Heaven's behest had placed in it. You have, I know, traced that divine indignation against ungodliness and impurity—an indignation incapable of feeling those hesitations, or consenting to those compromises which the overpowering sense of immediate responsibility forced on even the great ruler whom Milton revered as "our chief of men"; you have traced that indignation through the vehement undercurrents varying the exquisite beauty of his earlier verse, through the solemn account which the poet of *Paradise Lost* seems to lay before us of the struggle of man's free will against the seductions of passion and of sense, to the "sage"—that is, the ineffably wise and ineffably calm—rebuke, with which, in what I will not dare to designate as the sublimest passage of the sublime *Paradise Regained*, the pure lips of the Saviour dismiss the last and the strongest of



human temptations: trust in the intellect of man. And you are aware how in the poet's last inspired utterance, in the *Samson Agonistes*, the indignation flames forth once more, to be quieted at last in the assurance that

All is best, though we oft doubt  
What the unsearchable dispose  
Of Highest Wisdom brings about.

Even so. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart: since the time that their corn, and wine, and oil increased." The spirit of Milton's life and moral being—a spirit as little concerned with the cropping of hair as it was with the burning of books, but a spirit in which there must be something that is austere, something that disengages itself from the mists on the level, something, too, that is at war with a "lubrique and adulterate age"—is also the spirit of the writings on which rests his conscious claim to immortality. It overflows into his prose; it is the very essence of his poems. Thus, while criticism has tested its own powers by seeking to place itself in a right attitude towards the great poet's works—and I think that, from Dryden onwards, no true critic has ever failed, at least, to see that in dealing with them he was handling the gold of our literature—the English people and the English-speaking world to whom the inheritance of these works has descended are at one in cherishing them with grateful reverence. But the memory of the giver is inseparable from the glory of the gift; and you who have met together on the eve of the day when, three hundred years ago, John Milton became part of the life of this great city and this great nation, I call upon to rise in attestation of the honour due to his venerated name.

## 18. BENEDICT TURRETINI

(*The Edinburgh Review*, October 1888<sup>1</sup>.)

NONE among those Italian cities in which, about the middle of the 16th century the Protestant Reformation transiently took root, played a more spirited part in the religious history of the age than the capital of the little Republic of Lucca. Few other communities in the country had passed through a worse experience of political discord, and of that decay of public and private morality which, in the unhappy days of Clement VII and the *Sacco di Roma*, seemed likely to be the most enduring social result of the Italian Renaissance. An epoch had, therefore, arrived in the history of Lucca, when in 1541 Pietro Vermigli (Peter Martyr), the new Prior of San Frediano, entered her gates—a Reformer of whom it may seem much to say, in the words of the volume now before us, that he was perhaps the most perfect Christian of his age, but who certainly united to thorough steadfastness a humanity of character which the adherents of any Christian Confession may agree in admiring. The College established by him at San Frediano, where, stimulated and guided by him, the scholarship of his followers, natives of various parts of Northern and Central Italy, became the basis of their “New Learning” in things divine, was the seminary of ideas for which, unhappily, the Church of Rome could

<sup>1</sup> *Notice biographique sur Bénédict Turretini, Théologien Genèveois du XVII<sup>me</sup> siècle.* D’après des matériaux historiques et les documents rassemblés, etc. par François Turretini, etc. Geneva, 1871. (Privately printed.)

find no place; though Contarini, the friend of Pole, and himself one of the Reforming party among the Cardinals, is said to have taken counsel with Vermigli. But, before long, the hopefulness of the Ratisbon Conference, from which Contarini was at the time returning<sup>1</sup>, was a thing of the past; and when, a year later, in 1542, the Congregation of the Holy Office had been established at Rome, it at once applied its attention to the congregations which were, with a more or less open adoption of Protestant doctrines, establishing themselves in a series of Italian towns. In the summer of 1542, Vermigli, accompanied by three faithful associates, took flight from Lucca, and at Pisa, by receiving the Sacrament in both forms, declared his defection from Rome. He left behind him, for the instruction of the Lucchese, a *simplice declarazione* of his religious faith; but it is uncertain whether they ever had cognisance of it. About the same time, the famous Capuchin Bernardo Ochino, after meeting Vermigli at Florence, took refuge at Ferrara, whence, with the aid of the Duchess Renée, he escaped, as by a miracle, to Geneva. Vermigli had taken the route to Zurich, and thence, as is well known, passed on to Strassburg.

Though the Prior of San Frediano had not himself openly renounced the Church of Rome before his flight, others, including one of the Canons of his own foundation, had shown less caution, and many laymen had received the Cup in the Sacrament. A visitation of the

<sup>1</sup> The meeting at Lucca between Charles V and Pope Paul III, which in the memoir before us is dated September 1553, could not, of course, have taken place then, as Paul III died in 1549; it really occurred in 1541, after the close of the Ratisbon Diet.

monastery now led to the imprisonment of several of the monks; and at Lucca, among those who were in point of fact rapidly forming themselves into a Protestant congregation, an emigration began which did not come to an end for more than thirty years. So far as human calculation went, the history of Protestantism in Italy might almost be said to be over before it had well begun. As the Inquisition settled down to its work, as the Jesuit and other new Orders extended their influence, as the Council of Trent assembled, and as, finally, in the person of Paul IV the Catholic Reaction incarnate mounted the Papal Throne, the doom of the ill-fated growth seemed no longer open to doubt. To those whose aspirations had consciously or half consciously followed its beginnings, no consolation seemed left but that addressed by Calvin to a noble of Savoy, where Protestantism was likewise unable to establish itself: "Whosoever in these our days, the days of the dominion of antichrist, is desirous of leading the life of a Christian, must above all things be ready for death, and must console himself with the thought that when he dies he shall be gloriously renewed in the Lord<sup>1</sup>."

It is of a renewal which, though earthly, was carried on in some such spirit, that the simple volume now before us has to tell, in the instance of one of the scattered remnants of Italian Protestantism. A descendant of the eminent Genevese divine, Benedetto Turretini, and of his father Francesco, has, with the aid of a friend, M. Hudry-Menos, put together a narrative of the lives of these ancestors of his, which was privately printed some years since, and which, as we may say at

<sup>1</sup> L. Stähelin's *Johann Calvin*, vol. II, p. 14.

once, lays no claim to literary treatment of its materials. The elder Turretini (Francesco) dictated to his second son, Giovanni, a brief account of his own life, of which the greater part is here reproduced; for the biography of Francesco's elder son, Benedetto, as will be seen, more diverse and abundant materials were at hand; and a few welcome pages have been added concerning the later fortunes of the family. The entire work is a noteworthy tribute, not only to the sterling character of the second founder, as he may be called, of an ancient civic family of unblemished name, and to the religious labours and political services of his distinguished son, but also to the wise and beneficent hospitality of the illustrious and beautiful city where the Turretini family has so long had its honoured home.

Francesco Turretini was born in 1547, the son of Regolo, then or afterwards the head of the family, which had occupied a prominent position at Lucca from the early part of the 15th century onwards, several members of it sitting in the Senate, or holding the office of *Gonfaloniere*. Francesco was, therefore, twenty-seven years of age when, in 1574, Pope Gregory XIII, himself no fanatic, but completely under the control of the Reaction, despatched the Bishop of Rimini on a disciplinary quest to Lucca. While his father, Regolo, is not known to have ever swerved from the Catholic faith, and, accordingly, remained undisturbed in his native city, where he died a Catholic, without, however, leaving any Catholic descendants behind him, Francesco had reason to fear that the Bishop would seize him and others, and deliver them up to Rome, i.e. to the Inquisition. The charge which he expected to find brought against him

was that he had “spoken against the Church of Rome and the authority of the Pope, and that instead of going to mass he relied for his salvation solely on the merits of our Saviour.” He was no student, for he tells us that he had grown up in complete ignorance of polite learning, and, indeed, that such was the rule in the Church of Rome till it occurred to the Jesuits to counter-balance the Colleges newly established by the Reformed Religion by others of their own “for instruction in philosophy, so as to avoid the study of divinity and the true knowledge of salvation.” It, however, also appears from the memoir that those who had quitted Lucca before him had “sent books—notably a New Testament and Calvin’s *Institutions*.” Though of noble birth, Francesco was brought up to commerce, availing himself of the Imperial privilege permitting this without consequent loss of caste to the sons of nobles at Venice, Florence, Genoa, Lucca, “and a fifth city whose name I have forgotten, by reason of the sterility of their territories.” Thus, at the age of seventeen or eighteen, he had the entire management of a large silk manufactory with numerous workmen, and looked forward to take part in due time, like his father, in the government of his native city. That he had not by his commercial pursuits forfeited his privileges as a noble, was shown by the very circumstances which made his flight from Lucca possible at the critical moment. The assent of two-thirds of the Grand Council of the Republic was requisite before, as a member of the nobility, he could be seized; thus, though the Council was summoned early in the morning, there was time for him to take some ready money from his counting-house, and to saddle

his mule for his journey to Florence. Thence, he pushed on to Lyons, which as a French city promised more safety, and where he found several relations, private friends, and trade connexions, besides two chests of silks, the only property of value which he could now call his own. To assurances received by him that the Bishop of Rimini would willingly consent to his return on condition of a mere occasional conformity (so to speak) on his part, he turned a deaf ear, not being, as he says, of the opinion of those who hold *qu'on peut être sauvé en toutes religions*. So, though he pretended to adopt the advice of his worldly-wise kinsfolk at Lyons, he committed a pious fraud, and turned off from his homeward route to Geneva.

Here he remained, in the first instance, for four years or thereabouts, correcting some of the defects of his education, and securing, as fully as possible, a religious training. The paramount influence in Geneva at that time must have been Beza's, who had returned thither in 1563; but young Turretini likewise found here many fellow-citizens and fellow-exiles from Lucca. It does not appear, at least in the present memoir, at what dates during the thirty or forty years after the flight of Vermigli the various other Lucchese families, of whom Francesco Turretini found members settled at Geneva, had quitted their native city, but he was evidently one of the latest in this succession of fugitives. Among them were Burlamachi, descendants of that Francesco Burlamachi, so well known to the readers of Sismondi, who, about the middle of the century, paid with his life for his daring scheme of a federation of free cities in north and central Italy; Balbani, one of whom (Niccolò)

Francesco found established at Geneva as pastor of the Italian congregation; Micheli, Minutoli, Calandrini, Mai, and Diodati. Of these names none has so familiar a sound to English ears as that mentioned last. Carolo Diodati, who, at the time of Francesco Turretini's first sojourn at Geneva, was one of the deacons of the Italian church there, was the son of a *Gonfaloniere* of Lucca, but had early in life been sent to Lyons to learn banking. Having been forced to fly that country by the massacre of St Bartholomew, he settled at Geneva, whither other Diodati followed him, and where most of his numerous descendants remained. His third son John, born in 1576, was the famous theologian, known as the translator into Italian of the Bible ("Diodati's Bible") and of Fra Paolo's *History of the Council of Trent*. The fourth was Theodore, the father of Milton's schoolfellow and friend Charles Diodati, born in 1609, and a physician of note about London; and it was in all probability through this channel that, as will be noted a little further on, Milton, who himself paid a visit of some length to Geneva on his way home from Italy, became acquainted with one, if not all, of the members of the Turretini family<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Masson, in the first volume of his *Life of Milton*, but more especially in the new edition, pp. 98-103 and notes, has dealt so exhaustively with the history of the Diodati family, that it is needless to say more on the subject here. Among other details Mr Masson mentions Theodore Diodati's application to King James I in 1624 for the post of physician to the Tower, and his reference on this occasion for a testimonial of his fitness to the celebrated royal physician Mayerne (afterwards Sir Theodore). In a note by M. Théophile Heyer to p. 165 of the Turretini memoir, we are reminded that Théodore Turquet de Mayerne had acquired the



Yet, when Francesco first arrived at Geneva, the sympathy with which he was treated by his countrymen and co-religionaries was at first qualified by circumspection. Carolo Diodati bade him at once send for the two chests of silks formerly consigned by him to Lyons, and when one of them arrived made him sell it to a Genevese merchant of position, *feu le gros Savion*, who soon afterwards for some reason backed out of the bargain. This, says Francesco with pardonable irony, was the first good office rendered to him by Carolo Diodati, against whom it is evident that he conceived an enduring bitterness. Like Diodati, Niccolò Balbani seems at first to have thought that the newcomer would prove an embarrassment rather than a support to the Italian colony at Geneva; but he was deeply gratified when the young man, stimulated by a sermon of Beza's, came forward to aid in the maintenance of the Italian church at Geneva. Yet his resources were necessarily slender, and in 1579 he migrated to Antwerp, where he traded with such support (apparently not of a very

barony of Aubonne in the Pays de Vaud, which accounts for his being called "M. d'Aubonne" in the text. Mayerne was born at Geneva on September 28, 1573. A life of him was written by Beau-laure in the last century. His father, Lewis de Mayerne, was a Protestant refugee driven to Geneva from Lyons by the persecution in 1572. The young man studied at Geneva, and afterwards at Montpellier, where he took his degree in medicine, and then went to Paris, turned Catholic, and became physician in ordinary to Henry IV and to Lewis XIII: In 1616, King James I invited him to England, where he became First Court physician; he remained attached to Charles I in the same capacity, and realised a large fortune. A portrait of him, said to be by Rubens, is to be found in the Public Library at Geneva.

liberal nature) as he received from his Italian connexions at Geneva. At Antwerp he remained till 1585, passing through the tremendous times of Parma's siege. He states that his outspoken Protestant zeal, which displayed itself, in no very saintly fashion for the "ancient" of the French church, in a readiness to lay wagers that the city would not be taken, caused him to be noted by Parma's orders *sur le papier rouge*; and that the Pope and the Bishop of Rimini had taken care to provide for his being excluded from any arrangement which might eventually be made as to an exchange of prisoners. However this may have been, he doubtless had good reason to thank them for his narrow escape through the Spanish lines, almost on the eve of the capitulation.

After quitting the Netherlands he stayed for about two years at Bâle, and in 1587 moved to Zurich, where he entered into partnership as a silk merchant with the Wertmüller family, again in connexion with Italian compatriots, Micheli, Diodati, and Burlamachi, at Geneva. Of the last-named house he married a daughter, Camilla, and with her lived for five years in his new home. Heaven, he says, prospered him notwithstanding his ignorance of the language and his being prevented from trading in his own name with either Italy or Spain; and, though he practised great frugality, he was able to contribute to the maintenance of an Italian Protestant minister. In 1592, having served a sufficiently long term of expectancy, he was at last able to establish himself at Geneva, where henceforth he formed part, and after a time became the centre, of a family connexion which, with one or two exceptions, consisted

of descendants of the Lucchese Houses aforesaid, and which gradually, like the well known Quaker families of later days, with the aid of constant intermarriages, became inextricably intertwined. Thus, of Francesco's brothers-in-law of the House of Burlamachi, which, more especially through him, now recovered something like its former prosperity, one married a Diodati, and the other a Calandrini; of his sisters-in-law, one married a Minutoli, another a Diodati, and the eldest, Renée, a Balbani<sup>1</sup>. With Francesco Turretini, who himself had a numerous progeny, everything now seems to have prospered. Though the manufacture of silks—more especially of flowered silks—was, so to speak, his speciality, yet restriction to a special article of manufacture or trade was not the custom of his age, and his banking business grew so extensive that he became, in point of fact, the confidential banker of the Republic. Thus in 1622, about the time when Geneva was in fear of being besieged by the Duke of Savoy, the Government having enquired of Turretini through M. Savyon (query: the *gros Savion* of his earlier days?) whether he could advance any money to the State, he declared himself quite ready to produce 20,000 florins against proper security. In 1620 he built the house in the Rue de l'Hôtel de Ville which still is (or recently was) occupied by his descendants, and which bears several inscriptions expressive of the piety of its founder. In 1627 he had the honour to be entered with his eldest

<sup>1</sup> Renée, whose memoirs have been published, married as her second husband one of the most extraordinary men of his age, Agrippa d'Aubigné, who must at the time have been past seventy. He died at Geneva in 1630.

two sons on the burghess roll of Geneva; and, as he was a member both of the Two Hundred and of the Sixty, he may be said to have completely recovered for his family in its new home the position it had once held in the old. He died in the arms of his sons, March 13, 1628, in the eighty-second year of his age. In his will he left many handsome legacies to religious and charitable bodies, including the Venerable Company of Pastors of the Republic; but his largest gift, of 12,000 florins<sup>1</sup>, was to the *Bourse des pauvres Italiens*, from which the needs of Italian Protestant refugees were met at Geneva until, within recent date, religious persecution became a thing of the past in Italy. In his bequests to hospitals he characteristically laid it down as a condition that mendicity should be stopped at Geneva, and that *ceste paoureté criant par les portes et rues* shall not be tolerated there. His second son, John, became by purchase owner of the seignorial estate of Peney.

In Francesco Turretini we recognise one of those active and vigorous men of business whose character is ennobled by the vein of deep religious conviction running through it, and in whom, fortunately for itself, the history of Calvinistic Protestantism abounds. In his eldest son, Benedetto, the subject proper of the volume before us, the religious element completely asserted its predominance. But though, as his biographer says, he did not seek the honours of this world, he was to play no undistinguished part on the scene of his endeavours. Born at Zurich in 1588, he received his education at Geneva, whither, as has been seen, his family moved

<sup>1</sup> The value of the old Genevese florin was about  $4\frac{1}{2}d.$ ; that of the Dutch, mentioned in later passages of this article, is 1s. 10d.

in 1592. On both the College (High School) and Academy (University) the impress of Calvin still remained; since his death Beza's had been the guiding influence in both institutions. Protestant youths were attracted hither from various countries, and it was already the custom for them to lodge with pious families (*vivants selon Dieu*) selected by the Venerable Company of Pastors<sup>1</sup>. Young Benedetto's training was, however, not confined to the influences of school and home. He accompanied his father on several mercantile journeys, thus acquiring a command of modern languages which must have stood him in good stead during his brief diplomatic career. In 1606 he is found with his father at Heidelberg, then more than ever the centre of the schemes of combative Calvinism; in the same year, at Zurich, he formed the acquaintance of Professor Waserus and Pastor Huldricus, of his correspondence with whom it has been thought worth while to print some specimens at the close of this family memoir. They show the keen interest in politics which at that time pervaded the religious, and more especially the Calvinistic world, even when events came home less directly than did the death of Syndic Blondel, suspected of treachery in connexion with the *Escalade*, to a Turretini of Geneva. The attempt—or one of the attempts—at assassinating Fra Paolo agitated Benedetto and his learned correspondent Waserus so profoundly, that the Professor translated into German the French version of the sentence of the Seignory forwarded to him by his friend.

<sup>1</sup> In later years the celebrated John Diodati was especially sought out by young foreigners of rank, who boarded in his house. Cf. Masson, vol. I, p. 832.

In accordance with a generous usage of which the tradition, we believe, still exercises its influence at Geneva, it had been resolved to devote Benedetto to a learned career, viz. to that of a divine, his father merely insisting that, previously to his assumption of any spiritual duties, he should make a journey to France. Here, accordingly, he spent two years—1609-11—in the midst of which occurred the catastrophe of the assassination of Henry IV. A few months after his return home, he preached before the Venerable Company of Pastors<sup>1</sup> on a text proposed to him by them, and was approved for the ministry. Almost at the last, his father seems to have shown some hesitation; but finally he gave way to pressure, and allowed Benedetto to enter upon the twofold career of professor and pastor, on condition, first, that, in the event of his assistance, in the way of a journey or otherwise, being required by his family, he, as the eldest son, should be allowed to furnish it without incurring the risk of dismissal from office; and, secondly, that he should be set at liberty from his charge, if the Italian nation required him to establish a Church for it. The filial piety and patriotic enthusiasm which led Benedetto to make these conditions his own are very noticeable; it was not long before he refused a call which came to him from the Calvinists

<sup>1</sup> The Venerable Company of Pastors, which, besides supervising the *religious* life of the Republic, was responsible for the choice of ministers and for the character of their teaching and conduct, consisted of the five Pastors of the city, the Professors of Divinity at the Academy, and the Pastors of the rural congregations. The Consistory (= Presbytery), upon which it was chiefly incumbent to regulate the *moral* life of the community, consisted mainly of laymen.

at Paris. Like his father, he always kept a warm place in his heart for his native land; indeed, incidental evidence is offered in this memoir that (as children say) he "thought in Italian." He was permitted by the Venerable Company to preach once a week to the Italian congregation at Geneva, which till within recent date kept no services in its own tongue, and was in Benedetto's time hospitably allowed the partial use of two of the "temples" in the city, besides being afterwards assigned a house for its minister. Among his predecessors in this post were Count Celso Martinengo of Brescia and Emmanuele Tremoglio (a converted Jew), two of Peter Martyr's former disciples at Lucca, and among the members of the expatriated Lucchese families a Balbani and a Diodati. Six of Benedetto's Italian sermons were in 1624 published at Geneva, with an interesting dedication to his father. Their subject<sup>1</sup> is not less appropriate to the date of their production than is, according to the editor of this memoir, the vigorous Italian of their style; but the extracts here given, especially a passage of invective against "the Roman Synagogue," are mainly rhetorical.

Different times differently attemper the minds of earnest men, and it would be unreasonable to look in Benedetto Turretini for the spirit which led his grandson Jean-Alphonse, the correspondent of Leibniz, to endeavour in his day to broaden the foundations of his ancestral faith. Yet in the elder divine, too, the tolerance was not wanting which a happier age was more fully to develop in his descendant; thus, it is related in this volume how, on his journey to Holland in 1621

<sup>1</sup> St Luke xii, 5, 6.

he had a very friendly conversation at Calais with Simon Goulart, an exiled Remonstrant minister, and how, on several occasions, he expressed his disapproval of the severity shown to the Arminians in the United Provinces. But, in the son of the Lucchese exile and the appointed Pastor of a city which Rome would at any time have gladly crushed into powder, controversy with that archfoe could not but be as the very breath in the nostrils of his divinity. Already before his appointment by the Venerable Company, when it is evident that he looked with predilection on the academical side of the work in which he was about to engage, he undertook to organise and conduct a university class designed to train students for public controversy with Rome. In 1618, six years after his admission to the ministry, he was excused from accepting the Rectorate of the University in order to answer officially a noteworthy Jesuit treatise which reflected directly upon the character of the Church of Geneva. Coton, the author of the treatise in question, was still a redoubtable adversary, though the time had passed when, as the confessor of Henry IV, he had been suspected, however erroneously, of controlling the religious policy of that Prince. On the assassination of Henry, it was sought, as is well-known, to establish a close connexion between this event and the supposed Jesuit doctrines on tyrannicide; and the *Anti-Coton*, a tract full of inventive virulence, was published against the late King's confessor, who occupied the same position towards Lewis XIII and who was regarded as a type of the Society to which he belonged<sup>1</sup>. Coton's *Genève Plagiaire, ou Vérification des*

<sup>1</sup> One of the persons to whom the authorship of the *Anti-*



*dépravations de la Parole de Dieu*, was designed to show the frequent falsification of the Sacred Text by translation into the vulgar tongue; but of the merits of the question we need say nothing except to note that, elsewhere in this volume, the Venerable Company is found informing the Synod of Alais of its design to attend to *les défauts de l'impression de la Bible*, in order to obviate *tout iuste scandale*. The curiously interwoven relations between theology and politics at the time are, however, illustrated by the concern felt at Geneva, lest Coton's book should arouse a prejudice in the mind of Lewis XIII against the Republic, for which so much depended on the goodwill of his Government. Benedetto Turretini's *Défense de la fidélité des traductions de la S. Bible faites à Genève*, described by himself as written in four months to refute the principal portion

Coton was attributed was, according to Créteineau-Joly (*Histoire de la Compagnie de Jésus*, vol. III, p. 158, note), Pierre Dumoulin, Protestant minister at Charenton. This was doubtless the learned Pierre du Moulin the elder (Molinæus), father of the author of the *Regii Sanguinis Clamor* (see Masson, *u.s.* vol. v, p. 215). He is mentioned in our memoir as presiding at the Synod of Alais, which B. Turretini attended as deputy from Geneva. The Scoto-Frenchman, Alexander More or Morus, whom Milton charged with the authorship of the *Clamor*, became professor of Greek at Geneva a few years before the English poet's visit there in 1639. Milton was himself afterwards acquainted with one of the sons of Benedetto, who early in 1655 was staying in London. See his letter to Ezechiel Spanheim, of Geneva, in which he proposes that they should correspond through the two brothers Turretin, his acquaintance in London, and the Professor of Theology at Geneva, François, mentioned near the close of this article (Masson, vol. v, p. 175). Mr Masson conjectures that the London Turretin was one of Milton's informants as to Morus's reasons for quitting Geneva.

of a work composed in eighteen years, was accordingly specially commended by him to the attention of Lewis XIII in an introductory Epistle, which, in a moderate but by no means uncertain tone, prays him to remember the services rendered by the Kings of France, down to the very days of the Council of Trent, to the cause of a free and open Bible. The treatise itself, however, so far as can be judged from the extracts here given, contains much angry vituperation, both allegorical and direct, and a good deal of *tu quoque*; nor can we feign surprise that neither Lewis XIII nor his Spanish Queen would ever consent to accept it from the hands of the Genevese agent in France. According to the prolific fashion of the controversies of his times, Turretini followed up his first attack on Coton by a second, entitled *Rechute du Jésuite plagiaire*. It is a relief to turn from these controversial onslaughts to the historical sketch of the Reformation at Geneva, which the indefatigable Professor appears to have composed at the desire of the Venerable Company as a kind of popular summary, intended above all to remind the Genevese in what quarters they ought to look for the real adversaries of their commonweal, viz. Rome and Savoy. This brief History, of which the full text is here given as being very rare, though it had not, as at one time supposed, remained actually unprinted, reaches to the end of the year 1535—the year before Geneva promulgated her Confession<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The Second Confession of Basel, published in the same year, is called the First *Eidgenössische* Confession. This illustrates the true etymology of the term *Huguenot*, which is confirmed by Benedict Turretini.

The year 1620, fatal to militant Calvinism in Germany, was of critical significance for the prospects of the Protestants in France and Switzerland. Against the reactionary policy of Marie de' Medici's rule, the Huguenots had at first hoped to prevail by an alliance with the aristocratic interest, represented among themselves by some of the greatest Houses in France. Next, the Queen-mother, whose power was beginning to slip from her hands, had thought it worth while to intrigue with some of their leaders. But in the end, after Epernon's revolt, both King Lewis and his mother, and the monarchical and aristocratical parties in the realm, joined hands in a pacification which manifestly boded evil to the Huguenots. With the destruction of the rights and privileges of Béarn, hitherto one of the chief bulwarks of French Protestantism, and with the restoration of Catholicism in the principality of Jeanne d'Albret, began, about 1620, the series of struggles which ended nine years later with the fall of Rochelle and the ominous edict of Nimes. In the same year 1620, a brutal massacre put Spain in possession of the Valtelline. Although neither France nor Savoy could look calmly upon so palpable a gain to the House of Habsburg, Richelieu's day had not yet come, and the Thirty Years' War was to run half its course before the Spanish and Imperial troops were again deprived of their control over the eastern passes of the Alps. Not even in the days of Cardinal Borromeo and the Golden League had the Reaction and its Jesuit agents been more assiduously and hopefully at work throughout a great part of Switzerland; nor had the apprehensions of the Protestant cantons and of Geneva, lying, according to the ex-

pression of a contemporary traveller<sup>1</sup>, like a bone betwixt three mastiffs, ever been better warranted than now when these three—the Emperor, the French King, and the Duke of Savoy—were on amicable terms with one another.

At such a time, it is intelligible how certain internal troubles which had recently arisen in the Protestant Church at Nimes, reckoned the most important of all the Protestant Churches in the kingdom<sup>2</sup>, should have greatly added to the existing disquietude. One of the Nimes Pastors, named Ferrier, having been compendiously found guilty of “heresy and malversation,” had been lately excommunicated. Another, who had been deposed by the Consistory from his pastorship and professorship for notorious evil living, had been reinstated by the Synod of Bas-Languedoc, on condition of not exercising ministerial functions in the ecclesiastical province of Nimes, but had been admitted to its pulpit by the congregation of Montpellier, which formed part of that province. To heal these disorders, the ecclesiastical authorities of Nimes and the Synod of Lower Languedoc resolved upon seeking a pastor at Geneva, the metropolis of orthodox Calvinism; and, partly by reason of his own reputation, partly because a Diodati had previously filled a clerical office at Nimes with excellent results, the Church of Geneva was entreated to lend the services of Benedetto Turretini for a term of six months. This request having been granted,

<sup>1</sup> *Epistolæ Ho-Elianæ*, s.d. December 1621.

<sup>2</sup> Not long since, religious partisanship was still so keen in Guizot's native city that the opera of *The Huguenots* could not be produced with safety on the boards of its theatre.

Benedetto, after some delay, set forth on his journey about the end of August 1620. He found the Church which he had been summoned to guide outwardly tranquil, but internally *desséchée d'une fièvre, laquelle rend l'exercice du ministère moins fructueux*; yet complete success attended his endeavours to spread through the distracted community *la bonne odeur de l'union, pureté et simplicité que Dieu a miraculeusement conservées dans le petit Corps de la Compagnie* from which he came forth. At times, as he afterwards informed the magistrates at Geneva, congregations of more than five thousand persons attended his preachings. He was also instrumental in bringing about a compromise in a quarrel which had arisen between the population of Nimes and the Hôtel de Ville, and which much agitated the city: it turned on a question that frequently troubled these times, viz. the restriction of certain municipal offices to what at Lübeck or Augsburg would have been called a "patriciate" of particular families. He thus left a tranquil congregation and city behind him, when he passed on to attend as representative of the Church of Geneva the national Huguenot Synod which met at Alais, October 1, 1620, at the very time when the transactions in Béarn referred to above were producing deep excitement. The Venerable Company's letter delivered by him to the Synod bade it avoid any meddling with procedures *de Cour et de Palais*, and pursue a straight path, following the example set of late by the Synod of Dort<sup>1</sup>, which had, with great trouble and loss, saved the Churches of the

<sup>1</sup> The French Protestant Church, it will be remembered, sent no deputies to Dort.

Netherlands when already halfway down the abyss. In short, Geneva advocated a rigid upholding of the five canons of Dort, the total exclusion from the Church of *cette fâcheuse zizanie* which favoured Libertine views, and the keeping "an always open eye on academies, doctors, and scholars." This rather magisterial attitude on the part of the Church of Geneva gave rise to some cavils in the Synod at Alais, when some penal procedure was thought to be intended against obnoxious ministers; but Benedetto Turretini was personally well received, and confined himself, in accordance with his instructions, to recommending union on the basis of orthodoxy.

Having accomplished his twofold task, for the performance of which he afterwards refused to accept the handsome *honorarium* offered him at home, Benedetto Turretini, amidst expressions of satisfaction and gratitude, set forth on his return journey. On his way, at Grenoble, he learnt on good authority that the Duke of Savoy had determined to attack Geneva either by a surprise or by a siege; and in the *viva voce* account of his mission which, after his return, he gave to the Genevese magistrates, he took occasion to add to his message of religious peace an admonition to arm "as if Hannibal were at the gates."

Charles Emmanuel I, whom patriotic history calls the Great, but who, had his reign been protracted beyond the long period of years actually allotted to it, might have brought about the extinction of a dynasty which at one time or another he had dreamt of seating on most of the chief historic Thrones of Europe, found himself at this time, so far as his more general policy was concerned,

in an interval of relative repose. He had not forgotten the crushing defeat and serious territorial losses inflicted upon him by Henry IV of France at the beginning of the century, though he took part in the schemes of that Sovereign's later years against the House of Habsburg. Still less could he forgive Spain for imperiously prohibiting his claims upon Montferrat, and suppressing this phase of his protean ambition in a War in which his restless energy and his military genius exerted themselves in vain. But, while in his heart he was probably harbouring hopes of reprisals against both France and Spain, and allowing himself to be tempted to vague and remote aspirations by the unscrupulous diplomacy of the "Anhalt Chancery," he steadily adhered to the designs for a "rectification" of his northern frontier inherited by him from his father, and indeed from the history of his House during four centuries. After the failure of the *Escalade*, over which Protestant Europe had exulted, he had found himself forced to acknowledge the independence of Geneva (1603); and when, after the death of Henry IV, he had renewed his designs against the Republic, their execution had been postponed rather than defeated by the vigilance of the Genevese, opportunely aided by Zurich and Berne. Now, in 1621, when Charles Emmanuel's projects connected with the Bohemian and the Imperial thrones had been perforce dissolved into nothing, he once more took up his plans against Geneva. France was no longer the France of Henry IV, who had always regarded himself as Geneva's natural protector; the French subvention, that had been continued even under his successor, had ceased since 1618; and neutrality, at

least, might be fairly looked for in this quarter. Pope Gregory XV spontaneously, or at the instance of his all-powerful *nipote* Cardinal Lodovisio, blessed the enterprise of the new champion of the Church, and instructed Father Corona, his agent at the French Court, to commend it to the goodwill of the Most Christian King. "Geneva," he was to explain, "is a very *cloaca*. That this asylum should be tolerated in Europe is a scandal against all authority. But the greatest evil of all is, that Geneva spreads its poison far and wide by means of words and writings; many heretics are harmless in their own country, but, once at Geneva, they operate on the Christian world from this basis. It is necessary, then, that of this city an end should be made." *Delenda est Carthago*. The King's Jesuit confessor Arnoux, so the instructions (which have been printed by Gaberel) continued, was to be won by the promise of the establishment at Geneva of a College of his Order. It afterwards appeared that the bishopric of Geneva was to be restored and, by a convenient arrangement, bestowed upon Cardinal Maurice of Savoy. As for Spain, the Duke was ready to grant a free passage to her troops through his territory to Flanders, no doubt hoping thus to keep them as much as possible out of Italy. Very soon symptoms of immediate action became observable. From all sides the Genevese authorities received information as to the preparations of Savoy: Prince Thomas Francis (Prince of Carignan) was levying troops; a Spanish division took up its quarters near the city; Savoyard engineers studied its fortifications; and the Jesuits pointed to warnings of the Divine wrath perceptible of late in the phenomena of the



heavens. The Republic resolved not to be this time taken by surprise; but meanwhile money was urgently needed, and not to be obtained near at hand. There was but one quarter in which the Protestant cause had bankers who might be expected to honour any draft made upon them in its name. It was resolved at Geneva to send an agent to the States-General of the United Provinces to ask them for a loan; and Benedetto Turretini was chosen for the mission.

We must forego any detailed narrative of the course of his negotiations, which were ultimately crowned with success, but which, like most negotiations for such a purpose, especially with a Government constitutionally provided, like that of the United Provinces, with a machinery almost unequalled for purposes of delay, took a considerable time to accomplish. Between seven and eight months may seem a long period, especially as the net result of Turretini's mission was merely the actual payment of 30,000 (Dutch) florins, together with an undertaking on the part of the States to pay in addition three monthly subventions of 10,000 florins each, in the event of the siege of Geneva actually taking place; besides which, in the course of his stay in the Netherlands, he solicited and obtained liberal subscriptions from the Churches of Hamburg, Bremen, and Emden. But neither were these results, in point of fact, insignificant, nor were the difficulties which had to be overcome by any means purely formal. It is easy, with that very superior person, Professor von Treitschke, to sneer at "the Manchester men of the seventeenth century"; but one cannot read without admiration, in the account of his mission given by Turretini on his return

home to the Genevese Council, the list of the demands upon the liberality of the States-General, which at first interfered with the request he had been sent to urge. He states that claims for assistance were at this time advanced by, or on behalf of, the King of Bohemia, the Count [Marquis?] of Saluces, the Margrave of Jägerndorf, the "Count of Brunswick<sup>1</sup>," the Grisons, Rochelle, and Frankenthal [in the Palatinate]; nor was this list, in his opinion, exhaustive. Moreover, as he shows, the United Provinces at this time, though importuned for aid by so many claimants, and with their own War against Spain once more on their shoulders, virtually *received* no aid from any quarter. For the friendship of France was more than doubtful, while, as the Pope had told Father Corona, *l'Angleterre ne se mêlait de rien*. In the true spirit of Jacobean diplomacy, Sir Dudley Carleton seems to have striven to persuade Turretini that the support of England was worth asking, and would be given in due course; and the Genevese seems to have replied to him in the same fashion of grave make-believe. (George William, Elector of Brandenburg, by

<sup>1</sup> The Margrave of Jägerndorf was John George, outlawed in 1621 for espousing the cause of King Frederick of Bohemia. The Count of Brunswick was Duke Christian, the Queen of Bohemia's famous knight. In the course of a report to his Government (p. 243 of this memoir) Turretini reports that "Count Christian" had found at Soest a treasure "bequeathed by a bishop to his two sisters," and estimated at 300,000 rixdollars. This would have been a highly convenient *trouvaille*; but we take it to have been fictitious. No reference is made to any such piece of good fortune in the detailed account of the fighting Bishop's exactions in these parts ap. A. Weskamp, *Herzog Christian von Braunschweig und die Stifter Münster und Paderborn* (1884).

the way, a Prince not usually distinguished by promptitude, sent 5000 florins to Geneva on his own account.) Finally, what compensation was to be offered in this bargain, where, contrary to a popular couplet, the whole visible sacrifice fell upon the Dutch? In the straightforward words of one of the speeches addressed by Turretini to the States-General, the Republic which he represented could not "offer the rewards of this world, or an equivalent of reciprocal services; but it offers, and with perfect sincerity, the most lively affection of all those dwelling within its walls, as being ever ready, to the full extent of their power, to serve the States-General."

Almost from the first, that body made no secret of its wish to meet the request urged upon it with such unmistakable directness. But it cost Benedetto Turretini, who describes himself as running to and fro all the week days, and preaching on Sundays, no small amount of effort, first to screw up the amount of the proposed subsidy to a total of 20,000 florins, and still more to raise it by yet another third. One of his chief difficulties lay in securing the approval of this grant, which Holland had proposed at the outset, from the other Provinces; for in truth Holland alone had the cash in hand, as was afterwards shown by its prompt payment of its quota—a full third—of the total ultimately agreed to. The Zealand Provincial Estates were frozen up literally, and the Estates of other Provinces figuratively, despite the pastoral eloquence poured forth to them by Turretini. Again, when the grant had been actually made, it yet remained to expedite the distribution of the liabilities of the several Provinces, which were consistently slow

to approach the *ultima ratio* of paying up. "Nothing is wanting," writes Turretini in a hopeful sort of way as late as May 1621, "but the contributions of Gueldres and Groningen, and the completion of the transaction on the part of Friesland (for I presume that Zeeland has paid up, or will soon have settled the demands upon it)." In the end, the excellent agent, although not losing patience, ventured to commit the completion of the arrangements to a lawyer, "as is the way with foreign Powers desirous of bringing anything to a conclusion here."

Benedetto Turretini's endeavours were by no means confined to obtaining the loan in question from the States-General and from the Provincial Estates on which the former depended. We have already adverted to his solicitations to the wealthy Protestant cities of the north-western coast of Germany; and he would evidently have done far more in this direction, both within and beyond the Dutch frontiers, had it not seemed probable that popular appeals of the kind would weaken the force of his official representations. He also negotiated with the Prince of Orange (the illustrious Maurice) for the services of two officers of engineers; and he shows himself an adept in the language as well as in the processes of diplomacy in describing the way in which he "eased off" one of these officers, when there proved to be no longer any imminent necessity for his services: *J'ai descousu sans déchirer tout ce que j'avois traité avec S.E. touchant sa personne*<sup>1</sup>. For the effect of the

<sup>1</sup> This was De Maisonneuve. The other, Du Motet, according to Spon (*Histoire de Genève*, vol. II, p. 518), with the aid of Ferault, a French refugee at Geneva, fortified St Gervais, and dug a trench

warlike preparations of Geneva once more proved the truth of an old proverb. Charles Emmanuel abandoned his design against the city. Perhaps, he had come to think that a new attempt against the vigilant Republic might only end in a more elaborate disappointment than his previous designs in the same direction. Perhaps, the Valtelline incident brought home to him more strongly than ever the dangers to which the independence of Italy, an object really dear to him, was exposed from Spain, and he reflected that no Power was so able to divert her from schemes of this kind as the Dutch. The vagaries of his extraordinary political career were not yet at an end; but Geneva had no longer anything to fear from him for the moment; and it may be without much hesitation inferred that Benedetto Turretini's mission had contributed to this result. For it should not be overlooked that, in April 1622, the States-General despatched to the Duke a very outspoken protest against his designs upon Geneva, taking occasion to remind him explicitly of the sentiments entertained by him towards Spain in times anything but remote (the War which had ended with the Peace of Madrid in 1617).

from the Rhone to the Lake, so as to cover the city. Our narrative (p. 263) states that almost the solitary outward memorial left of Benedetto Turretini's successful mission is the name of the Bastion de Hollande, appropriately bestowed upon one of the fortifications erected at Geneva with the aid of the funds obtained by him. But Spon (*u.s.* 598-600) distinctly affirms that the Bastion de Hollande derived its name from the cost of it having been defrayed out of the subvention obtained from the States-General in 1661 by Benedetto Turretini's son François.

The memorials of the remaining nine years of Benedetto Turretini's life are scanty. *Je ne désire rien tant*, he had on one occasion written home to the Venerable Company in the midst of his diplomatic labours, *que de voir la fin de ces poursuites, où mon âme ne peut plus s'occuper, estant rappelé violement à ce qui est de nôtre vocation et de vôtre communion*. And thus he gladly turned back to his old occupations, resuming his chair of theology at the Academy (in which after his death he was succeeded by Frederick Spanheim), and in addition holding till 1625 the post of rector of the school. Two years afterwards, as has been already seen, he received together with his father the franchise of the city which in various ways they had served so well. During his late years he seems to have found less time for writing; he published, however, besides a treatise on the irreconcilable opposition between Scripture and the Church of Rome, a series of seven sermons in French, entitled *Profit des châtimens*, and bearing the characteristic motto:

Heureux qui est apprins de toi  
Et qui, bien instruit en ta Loy,  
Seigneur, y a bien profité.

He died three years after his father, on March 31, 1631. On his deathbed he was visited by the Venerable Company of Pastors, of which he had been so faithful and zealous a member.

Benedetto's eldest son, François Turretin—for the name was gallicised in various ways, till of late the family reverted to the original Italian spelling—was in every respect worthy of his father, to whose career his own

presents a strikingly complete parallel. As Professor, in his turn, at Geneva he attained to a high eminence among the authorities of orthodox Calvinism, of which his massive *Institutio Theologiæ Elencticæ* continues to be considered one of the standard books<sup>1</sup>. Curiously enough, in 1661, he was sent to Holland on a mission closely resembling that which his father had taken upon him forty years earlier. Apparently, the experience of the so-called Rapperschwyl War (1656) had once more directed the attention of the Genevese to the danger threatening them from Savoy, which soon afterwards recovered its territorial losses in the Peace of the Pyrenees (1659); and a general feeling arose that the defences of the city ought to be put in order, accompanied by the usual difference of opinion as to the way in which this might be most effectively done. Once more, as in 1622 (and in 1594, when a considerable loan had been obtained from the United Provinces), recourse was had to the friendly munificence of the Dutch; and François Turretin, after meeting with a very distinguished reception, brought home a most substantial sum, amounting to 75,000 Dutch florins. Like his father, he had combined preaching with diplomacy, and with so much success that both the Walloon Church at Leyden and the French Church at the Hague eagerly sought his services as their minister. But he refused both offers, as he afterwards did a still more flattering invitation to the chair of divinity at Leyden. *Comme il auroit fait un trop grand vuide, et dans l'Eglise, et dans l'Academie, on les pria de ne pas trouver mauvais*

<sup>1</sup> Bayle, in his article on the Turretini family, speaks highly of this work.

*qu'on voulut le conserver dans Geneve*<sup>1</sup>. So he remained in his native city, of which Benedict Pictet, in his *Benedicta Memoria Turretini*, declares him to have been the glory. Nor did the next generation of this race of patriotic and scholarly men prove *pejor avis*; to it belonged the large-hearted Jean-Alphonse already mentioned; among the descendants of Benedict's brother, the *seigneur* of Peney, were likewise two theologians, Samuel and Michel. "With them," says our memoir, "ends the theological tradition of the family, which now turned to the magistracy. From this point onwards commences a series of magistrates which continues during two centuries, and closes with the present (1871) *Procureur-général* of the Republic."

Such is the substance of this simple record, well worth composing and preserving, of the fortunes, more especially in its period of trial, of an interesting family which carried over into very different conditions of time and locality the best traditions of Italian love of learning and Italian civic patriotism. In a reply, already noticed, addressed by Benedetto Turretini in the name of the pastors of Geneva to the magistrates of the city, he supports his recommendation of strict discipline by an appeal to the example of Lucca, which on the same head had not shrunk from doing its duty by its citizens. In the opinion of the editor of this memoir, this proves that the Turretini family still maintained relations with their native place. The most distinguished members of the line will be chiefly remembered as citizens of the

<sup>1</sup> See Spon, vol. II, p. 599, note (ed. 1730). The memoir before us contains, so far as we have observed, no reference to François Turretin's mission to the Netherlands.



Republic and pillars of the Church of Geneva; yet if the long-lived influence of a cherished historical association be worth taking into account, one might almost apostrophise these unflinching champions of the faith that was in them under the designation of *pastores Thusci*, just as Milton reminded his friend, their kinsman:

et Thuscus tu quoque Damon,  
Antiquâ genus unde petis Lucumonis ab urbe<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Milton's *Epitaphium Damonis*, 127-8.

## 19. PATTISON'S MILTON<sup>1</sup>

(*Saturday Review*, February 7, 1880)

MR MARK PATTISON and the editor of *English Men of Letters* ought to know best about the general aim of the series of biographies which they have successively enriched with their own most interesting contributions. According to Mr Pattison, his "outline" is intended for those readers "who cannot afford to know more of Milton than can be told in some two hundred and fifty pages." If so, the more affluent section of the public is to be congratulated upon its accidental good fortune; for, though the Rector of Lincoln might undertake a biography for the needy, no production from his hand was likely to assume a flavour of the literary soup-kitchen, still less (if we may use his own phraseology) to "stupefy instead of training the faculties by the rapid inculcation of unassimilated information." On the contrary, we are happy to say that he has never been more himself than in this essay, and has accordingly never been more enjoyable. It is only in the very last sentence of the book that he seems to us to approach shallow water; for, if it was necessary by way of a final flourish to introduce Shakespeare and Milton—Shakespeare first and next Milton—as those by whom "we shall choose to be represented at the international congress of world poets," it was unfortunate so to

<sup>1</sup> *English Men of Letters: Milton*. By Mark Pattison, B.D. Rector of Lincoln College, Oxford. Macmillan and Co., 1879.

couple them in contrast with authors who are our "favourite closet companions." But, in general, this little work, full without overflowing its fixed limits, and of real value as a fresh and vigorous criticism, has the peculiar charm of its author's favourite ironical manner. And it is hardly necessary to add that in a sketch of Milton's life Mr Pattison finds many opportunities for employing his favourite manner in the service of his favourite antipathies. There is an unmistakable twinkle in the seriousness of such passages as the following, all of which are quite legitimately suggested by their context:

And in Universities generally it is not literature or general acquirements which recommend a candidate for endowed posts, but technical skill in the prescribed exercises and a pedagogic intention....

In virtue of the grandeur of zeal which inspires them, these pages, which are in substance nothing more than the now familiar omniscient examiner's programme, retain a place as one of our classics....

In these infamous productions, hatched by celibate pedants in the foul atmosphere of the Jesuit colleges, the gamut of charges always ranges from bad grammar to unnatural crime....

It is only to be regretted that a writer at once so grave and so witty should not both give himself the trouble of avoiding an occasional looseness of syntax which it is impossible to suppose intentional, and spare himself that of occasionally using a vocabulary which is manifestly such. "Battailous" is of course a loan, and a very happy one, from Milton's own verse, and, for all we know, "traditive" and "insititious" may occur among Milton's contributions to the "digladiations" of his age; nor would we assert in a witness-box that he nowhere

in his prose uses "truant" as a verb. But, in a writer of the present day, the choice of such words smacks just a little of affectation—a fault unfortunately common enough in masters of style, but not more praiseworthy in them than in their inferiors.

In any case, these trifles have but a feather's weight against the real merits of this admirable essay. If among these merits we are inclined to rank highest the recognition of that which gives unity to Milton's life viewed as a whole, it is not because we are able to accept Mr Pattison's view altogether, but because we are convinced that he has chosen the only admissible standpoint. Milton, born to be a poet, trained himself to become such, at first unconsciously, then more and more with a sense of the work, the duty, incumbent upon him. Occasional inevitable impulses of impatience apart, he adhered to his plan of life—of which he was neither weary nor ashamed—through long years of self-preparation, and even through the sustained interruption which absorbed nearly a third of his existence and all the best years of his manhood. This plan was that of perfecting himself, in the first instance, for becoming a great English poet; in the second, for executing a particular great poetical work in his native tongue. Perhaps none of our great poets has aimed so definitely, prepared so fully, achieved so completely. This cardinal fact, which is sufficient to entitle Milton to undisputed possession of the place occupied by him in our national House of Fame, has never been more clearly and convincingly demonstrated than by Mr Pattison. He shows, not merely (which required no showing) that *Comus* and its companion pieces were, "when produced, as they

remain to this day, the finest flower of English poesy," but also that Milton regarded them "only as firstfruits, an earnest of greater things to come." He reminds us how, though "*Paradise Lost* was composed after fifty, it was conceived at thirty-two"; and he suggests how, even after the accomplishment of his great work, Milton, in *Paradise Regained*, applied to his genius a yet stricter and more conscientious artistic discipline. From this point of view, which we believe to be the true one, Mr Pattison has consistently and effectively treated "the first Englishman to whom the designation of our series, *Men of Letters*, is appropriate." Milton, he continues,

was also the noblest example of the type. He cultivated not letters, but himself, and sought to enter into possession of his own mental kingdom, not that he might reign there, but that he might royally use its resources in building up a work which should bring honour to his country and his native tongue.

It is of course by no means necessary, because we are of opinion that Mr Pattison has found the true key to a just appreciation of Milton's life and mind, that we should subscribe to all the deductions which we are asked to accept in addition. Mr Pattison clearly regards Milton as having not only prostituted his powers, but wasted his time to boot, in his protracted deviation from the course which the promptings of his own inspiration had clearly marked out for him. In the course of his observations tending to this conclusion, Mr Pattison undoubtedly brings out some plain facts which it is useless to attempt to overlook. That in his pamphlets on *Divorce* Milton should have sought a general, not a personal, remedy for his own grievance, in one sense

shows the breadth and grandeur of his mind; but at the same time his pleadings are hopelessly damaged by the circumstance that the general change was so speedily (if Mr Masson's discovery of the earlier date of the first Divorce tract be correct, so instantaneously) urged as a remedy for a personal wrong. Again, Milton's theological writings may be deficient in that which to the controversies of theology, as an essentially historical science, is indispensable—a full and even a competent knowledge of the learning of the subjects discussed. When, however, in speaking of Milton's political pamphlets, Mr Pattison calls upon us to note that these productions, "now only serving as a record of the prostitution of genius to political party, were, at the time at which they appeared, of no use to the cause in which they were written," we demur to both the assertions contained in the sentence. In the first place, are we to be told (as Mr Pattison tells us again and again) of what the Puritan Revolution was to England and to Milton, and almost in the same breath to be asked to treat his self-sacrifice to its cause as a surrender of himself "to political party"? In the second place, it seems to us a mere begging of the question to assert (what for that matter we should be slow to allow) that Milton's pamphlets were useless *at the time*. For it may be worth a man's while to become the mouthpiece of a cause, a principle, or a policy, without the hope of producing an immediate effect. Ministers thought one of Burke's greatest Indian speeches unworthy of notice; but it was not on that account a waste of breath. And, to take very much lower ground, is Mr Pattison prepared to deny that the *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio*,

for instance, sufficiently answered its immediate purpose as a controversial countermove to the *Defensio Regia*? Furthermore, though we would willingly go any length in condemning the unworthiness of much in the *Defensio Secunda*, was it not, as a matter of policy at all events, worth while to have the greatest scholar in Europe and his champion answered after a fashion which showed that, as there was no flinching on the part of England's rulers, so they were not without an advocate whose execution of his task made "all Europe ring from side to side"? For it surely was no vain boast in which Milton indulged when he used these words in his famous Sonnet. Again, Mr Pattison takes a very different view from Professor Masson in holding Cromwell to have left Milton (who was after all only a novice in political life) unconsulted on affairs of great importance. But, even were we to accept Mr Pattison's opinion on this head, it would be useless to speculate on Cromwell's reasons when we know virtually nothing of the personal relations between the two men. At all events it is difficult to reconcile the belief that Milton was generally neglected by the leading politicians of the Protectorate with the tradition that he was allowed by the Protector, as he had previously been by the Parliament, "a weekly table for the entertainment of foreign ministers and persons of learning"—which certainly looks as if he had been put forward as what he really was, the literary representative of the Government. To the phrase quoted by Mr Pattison from Milton's letter to Peter Heimbach in 1657 we should be inclined to attach little weight; but, in any case, it seems going too far, considering the undeniable notoriety of some of Milton's

political writings, to attribute the leniency shown to him after the Restoration to his "insignificance," as well as to his "harmlessness." He could hardly have been regarded as insignificant by a *régime* which, like that of the Restoration, well understood the usefulness of penmanship. At the same time, Mr Pattison, as a matter of course, rejects the incredible tradition which states an offer to have been made under Charles II to continue Milton in his Latin Secretaryship. This story is only less absurd than that of his having died a Roman Catholic, a lively fiction exposed by Mr Pattison, as it were, from Milton's own mouth.

The true reason, as it seems to us, which led Milton at any risk—whether of health and wealth, or of peace and full contentment of mind—to take up arms on behalf of the Puritan cause, was that "ideal force working in the minds of a few" upon which Mr Pattison has so appropriately dwelt. Since of these few Milton felt himself one, no tendency to "aloofness" could prevent him from taking an active part in the conflict. He came to it, slowly indeed (Mr Pattison's irony is not at all out of place here), but surely, even from that Italian sojourn which had helped to reveal him to himself. The impulse may have often driven him astray, as it incontestably failed, at all times, to sustain his pursuit of his aim on a level with that aim itself. But this impulse was part of Milton's character, which, as Mr Pattison justly says of Milton's mind, was an organic whole. For our part, we are convinced that, not in *Lycidas* only, but already in the earlier *Comus*, and possibly even in the contrast between *Il Penseroso* and *L'Allegro*, is to be discovered the movement of that



crusading spirit (so to speak) which made it necessary for Milton to take service under the Commonwealth, and to become the official apologist of the Revolution.

This view of Milton's conduct of his life is, as a matter of course, absolutely independent of whatever judgment we may happen to have formed as to the Revolution and the Restoration themselves. Mr Pattison could hardly avoid an indication, at least, of his own estimate of these great episodes of our national history, however warily he may tread. To his view of the Restoration as a transaction which swept away the heroic age of England by one fatal blast we can only modestly demur, even as he has modestly advanced it. If "it is for the historian to describe and unfold the sources of this contagion," it is likewise for the historian to distinguish between reaction and decline—two processes by no means so absolutely identical as they are at times assumed to be. And before we can accept, even in passing, the observation that "the Restoration was a moral catastrophe," we may require to be satisfied as to the point in the drama at which Mr Pattison would place its climax. Meanwhile we have often felt that the treatment of Milton himself by the Restoration age has been pressed too far to its discredit. Mr Pattison speaks of Dryden as a "distinguished exception" to the comparative neglect of Milton's poetic claims; and we may add that even in the preface to the *State of Innocence* Dryden betrays an instinctive recognition of what all critics have recognised as the most characteristic of Milton's poetic qualities. But it should, at least, be remembered that the subscription for the edition of 1688 revealed a readiness to acknowledge the

claim of the Puritan poet, not only among favourite authors such as Dryden and Waller and Dorset, but even in the academical clique of the Christ Church wits. Mr Pattison, doubtless, has reason for saying that Milton's repute was the work of the Whigs; but it is curious that one of the earliest scholiasts upon Milton should have been Atterbury.

The more specifically literary criticism for which Mr Pattison has found room within the narrow framework of this biographical essay is throughout discriminating without at all verging upon pettiness; and his observations on *Paradise Lost* in particular explain many of the distinctive features of a poem which has attracted a large number of critics in proportion to the number of its readers. Never exuberant in his praise, Mr Pattison has, so far as we have observed, criticised Milton's prose style with justice, and his poetic style or styles with generous sympathy, leaving undetermined, though not unnoticed, the question whether the latter is not nearest to perfection in *Paradise Regained*. But on this point, and on other incidental topics of Miltonic criticism, we have left ourselves no space to dwell. We will, therefore, merely instance the brief but conclusive demonstration of the critical opinion that Milton "sees nature through books, but still sees it"; while, on the other hand, venturing to hint a doubt as to the supposed danger lest "the possibility of epic illusion should be lost to the whole scheme and economy of" *Paradise Lost*. Milton is not even in this respect at the mercy of an academic public, though, without academic criticism such as Mr Pattison's, Milton will never more than half disclose his beauty and his strength to the public

at large. It is this which makes the essay before us hardly less valuable than it is enjoyable. We cannot part from it without expressing our gratification at the cordial acknowledgment which it renders to Mr Masson's great work, as "a noble and final monument erected to the poet's memory." The tribute which Mr Pattison has laid beside this monument is no idle or ephemeral adjunct.

## 20. DRYDEN'S PROSE

(T. Humphry Ward's *English Poets*, vol. II.)<sup>1</sup>

DRYDEN has been called the greatest writer of a little age; but it may well be doubted whether he, for one, would have cared to accept either limb of the antithesis. None of his moral qualities better consorted with his magnificent genius than the true modesty which underlay his buoyant self-assertion. His attitude towards the great literary representative of an age earlier than that to which his own maturity belonged was from first to last one of reverent recognition; and, though the lines written by Dryden under Milton's portrait have more sound than point, they should not be forgotten as testifying to the spirit which dictated them. Of Oldham, in both the species of verse to which he owed his reputation infinitely Dryden's inferior, the elder poet wrote that their souls were near allied, and cast in the same poetic mould. To Congreve, his junior by full forty years, he declared that he would gladly have resigned the Laureateship, in which he had been supplanted by a Whig poetaster. On the other hand, whatever aspect the Restoration age, either in politics or in literature, may wear in our eyes, in its own it assumed any semblance rather than that of an age of Decline. And, indeed, to speak of its literature only, it must be admitted that there are not a few considerations to be urged against

<sup>1</sup> *English Poets*, selected, etc., by T. Humphry Ward. Vol. II. Jonson to Dryden. Macmillan and Co., 1880.

the validity of such a designation. It is common enough to find the literature of the Restoration age set down as essentially a foreign literature, reproduced and imitated. Yet a survey of Dryden's works alone, both dramatic and non-dramatic, should suffice to shake the foundations of any such criticism. The "Heroic Plays"—a species in which Dryden had rivals but no equal—differed from the courtly romances of the Scudéry School, as full-bodied Burgundy differs from diluted claret. The so-called Restoration Comedy—of the later and more perfect growth of which Dryden's efforts were but the precursors—is, both for better and for worse, as genuinely national as it is unmistakably real. It would, of course, be extremely absurd to deny the great influence in this period of French literature upon our own; but it was an influence of much greater importance for the future of English literature, both prose and verse, as to form than as to matter. Yet though the clearness as well as the pointedness of the Restoration style was partly due to French example, these qualities were something very different from the imported fashions of a season. Dryden may be charged with more than his usual audacity when, in a Prologue of 1672, he spoke of "our wit" as far excelling "foreign wit," after, in an Epilogue of 1670, he had extolled his own times as not only wittier but "more refined and free" in their use of the native tongue than any preceding age. Yet, inasmuch as during two centuries English writers have, on the whole, followed Dryden and his contemporaries instead of reverting to their predecessors of the Elizabethan and earlier Stewart periods, it would savour of rashness contemptuously to dismiss the claims to

literary honours of an age which formed for itself a style of so proved a merit. With the aid of this style it virtually called into life a new species of English poetry—that Satirical Poetry, of which Dryden was not indeed the originator, but in which he was the first, as he has in most respects remained the greatest, master.

Whatever view be taken of the general features of the age of which Dryden was the chief literary ornament—while Milton's muse, like the blind poet himself, dwelt apart—it is certain that this age speaks to us from the pages of its most brilliant writer. He was not formed, as a man or as a poet, to live outside his times. Yet neither was he, in character or in genius, one of those who merely give back what they have received, more or less changed in form or intensified in manner. He has been decried as a timeserver in politics, as a turncoat in religion, and in literature as the flexible follower of a succession of Schools. The reasons for and against these charges cannot be examined here; and there seems something specially unsuitable in treating of Dryden in a tone of apology. At the same time, both his life and works, the relations between which are peculiarly intimate, often require to be protected from some of the commentaries with which they have been visited. Many of our poets have been subjected to ungenerous criticism; but none has, so to speak, been "hansardised" so mercilessly as Dryden.

He was the descendant of Puritan ancestors on both the father's and the mother's side; his own father—according to an adversary of the poet's—was a Committee-man, and one of his maternal cousins was a peer of Oliver's creation. Nothing could therefore be more

natural or becoming than that, on the Protector's death, Dryden, then a young man of twenty-seven, should have sung the praises of "our Prince," generally selecting for celebration qualities which even Cromwell's angriest enemies would not have denied him to have possessed. That the author of the *Heroic Stanzas* should with the Restoration have blossomed forth as a royalist implies no tergiversation at all. It should not be forgotten that the Restoration was not a mere party act; and that much had happened between it and the death of Oliver Cromwell. Whatever may have been the hereditary politics of Dridens and Pickering's, John Dryden was a born royalist, and with the Restoration his political changes were at an end. Panegyric poetry was the fashion of the age, and the exuberant inventiveness and felicitous readiness of Dryden's genius made it easy for him to excel in this kind of composition. To be sure, even the most willing and the most fluent muse must rapidly exhaust such a theme as the virtues of King Charles II; and in his *Threnodia Augustalis*, written on the King's death, Dryden found little to add to what he had sung in the *Astræa Redux*, composed in honour of the Restoration—except that his Majesty died hard. In shorter pieces in honour of the King, the Duchess of York, and Lord Clarendon, Dryden displayed the same talent for waving gorgeous banners of courtly praise, till in *Britannia Rediviva* he hailed the birth of a Prince whom half the nation regarded as a Pretender before he and his parents were exiles. No Laureate has ever earned so well as Dryden the butt of sack which the economy of King James's new reign cut off from his salary. Of all the *tours de force* executed by him,

however, the most extraordinary is that in which he undertook to flatter the nation, as well as the dynasty, to the top of their bent. The fire and spirit of the *Annus Mirabilis* are nothing short of amazing, when the difficulties which beset the author (though partly of his own choosing) are remembered. There was, first, the difficulty of his subject, which, as a perusal of the poem cannot fail to reveal to the most unsuspecting reader, was by no means made up altogether of materials for congratulation. Yet the *Annus Mirabilis* must really have "done good" to the public; even at the present day it agreeably warms the John Bull sentiment, compounded of patriotism and prejudice, in the corner of an Englishman's heart. Another difficulty, but in this instance a self-imposed one, was the form of verse in which the poem was written. It was chosen for the sake of its dignity, but (as Dryden well knew, and told Davenant, from whose *Gondibert* it was borrowed) it put an extreme strain upon the ingenuity and skill of the author. Thus though Dryden has written much that is more thoroughly enjoyable, he has written nothing that is more characteristic of himself, than this long series of quatrains. The glorious *dash* of the performance is his own, and so is the victorious struggle against the drag of a difficult, and rather dull, metre.

But it was a yet different kind of poem by which the loyal adherent of the Stewart Throne first became a force in English politics. No modern reader, whether his sympathies be with the Jebusites, or whether he think that there may be something to be said even in favour of the Solymæan rout, is likely to refuse his admiration to the greatest—greatest without even a suggestion of



rivalry—of English political satires. This position, in a literature rich in contributions of the same kind to political controversy, *Absalom and Achitophel* (or rather the *First Part* of the Satire) owes to the reason which made it so singularly effective at the date of its publication. Besides being executed with incomparable vigour and *verve*, and as finished in detail as it is impetuous in flow, it has the supreme merit (for a work of this kind) of being completely adapted to its special purpose. *Absalom and Achitophel* is a political satire pure and simple, not, like *Hudibras*, a burlesque on a whole cauldron-full of political and religious controversy. The allegorical form of the satire, while so familiar in itself as to save all trouble in guessing the author's enigmas, just suffices for veiling the real theme beneath a decent disguise; but it by no means interferes with a quality necessary for the effectiveness of the work—its directness. Accordingly, every shaft flies home; in every character, from Achitophel and Zimri to the lesser personalities which are, as it were, merely touched in passing, precisely those features are marked as to which it is intended to strengthen and sharpen the suspicions of the popular instinct. The object of the writer being, not to furnish a satirical narrative of a complete historical episode, but to give a striking picture of the influences which had led to the situation existing at the time when Shaftesbury was to be placed on his trial for treason, the real completion of the plot of the poem would have been furnished by the event which it was designed to bring about—namely the conviction and condemnation of its treacherous hero. Thus, the *First Part* combines with its vehement invective and fervent enthusiasm a moderation

proving the author's hand to be that of a shrewd, as well as a keen, politician. The blows are not dealt indiscriminately, as in an Aristophanic comedy to which nothing is sacred, or in the wantonness of partisan wit, such as Canning poured forth against the impotence he disliked not less than against the fanaticism he abhorred, —but with care and even with self-restraint. Absalom (Monmouth) is "lamented" rather than "accused"; even Achitophel himself, where he deserves praise, receives it from the candour of his politic assailant. When Dryden revised the poem for a second edition, he was least of all anxious to sharpen the sting of incidental passages; for his purpose had not been to vilify all the opponents of the Court, but to ensure the downfall of the false Achitophel, who was first among them all.

Johnson has commended Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* as "comprising all the excellences of which the subject is capable"; and not a jot need be abated from this at once high and judicious encomium. In what other poem of the kind will be found, together with so much versatility of wit, so incisive a directness of poetic eloquence? Dryden is here at his best; and, being at his best, he is entirely free from that irrepressible desire to outdo himself, which, in a great author as in a great actor, so unpleasingly interferes with our enjoyment of his endeavours, and to which in productions of a different kind Dryden often gave way. This self-control was the more to his credit, since he had not yet shot all the bolts in his quiver, and declared himself quite prepared to convince those who thought otherwise, "at their own cost, that he could write severely with more

ease than he could write gently." The successors and the sequel, however, to the *First Part of Absalom and Achitophel* show the diminished fire of polemics composed after the crisis is over. The pungent satire of *The Medal*, written after the throwing out by the London Grand Jury of the Bill of Indictment against Shaftesbury, ridicules the hypocrisy of the hero of the Puritan citizens, and the sovereign stupidity of his worshippers, the mob—a stupidity against which "even gods contend in vain":

Almighty crowd! thou shortenest all dispute;

Power is thy essence, wit thy attribute!

Nor faith nor reason make thee at a stay:

Thou leap'st o'er all eternal truths in thy Pindaric way.

(The last line, by the way, reminds us incidentally of one of Dryden's favourite metrical devices—unfortunately too frequently and too indiscriminately employed by him—the incidental Alexandrine.) Among the Whig writers who took upon themselves to reply to *The Medal*, was Thomas Shadwell, "the true-born poet"—who was afterwards to supersede Dryden as Laureate, and who as a comic dramatist displays a measure of power which makes it necessary to take exception to the sweeping contemptuousness of Dryden's satire against him. Shadwell is the hero of *Mac Flecnoe*, to which brilliant, but not very generous, *jeu d'esprit* a harmless scribbler (who had even to the best of his ability extolled Dryden himself) was chosen to give his name. This most happily executed retort upon a by no means despicable antagonist has a double claim to immortality:—its own delightful execution, and the fact that this attempt to extinguish a single Dunce suggested to Pope the heroic

idea of annihilating the whole tribe. The list of Dryden's satirical poetry closes with his contributions to the *Second Part of Absalom and Achitophel*, of which Nahum Tate (afterwards Poet-Laureate in his turn) was the principal author. Tate's muse might well wax faint in striving to raise her own feeble efforts to the level of "the song of Asaph"; nor will his name be linked by posterity with Dryden's as it is with Brady's. The characters of Og (Shadwell) and Doeg (Elkanah Settle, the City poet, whose political opinions changed more than once, without landing him in a competency at the end) are in Dryden's most successful, and in his most rollicking, manner.

Thus, in what were at once the earliest and among the bitterest days of modern English party life, the Court poet had thrown himself heart and soul into the conflict, and had constituted himself the chief literary champion of a side which, in any case, must have engaged his goodwill and sympathy. At home and abroad, the adversaries of the Stewarts were the natural objects of his satire; for how could a born partisan of centralised authority love either Dutchmen or Dissenters? It would be hard to say which he attacked with greater zest, whenever opportunity arose. His attempt to inflame popular sentiment against the Dutch in the sensation drama of *Amboyna* is a disgraceful illustration of too common a misgrowth of patriotism. Even in the pleasant *Epistle* which, quite at the close of his life, he addressed to his kinsman, and which he himself considered equal to anything of his as a piece of writing, he had originally introduced some reflexions on Dutch valour, though a Dutchman sat on the Throne. His

antipathy against the Nonconformists he was to exhibit in circumstances creditable, at all events, to the ingenuousness of his partisanship.

The history of Dryden's religious opinions has called forth very various, and much cruel, comment. The latter term will seem apposite, if it be simply remembered how frequently instances of a change of creed analogous to Dryden's have occurred and continue to occur, and how deeply in most cases of the kind the insinuation of an interested motive would be resented by those best acquainted with the origin and progress of the change. On the present occasion, it must suffice to suggest, as indispensable to any enquiry into the process and motives of Dryden's conversion to the Church of Rome, a candid and impartial examination of his two poems, the *Religio Laici* (published in November 1682) and *The Hind and the Panther* (April 1687). In his most amusing comedy of *The Spanish Friar* (1681), it is difficult to discover anything bearing on the subject beyond evidence that Dryden hated priests—a feeling to which he remained true, even after he had become a member of the Church of Rome.

There is nothing whatever to show that the *Religio Laici* was called forth by any special occasion, or juncture of circumstances, in the life of its author. Nor can this poem be looked upon as the declaration of any creed in particular; for there are surely few members of any Protestant Church who would care to accept the Layman's exposition of his standpoint as a summary of their beliefs. Unwilling to take refuge in natural religion, unable to accept the theory of an infallible Church, and resenting the practice of leaving the truth revealed in

the Bible at the mercy of the rabble, the Layman is content to bow to authority where it deserves the name, to leave obscure points aside, and, where he cannot agree with the Church, to waive his private judgment for the sake of peace:

For points obscure are of small use to learn,  
But common quiet is the world's concern.

That a Protestant whose Protestantism stood on so very weak a footing should have been led after all into the bosom of a Church claiming infallibility, seems a process easily accounted for; and, in truth, the *Religio Laici* might almost be called a halfway-house on the road along which Dryden was travelling. A reverence for authority was implanted in his nature; he was a Tory before he was a Catholic; moreover, he was at no time a man to strain at minor difficulties; and it was, therefore, almost inevitable that the Layman's simple Creed would, sooner or later, cease to satisfy a mind inclined and accustomed to look at things in the grand style.

If, in point of fact, this time came very soon, there is no reason to deny that events happening and currents in operation around him, may have hastened the change. There are seasons specially favourable for a roll-call, in the moral as in the political world; and, apart from the bias in his mind, Dryden was, probably, not one of the converts whom Rome has found it most difficult to secure. But to attribute his conversion to the renewal of a trumpery pension—whether granted immediately before or just after his declaration of his change of faith—is not less ignoble than it is idle to suggest vaguely that he was influenced by “visions of greater

worldly advantage." If his conversion finds sufficient explanation as a process natural to a mind and disposition constituted like his, and subjected to the general influences of an age like that in which he lived, there remains no controversy to carry on. That, after becoming a Roman Catholic, he should have felt a strong desire to offer to the world a defence of a position not new to it, but new, and therefore in a sense uneasy, to himself, seems quite in accordance with experience. But that *The Hind and the Panther* was not published in order to conciliate the favour of King James II, is manifest from a very noteworthy circumstance. This poem, a species of *eirenicon* (as it might almost be called) to the Church of England on behalf of the Church of Rome, and an invitation to the former to unite with the latter against the Nonconformists, appeared a fortnight after the Declaration of Indulgence, by which the king had sought to conciliate the support of "the Bear, the Boar and every savage name" willing to listen to the voice of the charmer.

*The Hind and the Panther* has been censured by critics and burlesqued by wits on account of the supposed incongruity of its characters and dialogue. But there is no reason why beasts should not talk theology or politics—or anything else under the sun—in a piece constructed, not as an allegory, but as a fable; and moreover, as Sir Walter Scott has pointed out, Dryden might have appealed for precedents to the works of both Chaucer and Spenser. The lengthiness of parts of the poem may at the same time be undeniable; but its wit and vigour of expression, aided by a versification which Pope declared to be the most correct to be found

in Dryden, render it a unique contribution to controversial literature. That the author of *The Hind and the Panther* had lost little, if any, of his power as a satirist, will be evident from some of the passages quoted in our text, as more suitable for extraction there than snatches of controversy—the description of the Nonconformist Sects, the character of Father Petre (judiciously put into the Panther's mouth) and that of Dr (afterwards Bishop) Burnet, whom Dryden had already attacked in passing as Balak in *Absalom and Achitophel*, and who replied in his *History of his own Time* by stigmatising Dryden as “a master of immodesty and impurity of all sorts.”

This retort, or the element of truth contained in its violence, cannot be waved aside, like the charges brought against Dryden of political and religious dishonesty. The licentiousness of the Restoration Drama, which it would have mightily amused the Restoration dramatists to see explained as mere imaginative frolicsomeness, found in him a too willing representative, and one to be distinguished from the rest only because he had a genius to pervert and to profane. But it should be remembered in his honour that, though he was not strong enough to resist temptation, he was true enough to his nobler self to feel and to record the degradation of his weakness. Posterity need utter no severer censure on one who has spoken of his “second Fall” with the solemn severity of self-knowledge displayed by Dryden in the incomparably beautiful *Ode to the Memory of Anne Killigrew*. His nature was too fine and too manly to defy petulantly any criticism which he thought in any measure just, although he might deprecate exaggerated rigour,



and despise a preciseness of censure which to men of his mould is virtually unintelligible.

Undoubtedly, though the strength and pointedness of his style make him recognisable in almost everything he has written—a Hercules truly to be guessed from a mere bit of himself—Dryden is one of those authors to whom complete justice can never be done by those who study him in selections only. The inexhaustible fertility and grandiose ease of his style require the vast expanse of his collected works for their full display. But what cannot be exhibited in completeness, may be indicated by contrast. Truly great as a satirical, and unusually effective as a didactic poet, Dryden as an ode-writer surpassed even Cowley in execution, and at times equalled him in felicity of conception. From the panegyric strains of his earlier days he passed in his later to a twofold treatment of a theme not less difficult, and far loftier, than the praise of earthly Crowns and their wearers. The two famous lyrics in honour of St Cecilia's Day are almost equally brilliant in execution; but the earlier and shorter is not altogether successful in avoiding the dangers incidental to any attempt of a more elaborate kind to make "the sound appear an echo to the sense." *Alexander's Feast*, on the other hand, may not be without a certain operatic artificiality; but affectation alone can pretend to be insensible to the magnificent impetus of its movement, or to the harmonious charm of its *finale*. Of Dryden's art as a translator only one example could find a place here—the simple but singularly powerful version, familiar to many generations, of the *Veni, Creator Spiritus*. Yet this kind of literary work was one which neither he nor

his contemporaries were inclined to undervalue. He possessed one of two qualities essential to a master in translation, and lacked the other. While gifted with an almost instinctive power of seizing upon the salient points in his original, and wonderfully facile in rendering these by ingenious turns of thought and phrase in his own tongue, he had neither the nature nor the training of a scholar. He is, accordingly, at once the most felicitous and the most reckless of English poetic translators. His modernisations of Chaucer, which, with translations from Homer, Ovid, and Boccaccio, make up his last publication, the *Fables*, show his mastery over his form at least as strikingly as any other of his works. In the days in which we live, his once popular recastings of Chaucer happily can receive no other praise than this. But something more than a mere shred of purple seemed required by way of example of these famous "translations" by one great English poet of another and greater.

As a dramatist, Dryden cannot here be discussed; but room has been found for an example of one or two of his *Prologues* and *Epilogues*, in which the poet, following the fashion of his times, converses at his ease with his public through the medium of a favourite actor—or (since King David's happy Restoration) of a favourite actress. But nowhere do the wit and the "frankness" of the age (to use the term applied to it by one of its most popular comedians) find readier expression than in these sallies of badinage, occasionally intermixed with a grain of salt satire, or doing duty as acrid invective or patriotic bluster; and nowhere is the genial freespokenness of Dryden more thoroughly at home than

in these confidences between dramatist and public. Lastly, it should not be forgotten that as a prose critic of dramatic poetry and its laws Dryden remains much more than readable at the present day; his inconsistencies any tiro can point out; but it is better worth while to appreciate the force of much that he says on whatever side of a question he may advocate. Among all our poets, few have found better reasons for their theories, or for the practice they have based on the theories of others.

In Dryden it is futile to seek for poetic qualities which he neither possessed nor affected. Wordsworth remarked of him that there is not "a single image from nature in the whole body of his works." One may safely add to this, that he is without lyric depth, and incapable of true sublimity—a quality which he revered in Milton. If it be too much to say that the magnificent instrument through which his genius discourses its music lacks the *vox humana* of poetry speaking to the heart, the still rarer presence of the *vox angelica* is certainly wanting to it. But he is master of his poetic form—more especially of that heroic couplet to which he gave a strength unequalled by any of his successors, even by Pope, who surpassed him in finish. And, if there is grandeur in the pomp of kings and the march of hosts, in the "trumpet's loud clangour" and in tapestries and carpetings of velvet and gold, Dryden is to be ranked with the grandest of English poets. The irresistible impetus of an invective which never falls short or flat, and the savour of a satire which never seems dull or stale, give him an undisputed place among the most glorious of English wits.

## 21. EVELYN'S DIARY

(*The Church Quarterly Review*, January 1908)

THE Introduction to this fine edition of a noble book<sup>1</sup> brings out with perfect clearness a fact already noticed by John Forster in his revised issue of Bray's *Memoirs*, which included both the *Diary* and the *Private Correspondence* of Evelyn, that the *Diary* "does not, in all respects, strictly fulfil what the term implies." Forster cannot have been mistaken in his conclusion that the *Diary*, as it must continue to be called, was "copied by the writer from memoranda made at the time of the occurrences noted in it," and moreover "received occasional alterations and additions in the course of transcription." A careful re-perusal of the text in its present reproduction serves to confirm a view differentiating Evelyn's *Diary* from a chronicle which, like that of Pepys, almost literally "walks hand in hand with time," but nevertheless enhances the value of many passages contained in it—matured observations rather than *aperçus* of the moment—as contributions to biographical and general history. When, under the date of May 28, 1656, Evelyn mentions as visitors to his garden at Sayes Court "the Earl of Southampton (since Treasurer)" and "the old Marquis of Argyll (since executed)"—which latter nobleman "took the turtle doves in the aviary for owls"—he is merely indulging

<sup>1</sup> *The Diary of John Evelyn*. With an Introduction and Notes by Austin Dobson. Macmillan and Co., 1906.

in a kind of annotation such as would not of itself change the *Diary* into "Memoirs," a term by which the writer himself on one occasion designates it<sup>1</sup>. Forster, however, also directed attention to the mistakes—evident slips of memory—which indicated that the *Diary* was not a record of "freshly remembered" incidents; thus, Evelyn's last visit to "the late Lord Chancellor" Clarendon is wrongly dated<sup>2</sup>, as is his dining in company with Colonel Blood on what would have been the actual morrow of his theft of the regalia from the Tower<sup>3</sup>. The "reflexions on things past," bearing date May 31, 1672<sup>4</sup>, and suggested by the news of the death of the Earl of Sandwich in the battle of "Southwold, or Sole Bay" (but Dr Tanner has proved the two local appellations to be identical), might possibly have been inserted on the spur of the moment, though they must be allowed to reach a high level of character-drawing; and such may also have been the case with regard to the retrospect of the circumstances of Clarendon's decline and fall<sup>5</sup>. But, as the reader proceeds with the last volume of the edition before us, he can hardly fail to note a growing tendency of the "diarist" to expand his records into summaries of episodes or periods: such as the memorable passage on the effects of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, or the account of the reception generally accorded to the accomplished fact of William and Mary's accession to the Throne. On the other hand, in certain of the later entries, such as those under the date of April 24, 1692, we seem to detect rough notes intended for expansion on some later

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Vol. II. p. 365.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 284.      <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 322.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 347-8.

<sup>5</sup> Vol. III. p. 110.

opportunity—though, indeed, the opportunity never came.

Thus, quite apart from differences of character and circumstance which are undeniable, but hardly more striking than are the resemblances in their opinions of men and things—so that a “parallel” review of the lives and character of the two friends ought assuredly to be taken in hand by some leisured member of the Pepys Club—Evelyn’s *Diary* cannot lay claim to the full freshness of immediacy which is the supreme charm of the journal of his rather younger and less long-lived contemporary. But, all the same, Evelyn’s book, by whatever name we may call it, possesses qualities which have justly secured to it the position of an English classic; and seeing that, as in the case of all the “best books” in any literature, the qualities which endear it to us are the qualities of the man who wrote it, none who love Evelyn’s *Diary* and revere its author can fail to rejoice that it should have been reproduced in so worthy a form, and should have found an editor like Mr Austin Dobson. Evelyn himself, we remember, could not abide slovenliness in the production of a book. Already as a young man, he noted on a visit to Geneva<sup>1</sup> that “here are abundance of booksellers, but their books are of ill impressions”; and, at a later date, he all but lost his temper (an occurrence in his case “against kind”) over the “abominable misuse” which his *Essay on the first Book of Lucretius* had suffered at the hands of the printer, and the negligence of the gentleman, “well known for his ability,” who had with a too officious zeal undertaken to “look over the proof-sheets with all exactness

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I. p. 34.

and care" during the author's absence<sup>1</sup>. The outward form of the present edition of the *Diary* leaves nothing to be desired, and it is adorned with engravings of a charm at once rare and appropriate. They include, in addition to a carefully chosen gallery of portraits, illustrations not only of the London and England of Evelyn's day, but also of the Paris in which, according to his own ingenuous confession<sup>2</sup>, he spent what must have been almost the only "idle" days of his life—for instance, the picture of the Luxembourg, a fit accompaniment of Evelyn's delightful description of "this paradise<sup>3</sup>"; and of the Rome of the irresistible days of decadence, when *renaissance* was being frittered away into *rococo*, such as the view of the exquisitely frivolous Ludovisi Palace and gardens, "formerly the viridarium of the poet [*sic*] Sallust<sup>4</sup>."

On the merits of Mr Austin Dobson's Introduction we have already touched, and, so far as we have examined it, this edition seems to have the advantage, which in a book of the kind it is impossible to over-estimate, of an excellent index. But the bibliography which precedes the index called for a much closer revision at the hands of the present editor. The "dedication to Renatus Rapin of *Gardens*" is surely shown by the context to be from the hand of its translator, John Evelyn the younger; later editions of *The Life of Mrs Godolphin* should have

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II. p. III. We have noticed hardly any misprints in Mr Austin Dobson's edition. "Charles I" on p. 73 of vol. II. note, should of course be "Charles II"; the perverse reading "approaching" for "reproaching," vol. III. p. 191, may be a slip of the diarist's own committing.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. I. p. 352.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 165.

been specified, and the editor of *A Rational Account of the True Religion* named. Nor can we candidly say that the annotation of the text is in our judgment adequate. While it was unnecessary to supply data as to so prominent a personage as Titus Oates, or so well known a chapter of history as the persecution of the French Protestants on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, an editor possessed of Mr Austin Dobson's rare resources might fairly have been expected in instances of a different sort to have supplied the reader with information which would have been of value to him and have saved him the trouble of making search for it.

Thus, Patrick Cary<sup>1</sup>, whose acquaintance Evelyn made at Rome, in 1644, as that of an abbot—"a witty young priest, who afterwards came over to our Church"—and whose poems were edited by Sir Walter Scott, deserved a note for his own sake, as well as for that of his illustrious brother. Another compatriot whom Evelyn met, or of whom he heard at Rome in 1645, is mentioned by him as "Mrs Ward, an English devotee, who was much solicited for an order of Jesuitesses<sup>2</sup>." Allowing for the looseness of Evelyn's method of entries in the *Diary*, we may conclude this to have been Mary de Ward, of the old and long extinct Yorkshire family of that name, the foundress of the Institute of Mary, domiciled in several Convents of "English ladies" in Bavaria and elsewhere. She died, in 1645, at the Manor-house of Heworth (near York); her tombstone remains in the churchyard of St Thomas, Osbaldwick. Evelyn might conceivably have seen her in Flanders or in France, but there is no note on the mention

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I. p. 154.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. III. p. 267.



of her in Mr Austin Dobson's edition. To pass abruptly to a very different subject, the note on the famous *Est Est* of Montefiascone<sup>1</sup> might surely have referred to Wilhelm Müller's jovial ballad. In the interesting Appendix I to Vol. I, which consists of a letter from George Evelyn to his father, giving an account of the visit of Charles I and Henrietta Maria to Oxford in September 1636, the curious expression "the Prince Elect," used more than once, surely called for comment. It seems unmistakably to refer to the young Elector Palatine (or Pretender to the Palatine Electorate), Charles Lewis, with whom, as we know from a contemporary Spanish despatch, the Puritans had shown much sympathy on the occasion of a visit to Oxford about this time, much to the disquieting of his royal uncle.

In Vol. II students of Chaucer would be curious to know whether Mr Austin Dobson accepts Evelyn's statement<sup>2</sup> that "Donington Castle" (in the honour of Tutbury, Duchy of Lancaster, not far from Ashby-de-la-Zouch) "had been in the possession of old Geoffrey Chaucer," and students of the drama, whether the name has been ascertained of "the tragi-comedy acted in the Cockpit, after there had been none of these diversions for many years during the war<sup>3</sup>." The note on Cosin<sup>4</sup>, with whom Evelyn came a good deal into contact at Paris, is imperfect, since, though it states that Evelyn was at a later date in treaty for the purchase of Cosin's excellent library, it does not mention that the greater part of the library, which had been forfeited by its owner to the Government, was acquired (not

<sup>1</sup> Vol. III. p. 152.

<sup>2</sup> P. 73.

<sup>3</sup> P. 4.

<sup>4</sup> P. 43; cf. p. 55.

altogether gratuitously) by his College (Peterhouse) in compensation for the losses caused to it by the excessive decoration of its chapel by the Master and his associates. The name of Cosin, in whom the love of elaborate ritual was combined with a spiritual unction not invariably to be found accompanying it, suggests that to some lay readers a note might very possibly have been welcome in illustration of another entry in this volume<sup>1</sup>. Under the date of December 25, 1652 (Christmas Day in Paris, but no longer officially such in England), Evelyn notes that "the King and Duke received the Sacrament first by themselves, the Lords Byron and Wilmot holding the long towel all along the altar," an entry which, in Mr Vernon Staley's *Ceremonial of the English Church*, and perhaps in other manuals, is cited as a *locus classicus* with regard to the use of the "house-lining cloth"—a use observed on an occasion so recent as the coronation of George IV in 1820. By way of contrast: are many of the readers of this edition likely to identify "that cursed woman called the Lady Norton," of whom it was reported that she spat "in our King's face as he went to the scaffold<sup>2</sup>"? The members of the Classical Association at all events would have relished a note on the "odd" pronunciation of Latin at Westminster School in 1661, which Evelyn censures as being such that "out of England none were able to understand or endure it." No clue, again, is given by a note to the identity of the "black Baron<sup>3</sup>"; the meaning of the term "Baron of Canterbury" in a note of Mr Dobson's own is not likely to be mistaken<sup>4</sup>. The editor has

<sup>1</sup> P. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. III. p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. II. p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 345.

nothing to tell us about the attempt of the Duke of Northumberland—"a tall black man," says one authority, "like his father, the King"—to "spirit away his wife," with the help of his "brother Grafton<sup>1</sup>"; and he leaves the reader to seek either in Macaulay or in the succinct statement furnished in Miss Foxcroft's valuable new *Life of Burnet*<sup>2</sup> for an elucidation of the following entry, puzzling at first sight, under the date of February 4, 1693:

Dr Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury's, book burnt by the hangman for an expression of the King's title by conquest, on a complaint of Joseph Slow, a Member of Parliament, little better than a madman<sup>3</sup>.

The offending book in question was the Bishop's first *Pastoral Letter*, and the spirit of Burnet's defiance of the factions which contributed to the insult is better worth remembering than the shameless Parliamentary incident itself<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. III. p. 201.

<sup>2</sup> Cambridge University Press, 1907.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. I. p. 300.

<sup>4</sup> Surely, on the other hand, the comment appended to a passage in the *Diary* (vol. II. p. 98), where Evelyn refers to Sir Ambrose Browne, and other gentlemen of his "sweet and native country" ("query—*county*, i.e. Surrey"), is, to say the least, superfluous. This long common use of the word "county," illustrated by several other passages in the *Diary* itself, was hardly one to suggest as an original conjecture. While on the subject of vocabulary, we may take the opportunity of directing attention to Evelyn's varying employment of the epithet "melancholy"—a word which, thanks to Shakespeare and Gray, as well of course as to Burton, has a history of its own in our literature. Evelyn uses it preferentially in a sense more or less resembling the vague modern use of the word "romantic." Thus he considered the Park at Brussels "agreeable, melancholy and country-like" (vol. I. p. 55). Again, he describes Groombridge, in Kent—

We should be sorry to have been guilty of petty faultfinding with an edition which has given us, and we are sure has given others, a great amount of pleasure. And we may add that Evelyn's *Diary* is most assuredly one of those books which from the nature of the case do not admit of "definitive" editions. For while this record covers little short of fourscore years—of course with many a gap—of English public and private life, it is intended as a store-house of facts and experiences rather than as a literary labour. Hence its unadorned reflexion of a career true, as is the needle to the pole, to its modest purpose of beneficent usefulness. Where style and treatment rise above the ordinary level, it is because the artistic or scientific tastes of the author tempt the man of affairs into the expansiveness or the enthusiasm of the dilettante, or because the emotional side of his nature is called forth by affection or indignation—by his love for a child lost all too soon or for an adopted daughter of his heart, like Margaret Godolphin, or, again, by his scorn for the corruptions of a Court

where, by the way, there was a chapel built "in remembrance of King Charles the First's safe return out of Spain"—as "a pretty melancholy seat, well wooded and watered" (vol. II. p. 61). In the same way he speaks of Sir Edmund Bowyer's "melancholy" seat at Camberwell, where he found "a very pretty grove of oaks, and hedges of yew in his garden, and a handsome row of tall elms before his court." On the other hand, he characterises the situation of one of his brother Richard's houses, Baynards, in Surrey, as "excessively dirty and melancholy" (*ibid.* p. 121). The "melancholy water-fowl, brought from Astracan by the Russian ambassador," that diverted him in St James' Park ("so safe," sings Waller, "are all things that our King protects"), had apparently qualified itself for the adjective by extraordinary performances at a fish dinner (*ibid.* p. 223).

through which few could, like that Una, pass unscathed. But, in its general tenour and manner, the *Diary*, while it connects itself with many and varied interests, comes home to those who feel most at their ease in the company of the class of English gentlemen who, even if they are diarists or memoir-writers, say very little, in one sense of the phrase, about themselves, but whom it is not the less easy to learn to respect and love.

The career of a man of Evelyn's type arrives slowly at its height, and is very gradual in its decline; and the man himself is not usually to be found skimming the surface of the world's doings, or fluttering about the heights or the extremes to which its movements reach. On the threshold of his manhood, near the close of the year 1640, Evelyn, whose birth and breeding had brought him into full sympathy with "the most happy monarch in the world" and "the then glorious Church of England," was left, with his brothers, by the death of their father (preceded by that of their mother) to make such proof as they could of "the greatest and most prodigious hazard that ever the youth of England saw." He deprecates with perfect simplicity any suggestion of its having been his own merit that he did not, like many others, "impeach his liberty or his virtue among many who made shipwreck of both"; yet there can be no doubt that the risks which, like so many of his contemporaries, he had to run taught him, already in his younger days, the prudence which remained one of his characteristics through life, though the longer he lived the more ready he was found on fit occasion to show the courage of his opinions. In 1641, he made his first journey abroad, "being desirous to overtake the

leaguer" (which Mr Dobson translates "siege," but which we would rather render "camp"), then before Gennep-on-the-Waal—a leisurely process of participation in warfare which, after the Civil War had actually broken out, he repeated in October 1642 by travelling to Chichester, "and hence the next day to see the siege of Portsmouth<sup>1</sup>." Evelyn's actual campaigning in the Civil War was very brief. At the battle of Brentford he "came in with his horse and arms just at the retreat"; but he did not accompany the royalist army on its march to Gloucester, "which would have left both me and my brothers exposed to ruin, without any advantage to his Majesty." Thus it came to pass that he soon again started on his Continental travels, and that the Civil War was in substance (though, of course, not finally) over when he found himself back in England.

Not only had he returned as convinced a Royalist as he was when he quitted the country, but it is probable that he had already—in all probability through the contrivance of the King's Resident in Paris, Sir Richard Browne, whose daughter he had recently married—rendered services of some importance to the royal interest. At all events, when he kissed the King's hand at Hampton Court, Evelyn rendered to him "an account of several things he had in charge." After the execution of Charles I, and what Evelyn terms "the proclamation

<sup>1</sup> More than forty years later Evelyn records (vol. III. p. 130) of the young Duke of Northumberland, who was not to fulfil the hopes placed upon him ("of all his Majesty's children...this seemed the most accomplished and worth the owning"), that he is "newly come from travel, and had made his campaign at the siege of Luxemburg." The evolution of this amateur belligerency into the war correspondence of our own times might be worth tracing.

of un-Kingship," he kept up a secret correspondence with his father-in-law at Paris, and no doubt he improved the occasion of each of his sojourns in Paris, in 1649-50 (by the way, should "from Paris," vol. II. p. 15, read "for Paris"?) and in 1650-2. His account of his earliest audience with Charles II may be taken as ominous of his later censures of that Prince, so far at least as the final touch is concerned: "I left his Majesty on the terrace, busy in seeing a bull-baiting." Charles II seems in later days to have exercised a personal fascination over Evelyn, as over most persons with whom he came into contact—a fascination by no means only due to the architectural abilities of the King, to which the diarist testifies<sup>1</sup>. To the fatal flaws in Charles' character Evelyn was never blind, notwithstanding the King's consistent desire to "distinguish" him, and his loyal subject's response in a number of dedications of books which we have not succeeded in counting up.

During the Commonwealth and the Protectorate Evelyn conducted himself with caution, and though he made no pretence of concealing his churchmanship—Jeremy Taylor was his "ghostly father"—he attended in his own Church services conducted by a minister "Presbyterianly" inclined, in order not to be suspected as a Papist. At the same time he continued to promote the Royalist cause, constantly conveying intelligence to the King across the water, and drawing largely for the purpose on the information supplied to him from the Dutch Embassy in London. When, after Oliver's death, the question of the Restoration reentered the

<sup>1</sup> Vol. II. p. 217.

range of practical politics, Evelyn, in November 1659, published what he terms his "bold *Apology* for the King in this time of danger, when it was capital to speak or write in favour of him." The vituperation heaped in this pamphlet upon the late Protector, and upon the other "ungodly" whom the writer had seen in power and "flourishing like a green bay tree," leaves nothing to be desiderated either in plainness or in vehemence; but, after all, the pamphlet was anonymous. More "bold," inasmuch as more open to detection and eventual punishment, were the negotiations in which, only a few weeks later, Evelyn engaged Colonel Herbert Morley, and of which a fuller account is given in Appendix IV to Vol. II of Mr Austin Dobson's edition. If carried to an issue by Morley, who was in command of the Tower, they might have entitled him, at all events, to a share in the glory, and other pickings, of the carrier Monck.

To the Royalist sympathies evinced by Evelyn in adverse times he remained true in the hardly less trying period of prosperity now at hand. To his reflexions on the pernicious effects of Charles II's use and abuse of his unprecedented and unparalleled opportunities there is no need of recurring here; they form some of the best known, and indeed imperishable, passages in the *Diary*. But his condemnation, on political as well as moral grounds, of the vices of Charles II's *régime* never affected his monarchical principles, or induced him to view with anything but repugnance the proceedings and intrigues of the Whigs; indeed, he incidentally observes, he was told by the founder of the Whig party himself, in confidence, that he (Shaftes-



bury) "would support the monarchy to his last breath, as having seen and felt the misery of being under mechanic tyranny."

During the reign of Charles II, which coincided with his own best years, Evelyn rendered important services to Crown and State, not only in the official position, which he occupied from 1671 onwards, as a member of the Council of Foreign Plantations ("with a salary of 500*l.* per annum, to encourage me"), but also in the very responsible temporary office to which he was named in 1667, and which placed in his charge the care of the sick and wounded in the first Dutch War of the reign, thus involving him in financial responsibilities amounting to more than 30,000*l.* He was consulted in the matter of the proposed Military Hospital at Chelsea, as he was at a later date on the organisation of the Naval Hospital at Greenwich, in the former instance at a time of his life when, as usually happens to busy (even if unlitigious) men, he was everybody's trustee or confidant, and was engaged in all sorts of advisory work on behalf of the Norfolk family, Lord Berkeley, his beloved Godolphins, and others, besides being the acknowledged general referee on domestic architecture and the arrangement of great gardens. And, as for King Charles II himself, it was by no means only administrative or advisory business, official or partly official, which, in his inimitable "sauntering" way, his Majesty contrived to impose upon his faithful subject and servant. Soon after the close of the first Dutch War in 1667, the King began to lay his plans for a second, to be waged in circumstances which left room for doubt whether the reopening of the conflict would be as

acceptable to the nation as its beginnings earlier in the reign had been. Thus he conceived, apparently in 1670, the notion of engaging Evelyn's pen (albeit rather learned than popular) to compose a history of the previous struggle which, if judiciously managed—and the King suggested that it should be made “a little keen”—might prove an incentive to patriotic fervour when the second War was about to be declared. It was not, however, till 1674, some two years after the second War had actually opened, and just after it had come to an end by the conclusion of peace with the States-General, that Evelyn brought out his little book on *Navigation and Commerce—their Original and Progress*. It is an historical essay—we had almost said, prize essay, which, however, gained no prize other than a withdrawal after it had provoked a complaint from the Dutch ambassador, and a consequent *succès*, “which turned much to the stationer's advantage.” It consists of a lengthy exposition of the commercial and colonial history of the ancient and modern world, followed by an account of the activity of the two Powers England and Holland. These Powers, says Evelyn, “courting the good graces of the same Mistris, the Trade of the World, divide the World between them”; and then he subjoins a statement of England's claim to the dominion of the seas, including that of “the Honour and Duty” of the flag, presumptuously refused by De Witt, and of her right to the fisheries usurped by the superior energy of her competitor. Though both learned and lucid, albeit by no means instinct with the “bold” and combative spirit of Evelyn's *Apology*, this manifesto, as the author himself confesses, was futile,

as coming after the fray. The *History*, to which it was to have served as an introduction, was now, as he states, "pursued no further"; and Mr Austin Dobson has taken care not to repeat the utterly misleading assertion, to be met with elsewhere, that Evelyn's *History of the Dutch War* has been unfortunately lost. While it may be doubted whether his literary powers would have been equal to an effort which could not but have proved very difficult to a man in his position, we may, at least, feel sure that he would have dealt more fairly than some historians have with the achievements and general condition of the English navy in the first Dutch War of Charles II. The second, which his narrative of the first was to have helped to bring about, was, as we have seen, at an end before he abandoned the task; but, in his *Diary* at all events, he makes no secret of his condemnation of the policy which gave rise to it, evidently agreeing with Sandwich as to "the folly of hazarding so brave a fleet, and losing so many good men, for no provocation but that the Hollanders exceeded us in industry, and in all things but envy."

In the following reign, Evelyn's loyalty, like that of so many who thought like himself, was to be exposed to still severer tests, though quite different, from those which it had met under Charles II. At first, we find the diarist hopefully testifying to his reliance on the honesty and sincerity of the plain-dealing King. After James II had blindly rushed upon his political doom, it is not quite obvious whether Evelyn agreed with Sancroft and the majority of the English episcopate, whom he had gone out of his way to warn against the doings of the Jesuits, in seeking the solution of the crisis in the

establishment of a Regency, "thereby to salve their oaths"; for Evelyn was in politics the reverse of a formalist. He waited on the Prince of Orange at St James' Palace before the King's second flight, though he had actually held office under James II as a Commissioner of the Privy Seal; and he showed no disposition to stand out against the new *régime*. So far as one can gather from the *Diary*, he judged William III fairly, censuring chiefly (perhaps under the inspiration of the stronger mind of Pepys and Pepys' able ex-clerk William Hewer) the management of the navy as compared with that under the last two Stewart kings. Queen Mary he judged with severity at first, having no clue to the Christian beauty of her character, and acknowledging this, even on her death, with an abatement, because of her "taking the Crown without a more due apology." His last atonement to a pious spirit whom he may be pardoned for having understood only through a glass was his undertaking the Treasurership of Greenwich Hospital, which he held during six years. Under Queen Anne, his loyalty no doubt endured; but his impressions of contemporary politics became hazy, as has happened to public men of greater importance who have outlived their age. In October 1705, he notes

an indication of great unsteadiness somewhere, but thus the crafty Whig party (as called) begin to change the face of the Court, in opposition to the High Churchmen, which was another distinction of a party from the Low Churchmen.

Evelyn's attitude towards religious questions, as already illustrated in the course of these pages, was not in all respects the same as that taken up by him in dynastic and general politics. It is, of course, quite

impossible in such a period as that spanned by his experience to keep apart these aspects of a life so full of public and private interests. Evelyn's single-minded and convinced attachment to the National Church was strengthened by his inborn dislike—due to motives quite unconnected with dogma or system—of any kind of Nonconformity. If, in spite of this spiritual and mental attitude, which his *Diary* attests, not in one or two, but in a hundred instances, he has been frequently called a Puritan, this is only because the whole period of English life into which that of his manhood coincided is still persistently misunderstood. Perhaps, however, the fallacious fancy is being gradually destroyed that in what is called the Restoration Age, not only religious sentiment but a religious conduct of life was in the main confined to the Puritans and those who were in general sympathy with them. This fallacy Evelyn's own *Diary*, hardly less than his imperishable monograph on the life of Mrs Godolphin, ought long since to have sufficed of themselves to explode.

Evelyn, it may at the same time be worth emphasising, was free from the slightest inclination towards Roman Catholicism, such as was by no means unfrequent among the English upper classes in the time of his youth, and was, of course, deliberately encouraged during the brief reign of James II. The Italian travel of his younger days had, in accordance with a common biographical experience, failed to mould his mind towards acquiescence in the pretensions of a Church which to him remained alien. Born antiquarian though he was, he could not imbibe any superstitious reverence for relics, whether for the pillar on which the cock

crowded after St Peter's denial<sup>1</sup>, or for "trifles" connected with the "reported martyr Becket<sup>2</sup>," or for the "doubting finger of an earlier St Thomas<sup>3</sup>"; and the ceremony of kissing the Pope's toe left him unmoved. Though he actually translated the volume which bore the sub-title of *Another Part of the Mystery of Jesuitism* (a continuation, with a difference, of Pascal's *Provinciales*<sup>4</sup>, itself in its turn continued by Dr Tonge), and prefixed to it a brief but very pointed preface, he maintained an attitude of prudent *skepsis* towards the Popish Plot denunciations and towards the case of Lord Stafford in particular. On the other hand he testified to the direct influence of the French religious persecutions in keeping up anti-Catholic feeling in Europe, and the open demonstrations in favour of Rome directed by James II filled him with disgust, while his conviction of the intrigues of the Jesuits prompted him to address Archbishop Sancroft on the subject in a letter which may be held to have contributed to influence the conduct of the bishops. Yet, while he approved Burnet's Calvinistic exposition of the doctrine of election<sup>5</sup>, he was himself no latitudinarian or *Aufklärer*, and in 1655, in the midst of the days of religious "liberty," he records that he frequently stayed at home

to catechize and instruct his family of those exercises universally ceasing in the parish churches; so as people had no principles, and grew very ignorant of even the common points of Christianity: all devotion being now placed in hearing sermons and discourses of speculative and notional things.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. I. p. 191.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 246.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 255.

<sup>4</sup> Vol. III. p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> Vol. I. p. 262.

The work in which Evelyn seems to have designed to comprehend the total of his thoughts on religious belief and religious life, *credenda et facienda*, was destined to remain unprepared for publication, and was not actually published till nearly a century and a half after the death of the writer (1850). Even without more than a quite cursory glance at this book, which fills two volumes of not inconsiderable size, and is in itself a monument of the single-minded and unpretentious labours of its writer, it is permissible to conclude from many scattered passages of his *Diary*, that he had seen into the significance of true Christianity beyond the spheres of either systematic or controversial theology. Evelyn's was a positive nature; numerous and varied as were the interests that occupied his mind, the imaginative was not its strongest side; and, when called upon to make out a list of great Englishmen worthy of a place in Clarendon's portrait gallery he left out not only Milton (which is explicable enough), but—unless he had been previously included—Shakespeare. But his soul had scaled the heights and sounded the depths of spiritual feeling. No royal compliments could suppress in him the wish—even as a servant of his King—"O that I had performed my duty as I ought!" The deaths of those he loved best helped, as they help all those who can believe in a world to come, to strengthen and to refine the faith that was in him. And when he had devoted a day to visiting the sick, "and thence to an alms-house, where was prayers and relief, some very ill and miserable," he recorded that this was one of the best days he had ever spent in his life. The annual resolutions of his later birthdays were not pious

banalities; they expressed a rule of conduct which he had always humbly striven to follow: they were true prayers.

Many sides of Evelyn's activity, and some of them those which will most readily occur to readers of the *Diary*, have been barely glanced at in this brief review. His services to the cultivation of art in England were not limited to his procuring the Arundel marbles for Oxford (to which University he was piously attached, though his account of Cambridge is quite creditable to an Oxford man), or to his virtual discovery of the genius of Grinling Gibbons. His practical advice to divers patrons and friends in the matter of domestic architecture, and more especially as to the management of parks, orchards (*Pomona* is an appendix to *Sylva*), and gardens in general, gives him a place which he will never lose among the English writers whose names are associated with this truly national theme. His services to science cannot be measured even by the practical value of *Fumifugium*, one of the most frequently cited though perhaps least widely followed of his works; for he was one of the founders, though his modesty prevented him from becoming one of the earliest Presidents, of the Royal Society. In 1659, the year of confusion, he communicated to Robert Boyle his proposal for erecting a "philosophic and mathematic college"; and some years later he took part in setting on foot in London an "academy" for physical and especially military training. Although he thus came nearer in his conceptions than most of his contemporaries to modern ideals of University work and life, his best service to the progress of higher education in this



country was that, by example as well as doubtless by deliberate enunciation of his views, he upheld and advanced what seemed to him the standard appropriate to the class to which he belonged. From a description of Lord Essex' house of Cassiobury, in Essex, he passes on to an estimate of its owner, "a sober, wise, judicious, and pondering person, not illiterate, beyond the rate of most noblemen of his age; very well versed in English history and affairs, industrious, frugal, and accomplished." The description might stand for one of Evelyn himself, if there were added that *nescio quid* of the qualities which raise such a man as he was above the level he here indicates, and which mark him out as an admirable type of the cultured gentleman of his age, but at the same time, though devoid of either literary or scientific genius, as a man of high purpose and deep conscientiousness. It is this which distinguishes everything that he wrote, and that, in an age of which such men as he were the salt, gives an idealistic tone even to a dry treatise like his *Sculptura*, by virtue of such a passage as this:

If a quarter of that which is thrown away upon cards, dice, dogs, mistresses, base and vitious galantries, and impertinent follies, were employ'd to the encouragement of arts, and promotion of science, how illustrious and magnificent would that age be, how glorious and infinitely happy! We complain of the times present—'tis we that make them bad.

## 22. A STUDY OF GOOD WOMEN<sup>1</sup>

(*The Manchester Guardian*, November 8, 1892)

MY purpose tonight is, without taking great pains to distinguish between the historical and the literary aspect of my subject, to bring before you a small group (which might easily be enlarged) of lives and characters of women belonging to the same age and country; and to ask you, since within an hour we shall hardly be able to do so to much purpose together, to resolve for yourselves a question which in both historical and literary criticism it is rarely unprofitable to ask. What, in these lives and characters, was the result of the influence of time and place and circumstances, and what, as proper to the individual, has a higher and deeper interest, and bears, if you will, the mark of an origin to be ranked in some higher category? And if you should care to engage in a task of this description, I would advise you to do so with the aid of the materials themselves which I have used for my brief sketch, and which, imitating the example of my friend Professor Dixon when he spreads out on this board his metals and their compounds, I have ranged in the same place before you. These materials are the actual writings of the personages of whom I am about to speak—the memoirs and letters which they left behind them, or which have been collected and arranged by editors wise enough to allow them to speak so far as possible for themselves.

<sup>1</sup> "Monday Popular Lecture" delivered in the Chemistry Theatre, at the Owens College, Manchester on November 7th, 1892.

The writers—whose portraits I wish I could have hung up on the screen behind me, but perhaps you will glance at some of them when my lecture is over—were a few Englishwomen of the middle and later part of the 17th century, whose maturer years coincided more or less with the epoch of the Great Puritan Revolution, of the reaction which followed upon it in what we call the Restoration times, and of the political settlement effected before the century closed. You have, I daresay, supposing that you have given a thought to the matter, guessed my reason for calling tonight's lecture *A Study of Good Women*, and with it my motive in making choice of this particular group of figures from a scene surely as memorable and interesting as any other in our national history. In galleries and books of beauty devoted to the later half of the 17th century, the Good Women are, I fear, not always in the majority; Britannia with helm and lance and shield, as she long presented herself on part of our national coinage, is known to have been graven in an image far more familiar to readers at large than the types which I desire to bring before you. It is therefore as if (so to say) we owed a debt of peculiar recognition to the good women who did so much to leaven the imperfections of their age, and in spite of all those imperfections to ennoble it and make its memory sweet. When Chaucer wrote his *Legend of Good Women*, he professed to be desirous of making honourable amends for the wrongs imputed to him as a poet and a satirist; and though it is certainly not our business to incur as it were *ex post facto* the twinkle of his irresistible irony, we may confess that, towards the half of the human race in question, neither he nor the

Middle Ages to which he belonged had found what we believe to be the true tone. Religion and chivalry combined to over-colour sentiments which popular humour not less persistently set itself to turn into coarse ridicule; and Chaucer, whose poems contain some figures of women unsurpassed and unsurpassable, remained, notwithstanding the penitent opening of his *Legend*, a veritable child of his age.

So much, then, as to my title, which, you will perhaps consider, is not of much consequence in any way. The names of the Good Women of whom I should speak, had I time tonight, would exceed in number the list of those celebrated in Chaucer's *Legend*, were it preserved to us in a complete state, although it spreads over the whole area of classical mythology. Yet these Englishwomen were not only all of them more or less contemporaries with one another, but they alike belonged to the same upper classes of society. From the nature of the case, I cannot introduce to your notice women of a different class upon whom the art of letter-writing had not yet dawned, just as even their more favoured sisters had not yet advanced very far in the subsidiary accomplishment of spelling. But although in the later part of the 17th century only a fraction of the educated women of this country (and for that matter of its educated men) had learnt how to *spell*—the phonetic or sound-catching method, diversified by the most startling effects of individualism, being still in the ascendant—it is wonderful to observe how well in the wider sense of the word they had learned to *write*. I am drawing no comparisons, remember, between an age of meditative diaries and an age of post and corre-

spondence-cards. But the later half of the 17th century was (I take it) the very golden age of English prose, and all the more so because of the varied fulness which characterised it as an age of transition: when the quaint and rich sententiousness of the later Elizabethan and Jacobean style was, partly with the aid of foreign models, learning to submit to the self-restraint imposed by a purer taste. Thus, even in the private and personal remains with which we are concerned, the interest and pleasure to be derived from the matter are almost invariably enhanced by the charm of the manner.

Shall we, then, among the Good Women of our period, turn in the first instance to a type more common, in our own country at all events, in periods other than the one in question? France, in the earlier years of the 17th century, had its Hôtel de Rambouillet, the home of a woman of that peculiar kind of genius which majestically asserts itself over all the belittling jealousies of literary life, and to whose praise the spiteful lips of a Tallemant conformed themselves as easily as the gushing enthusiasm of the authoress of the *Grand Cyrus* herself. France, I say, had her Mme de Rambouillet, and the whole bevy of lettered ladies of fashion that grew up under her influence like the lilies of her garden, to be succeeded in their turn by a yet more prolific if also more artificial growth. But in England, it would I think not be very difficult to show, the influence of the Renaissance upon female culture had been more isolated and less long-lived, albeit exposed to no such terrible counter-influence as the demoralising fury of the French Civil Wars. The literary aspirations of such daughters of debate as good Lady Jane Grey and our

Tudor Princesses had been quenched in blood, or absorbed in fierce conflicts involving honour, religion, life itself; and in the intellectual movement of the Elizabethan age proper, even if we include in it the florid enthusiasm for which the Queen's own person served as a pretext, the ladies of England had in truth no important share. Euphuism was lisped at Court with a persistency worthy of a better cause; and here and there, as in Sidney's sister, we trace a real love of literary pursuits and insight into their significance; while other names will suggest the fostering care, inconceivable without some measure of ordered self-preparation, consecrated by wise mothers to the training of their sons. But loud above such gentle voices rushes the wild license of later Elizabethan and Jacobean literature, which modern critics, after their kind, have taken far too lightly, but which reflects only too faithfully the rapid degeneration of both public and private morals. At last, this tone gave way to that of conscious self-control, accompanied however too often by a rather sickly sentimentality, which marks the literary age of Charles I and with it the growing literary and social influence of France. No doubt (for the 17th century assimilated rather more slowly than the 19th, in which we imitate so quickly as at times to imitate a little crudely), the sentiments which our Cavalier poets dedicated to their Altheas and Lucastas were not altogether spiritualised; but as a whole the literary tone of the age towards women, while freeing itself from the danger of becoming lawless in one direction, ran the risk of becoming artificial in another. But for the more powerful impulses and stronger currents of feeling which a greater and more

serious time soon brought with it, women might have been driven back into a position nominally supreme and regnant as in the days of chivalry, but in truth unworthy of themselves, as keeping them at a distance from the truest interests of life. It may be worth while to note, in the biography of one of the few literary English-women proper of the epoch of Charles I and the Puritan Revolution, influences and counter-influences at work, which are perceptible to us, though with all her philosophy she was most probably unconscious of their operation.

Very different estimates have been formed by different critics of the literary claims of Margaret Duchess of Newcastle, who, as became so loyal a wife, has left behind her a biography of her husband (considering the subject) of quite sufficient length, but only a brief relation of what was personal to herself. Among her contemporaries—and this at a season when the University of Cambridge was prostrating itself *in corpore* before both their Graces—Samuel Pepys confided to his cipher how “in favour of his eyes,” from which he was suffering, he one night “stayed at home, reading the ridiculous history of my Lord Newcastle, wrote by his wife; which shows her to be a mad, conceited, ridiculous woman, and he an ass to suffer her to write what she writes to him and of him”;—for her literary monument to her husband was, singularly enough, erected during his lifetime. On the other hand, Charles Lamb, with whom most of us would perhaps rather if necessary err than go right with Mr Pepys—although the latter, as knowing his own mind, was no despicable literary critic—Charles Lamb, I say, in words often

enough quoted declares that "where a book is at once both good and rare; where the individual is almost the species, and when that perishes—

We know not where is that Promethean Torch  
That can its light relumine."

"Such a book, for instance," he continues, "is the *Life of the Duke of Newcastle*, by his Duchess—no casket is rich enough, no casing sufficiently durable, to honour and keep such a jewel." And you may remember his reproaches to the importunate friend who had carried off with him on a journey to France from Lamb's library, "in spite of tears and adjurations to forbear, the Letters of that princely woman, the thrice noble Margaret Newcastle. Then, worst cut of all! to transport it with thee to the Gallican land—

Unworthy land to harbour such a sweetness,  
A virtue in which all ennobling thoughts dwell,  
Pure thoughts, kind thoughts, high thoughts, the sex's wonder."

The individual, says Lamb, is, in the case of the Duchess of Newcastle, almost the species; and, indeed, on perusing, in addition to the biographies aforesaid, some segments or fragments of her numerous works, one arrives at the conclusion that they contain a notable residuum of originality. They are voluminous, to be sure, in every sense, being reckoned to amount to thirteen volumes in print, besides a good deal more MS. which, had she lived nowadays, she would doubtless have autotyped in person—for during a great part of her literary career the Duke, as she informs us, could not afford her a secretary; and they contain in prose or verse, and in most known species of the one or the other—dramatic,



narrative didactic and, above all, aphoristic—together with much queer philosophy and various other cleverness out of place, not a little genuine mother-wit and occasional felicity of gnomic phrase. “I have heard,” she says in one of her innumerable prefatory epistles (there never was such a woman for prefaces, a form of composition, speaking generally, more honoured in the breach than in the observance), “that some should say my wit seemed as it would overcome my brain, especially when it works upon philosophical opinions. I am obliged to them for judging my wit stronger than my *brain*: but I should be sorry that they should think my wit stronger than my *reason*: but I must tell them that my brain is stronger than my wit, and my reason as strong as the effeminate sex requires.” She had in fact a scorn she did not care to conceal for any fetters upon the most active part of her nature, her mind. “My only trouble is lest my brain should grow barren, or that the root of my fancies should become insipid, withering into a dull stupidity for want of maturing subjects to write on; for I am of a lazy nature and not of an active disposition as some are that love a journey from town to town, from house to house, delighting in variety of company, making one where the greatest number is.” Originality, she is free to confess, is her *foible* as well as her *forte*: “I always took a delight in singularity, even in accoutrements of habits”; and her portrait, with its aureole of ringlets and turban-like hat, bears out the statement, recalling, if anybody, that other illustrious blue-stocking, Mme de Staël. As for her writings at large, they are just of the kind that delights the one reader in ten thousand who, like Charles Lamb, has a

true eye for stray pearls, whatever labour he may expend on the quest for them. While she illustrates the irrepressible force of natural talent, even if its quality be but thin and its lustre moderate, she proves even more unmistakably the value of that orderly mental training which, it is quite clear, she altogether lacked. Indeed, I gather from a passage in her biography of her husband, where she extols his father for breeding him like a gentleman and not overpowering his good natural wit with school and university learning, that she cherished that contempt for a systematic education by which autodidacts who have written a good many volumes are too often inflated; although there may be some truth in the picture, which she draws elsewhere, of a boy nourished with blows at school and with wind at college—a view of contemporary education borne out by more competent authorities, Milton's to begin with.

But it is not as a moral or social any more than as a natural philosopher that she is likely to interest posterity. Her biography of her husband and the devotion which it reveals have secured her the niche which she occupies—maybe not a very eminent one—among the memorable women of her age. The first Marquis and Duke of Newcastle played a very prominent part in the great Civil War, bearing himself gallantly till his withdrawal to the Continent after the catastrophe of Marston Moor, and sacrificing in the King's cause, according to his wife's calculation, little short of a million sterling. Besides being a brave soldier, though no great general, and a brilliant cavalier who in fencing and more especially in horsemanship was esteemed one of the leading authorities of his times, he assiduously

cultivated his literary faculties and was certainly altogether a most accomplished nobleman. Still, as some men are born to command armies and others to guide the State, so the Duke of Newcastle was manifestly born to be Master of the Horse; and Charles II, in whose training Newcastle had some little share, must have been loth to disappoint him by conferring the post on Monck, whose claims to it were of a totally different nature. Thus, in the lives of the Duke and Duchess who after fifteen years (or thereabouts) of an exile sustained with cheerful dignity were restored to a partial enjoyment of their earlier fortunes, there may be nothing corresponding to a loftier ideal than that of duty generously done, and consolation sought and found in occupations readily commending themselves to minds of natural nobility. And yet there is to me in the personality of the Duchess, as it stands forth from the pages of her brief autobiography, something which, if less than heroic, is more than merely attractive. She tells how she and her sisters were "bred virtuously, modestly, civilly, honourably and on honest principles," and how in her father's house order reigned by the side of plenty, and refinement tempered a gentle discipline of life, wherein "instead of threats reason was used to persuade us, and instead of lashes the deformities of vice were discovered and the graces and virtues were presented to us." Loyalty was a matter of course in her family; she dedicates a poem of evidently deep feeling to the memory of her youngest brother, the Sir Charles Lucas fusilladed at Colchester; but, though his fate was the most tragic, the whole of her family—a singularly united one in both sentiments and habits—

was ruined by the Civil War, together with the great House to which she became linked by marriage. Her part was to bear the buffets of fortune with courage and composure—on one occasion she travelled from Antwerp to London to try whether, by way of an allowance to herself, she could save a fraction of her husband's confiscated estate. The fortunate conformity of tastes and dispositions between the pair enabled them to weather the long-enduring storm, and, when the haven of home had been regained at last, cheered the country solitude to which they were relegated by the selfishness of their sovereign. Very slightly to alter the Duchess's own words, she was "honourably born and nobly matched; she had been bred to elevated thoughts, not to a dejected spirit; her life was ruled with honesty, attended by modesty, and directed by truth." From such a portraiture the vanities and oddities at which we smile fall off easily enough. Literature proved to the Duchess of Newcastle, if you please, nothing more than a noble diversion, but it was pursued in a noble spirit, nor did it divert her from duty, or, because it was her ambition to be a wise, witty and learned body, leave her a less genuine type of a faithful wife.

We cannot, however, all of us be distinguished noblemen; and we need not therefore restrict our ideals of womanly aid and sympathy to ladies of letters whose pens or stylographs are able to "set forth and declare to after ages" our endeavours in word or deed. If, then, the test of fidelity is to be found in that daily self-sacrifice in small things and in great which never so much as whispers to itself whether the effort needed be great or small—then I know not among the good women of

this age where to find such another ministering wife as Dame Mary Verney, whose experiences and sufferings have recently been unfolded together with those of the grand old English country family into which she married in the charming *Memoirs of the Verney Family during the Civil War*. The book, like the stately and hospitable home of which it treats, is full of family portraits in face of which, with a guide such as the late Lady Verney, who but would love to linger during a long summer afternoon? There is, first and foremost, the gallant Sir Edmund Verney, *ultimus Angliæ Bannerettus*, who bore the standard of King Charles without flinching to the last hour—nay to the last moment—of his life. For, after at Edgehill the tide of battle had turned against the royalists, and the struggle round the standard itself had become furious in the extreme, Sir Edmund on being offered his life by a throng of his enemies, on condition that he would deliver the standard, made answer to them that his life was his own, but the standard was his and their sovereign's, and he would not deliver it while he lived. So he sold it and his life at the price of sixteen gentlemen who fell that day by his sword. The standard was taken, and round its staff still clung, severed from the arm, the hand which had grasped it, faithful in death. This knight without fear and reproach, says the writer from whose narrative of Edgehill fight these sentences are taken, was "one of the strictness and piety of a Puritan, of the charity of a Papist, of the civility of an Englishman; whose family, the King his Master would say, was 'the model he would propose to the gentlemen'; whose carriage was such that he was

called 'the only courtier that was not complained of.'" For, by the traditions of his House, by the principles which prevailed in his and Hampden's county, and by his own religious and political convictions, he had been brought to judge with perfect clearness of the course in which the King had engaged. But then, the King was the King his Master, who had early taken him into his personal service, and for whom he felt bound to sacrifice himself all in all. His eldest son Ralph might furnish a less picturesque figure for romance; but for students of history he has an even greater interest as an admirable type of the best class of country-gentlemen of his day—gentle and courteous; a very mainstay to his brothers and sisters and all the members of his numerous family of which he found himself perforce the managing head already during the later years of his father's life; a thorough man of business, and in Parliament, as is known from his notes of the debates, a member equally conscientious and intelligent. His religious views, like his manners which derived their tone from them, were sober and free from the slightest tendency to precisianism and cant; and in his political creed he was loyal to the core, with that truest and manliest kind of loyalty—an immovable reverence for the law—which is unintelligible alike to Courts and to mobs. You must turn to the book for a narrative of Sir Ralph Verney's many trials both public and private. Acting simply as his conscience bade him act, he held by the Parliament in the great struggle till, by its attempted imposition of the Covenant upon all its members, it seemed to him to seek to coerce him in that wherein his spirit would not brook coercion. So he left behind him his beloved

house of Claydon and his country, and became an exile with his wife and children. The long family of brothers and sisters fell as it were to pieces behind him—how I wish I could describe its members to you—the brave Sir Edmund the younger, treacherously slain by the Cromwellians after the massacre at Drogheda—Tom, the black sheep of the family, a most unfortunate traveller in many lands and seas, always impecunious, and always full of promises and prospectuses, abuse and excuse, ingratitude and self-satisfaction—his more cold-blooded but scarcely more amiable brother Henry—and their five sisters with their husbands, hard to catch in those troublous times, when indeed it required much faith to put trust in the proverb concerning the place where marriages are made.

But Sir Ralph himself cannot have thought the proverb musty; and it is full time to speak of his wife. Pray, look for a moment at the photograph of Van Dyck's charming painting of her at Claydon! It is, I suppose, merely or chiefly the style of the dress and the *coiffure* which, they scan with the inimitable style of the painter himself, at once recalls his portrait of a contemporary lady who was likewise a very faithful wife in her way, but of whom the most indulgent censor could hardly assert that she proved altogether a blessing to her consort—I mean of course Queen Henrietta Maria. "Mischief," to be sure, was Sir Ralph Verney's favourite designation for the pride of his eyes and the joy of his heart; and there are other indications (apart from the delightfully natural style of her letters) to show that she had in her that element of vivacity which gentlemen both in town and country are apt to relish in the partners of their daily

life. She seems moreover to have been by no means a woman without accomplishments; and in the depth of her troubles her husband bade her keep up her practice on her guitar, or (he added with a playfulness worthy of Sir Peter Teazle) he would on her return home break her fiddle about her pate.

Alas! there was little guitar-playing and little laughter for poor Lady Verney on her journey from France to London, undertaken in order to get the sequestration taken off her "delinquent" husband's estate. A plain-spoken friend of the unfortunate family had recommended that she should bring with her, in order to produce an effective petition to the Parliament, a soliciting temper, and ability to use the juice of an onion sometimes for the softening of hard hearts. Women, wrote another of her husband's counsellors, were never so useful as now; and his best course would be to instruct his wife, and to leave her to act it with committees—women's "sex entitles them to many privileges, and we find the comfort of them more now than ever." Her task, difficult enough in itself, was complicated by the circumstance that the debts incurred by her husband's father and the annuities charged on the estate by his will had obliged Sir Ralph before the sequestration to put Claydon under trustees—so that, at the very time when she had to raise funds to smooth the way of the petition, and to obtain money from her husband's debtors, numerous claims were pressed upon her by others to whom he in turn was in debt by no fault of his own. His relations were clamorous, and Tom was perfectly insupportable. All this time, the husband and children whom she had left



behind her were living almost entirely on her fortune; "for my land," she afterwards wrote to him, "I should have been very glad to have kept enough of it to have provided well for my two younger boys and my girl; but if that cannot be, thou mayest as freely dispose of that as of myself."

She had not been settled with her maid in her London lodgings for many weeks, before, in the midst of her weary endeavours, a fever cast her down upon her bed and kept her there 18 days; and when the fever left her it had brought her so low that, as she writes, she was unable to go twice the length of her chamber; her maid fell sick, too, "so that I am in so great a strait that I know not what in the world to do, for 'tis a torment to me to have a stranger come near me, but I trust God will give me patience to bear all these afflictions." The delays in her business were endless, for in Parliament the Presbyterian majority was still confident of maintaining its ascendancy; her correspondence with her husband, so far as it could be carried on at all, could only be conducted by means of a kind of private cipher; and amid all these hopes and fears a baby was born to the poor wife. She had wished it to be christened by her husband's name Ralph; he (poor man) had a half-superstitious fear of his unlucky name being imposed upon the infant, and exclaims (assuredly with no thought of one of the most pathetic passages in Greek tragedy which his words recall): "If the boy's name be Richard, I shall hope he may be a happy man; but if it be otherwise I will not prophesy his ill-fortune, but rather pray to God to make him an honest man, and then he will be happy enough." Soon after its birth

the child sickened, and on its recovery—when three weeks old—was sent off to Claydon House—partly by coach, partly on horseback, bedded on pillows in front of its nurse's husband; "and pray do you see," writes the anxious mother, "that they take a great care of the child, and that they go very softly, for the weather is very hot; if he carries the child before him it must be tied about him with a garter, and truly I think it will be a very good way, for the child will not endure to be long out of one's arms."

A month or two afterwards, business in London having been completely stopped as the army acquired the mastery over public affairs, Lady Verney herself made her way to Claydon, where one of her little boys had been left behind by the family. She found it full of soldiers, "God send us well quit of them." Nothing could be more touching than the good housewife's lament over the desolation which she met in the half-ruined home; and most pathetic of all is her anxiety to execute and report on all her husband's minute commissions; for he was one of those excellent business men who expect things to go on by clock-work even when the world is out of joint. Hardly had her business taken her back to town, when the news reached her of the death of the baby, which had hitherto thriven with its nurse at Claydon; and then came the still sadder tidings that two of her children abroad had been likewise taken away. I cannot quote her letters—what is it that sustains a mother under such afflictions? Her husband's fortitude for a time gave way completely, and he talked of seeking a refuge alone in some remote land where peradventure death might overtake him.

“Truly,” she responds, “this very notion of yours hath gone so near me that I have scarce had one night’s rest since I received your letter. I had enough upon me before, and I praise my God that he hath kept my heart from breaking all this while.” And so it came to pass that her constancy was rewarded, and that, after labours which had lasted altogether for rather more than a year, her petition was granted and the sequestration business was referred to a Committee of the Lords and Commons (“I took up £40,” she writes, “and paid it the same day, you may imagine for what”); and a few months later the case came before the Committee, and the sequestration was removed.

Three months later she set forth on her return journey; for want of money still prevented her husband from coming back to England, and it behoved her to be still as prudent as ever. As a coach from London to Rye would cost £7, she resolved if she “had health enough, to ride on horseback; and I hope I shall carry my boy Jack safe and lap him up warm...my dearest Rogue, it joys my heart to think how soon I shall be with thee....I am for ever thine own.” One summer and one winter they spent together; and then when May came again, Mary Verney left her husband once more, and this time for ever. The strain had been too severe. With infinite trouble Sir Ralph brought about the interment of her remains in Middle Claydon Church, where a bust of her is still to be seen; and he mourned her during the forty-six years of life which still remained for him—years full of public and private duties honourably performed, and of grief unutterable.

More than one companion-picture better known to

fame might be placed by the side of this hurried sketch. Lady Verney's devotion to her husband—her sweet compliance, as he pathetically calls it—was given to a man of stainless honour and inflexible uprightness. The extraordinary services rendered to Colonel Hutchinson in life, and to his reputation after death, by his celebrated wife and biographer can hardly be unknown to many in my audience. It was Lucy Hutchinson's conviction that the Colonel's many misfortunes were due to the conscientiousness which forbade his swerving at any time from his own straightforward course. If it was not very early in the Civil War that he found, as he phrases it, "a clear call from the Lord" to take up arms on the side with which he sympathised, on the other hand he retained his seat in the House of Commons even after proceedings to which his wife states him to have objected. He was (according to the same authority) a regicide on compulsion; and this may have made it the easier at the Restoration for her to plead in his name "a signal repentance," which saved his life. She may have gone rather far in asserting that "there was nothing he durst not suffer but sin against God"; but, notwithstanding the Puritan discipline to which she had come to submit herself, and to which she readily sacrificed her consciousness of having translated so unsanctified an author as Lucretius, hers was not a nature to love or hate by halves. In return, her learning and her ability, her high spirit and her enthusiasm, more than justify her husband's dying commendation of her as "above the pitch of ordinary women"; while her heroic devotion to him during a long succession of perilous years, in the course of which a fatal catastrophe

was only avoided by her woman's wit, would entitle her, were the allusion not slightly incongruous, to a place among the good women of all time not far from that of Alcestis herself.

Nor very far (you will perhaps more appropriately suggest) from a wife and widow of the generation next to Mrs Hutchinson's own, who was under no delusion in honouring her life's hero as the martyr of his country's liberties. Lord William Russell may not have been an altogether flawless patriot; but the tyrant's fears which slew him (for Charles II was a tyrant without a body-guard) shook the wretched relics of arbitrary government as effectively as they did the paltry soul of the trembler on the Throne. And, most assuredly, Lady Rachel Russell will be remembered by the side of her husband, even as she sat by him at his trial, pen in hand, with her eyes fixed on the beloved lips so soon to be blanched in death. The written memorial of her wifely devotion differs greatly from Mrs Hutchinson's panegyric of her husband; and, though Lady Russell's letters, all of which belong to the period, extending over nearly half a century, of her widowhood, have been frequently reprinted, they hardly make so much as a pretence to style. It is as if the great Whig lady (for as such she seems to present herself even in her modest widow's weeds) had preserved even through her life-long grief that combination of aristocratic undemonstrativeness and of openness to matter of fact which is a note of the species. Her religious sentiment too, as might be expected in the friend of the Low or (as we should say) Broad Church divines of her day, was but little tinged by the enthusiasm of the beautiful souls cherished by

Herbert or Ken—the good women who might have sat for their portraits to the lamented authoress of the *Récit d'une Sœur*. To the figure of Lady Rachel Russell, and to the mingled pathos and humour of her venerable old age no pen but that of our own Mrs Gaskell could have done justice; no other touch at once genial and tender could have brought before us the grand and good old lady—half in this world and half out of it, dreaming of what she had lost and waited for so long, but kept awake “though evening is creeping upon me, by a grandchild, who was willing to take her dinner with me, her sister having taken physic, and she not loving a boiled chicken.” She had lived to see many things, and was large-hearted enough to be able to render thanks for the fulfilment of aspirations which had cost her the happiness of her life. Yet what had sustained her had been a sense of duty to the living as well as to the dead: “That I have not sunk under the pressure, has been I hope in mercy, that I might be better fitted for my eternal state, and form the children of a loved husband before I go hence.”

During a great part of the period of our public history which brought to Lady Rachel Russell the consoling conviction that her husband had not died in vain, a lot which I almost think was harder to bear than hers fell to the share of the first lady in the land. Though the theme of much courtly eulogy and after death of much rhetorical sentiment on the page of party history, the good Queen Mary has in my judgment not received the full meed due to her either of praise or of pity. The censors of her conduct towards her father have not known of the evidence, wrung as it were from her own

lips, of the searchings of heart she had to undergo. The admirers of her services to the cause of her husband say as little as possible of her magnanimity in suffering as well as acting for him to whom she had gone in tears, and who was very tardy, and the reverse of eager, in his efforts to dry them. Religious biographers, who are lost in admiration for the records of lives which might be epitomised under the title of Mendelssohn's overture "Calm sea and prosperous voyage," have not as yet penetrated into the depths of agonising trouble revealed by the *Letters and Diaries of Queen Mary*, in whom, if ever in a woman, faith overcame. If she was not wholly successful in her efforts to better her age by statute, yet it was most assuredly the better for the example she set on the Throne of beneficent activity, of unsullied modesty, of utter self-forgetfulness, and of a piety so gentle and unostentatious as to be safely left to be a witness to itself.

My sands are running out; but it would perhaps in any case be most fit to leave to religious biography proper the praises of those "devout and honourable women" of whom quite a little calendar has been put together by tender and reverent hands. I therefore merely mention the name of Margaret Lady Maynard, the Monica, as Dean Plumtre calls her, of Little Easton, where Ken drew inspiration from what on her death he called the glory of her example. Unfortunately, the correspondence between them from which Ken quoted so largely in his famous funeral sermon has wholly perished; and in the house where she led her pure and pious life nothing remains to recall her memory but a portrait imperfectly suggestive (at least in its repro-

duction) of so spiritual an existence. And I also pass by in all but silence Lady Maynard's neighbour, Mary Countess of Warwick; although of this good woman whose type was more essentially Puritan, the remains left to us are comparatively copious. I have read much of her original writing in her *Rules for a Holy Life*, and in her meditations and reflexions, some of which, connecting themselves in gentle imaginativeness with suggestions from outward things—a fine carpet on a dusty table, many candles lighted at once, and the like—remind us how this practice of searching for similes and symbols had spread over both plains and heights in the literature of her age. As for her *Autobiography*, I may be pardoned for hinting that it has just the sub-flavour which is perhaps unavoidable where the good things of this world are so abundant as to require a passing notice; even the author of the famous funeral sermon on Lady Warwick—who has not heard of Dr Walker's so-called Εὐρηκα sermon, *The Virtuous Woman found, her Loss bewailed, and Character Exemplified?*—thinks the saying of her husband worth commemorating, that he would rather have her with five thousand pounds, than any other wife with twenty. In her *Diary*, which has been reprinted in an incomplete form by so modern an agency as the Religious Tract Society, there is more unction, and no reader will mistake the sincerity of the pious lady, striving to guide her life aright step by step and upward day by day in the midst of surroundings at once worldly and commonplace. If in this as in many another biography of the same class one may individually miss the charm from which there is no escaping, it may perhaps be with



some lives of which we read as with others whereof we are ourselves witnesses that their full beauty only discloses itself to an intimate knowledge. Let us beware of the process so exhilarating even to experienced authors of jumping to conclusions: lest we should fall on the other side like Carlyle in his angry and foregone estimate of the latter-day household of the Common Life founded by another good woman of this age, the mother of Nicolas Ferrar. I would therefore fain include—if you will bear with me for a few moments longer—with an example I have myself long held dear of what may surely without affectation be called the highest type of good women in this or any other age. Or is it but a way of speaking to say that there are some who, not in mere phases or moods, but in the transparent essence of their lives, seem to stand in more constant and more conscious contact than other men and women with that which is not of this earth?

Such a one, if we may trust the extant evidence of her brief career, handled by her biographer Evelyn with a tenderness so exquisite that the dew seems still to linger on the beautiful flower which knew no noontide, was Margaret Blagge, afterwards, but only for a brief time, Mrs Godolphin. It may seem a strange fate which, not by one of the conventional matches then so common but after a course of true love which ran anything but smooth, mated so spirited a being with one by profession a politician and a placeman. Considering Godolphin's services, and his loyalty, and his gentlemanly dislike of undue self-assertion, one may credit the legend that Queen Anne, who was not ungrateful when she was pleased, fell in love with him;

but it seems less in the fitness of things that he should have led captive so refined and elevated a nature as that of his wife. And perhaps we may say that he did not lead her nature captive, inasmuch as it was not given to him to do so; but that the loyalty and constancy of his affection were by her loyalty and unfalteringly returned. The child of a father distinguished by his fidelity to Charles I and of a mother whom she was afterwards thought in both mind and body to resemble, Margaret Blagge was early tried in the faith in which she had been bred. On being taken to France while still a young child, a futile attempt had been made at Queen Henrietta Maria's Court to gain her over to the Church of Rome; on her return, she was held fit at the early age of eleven for confirmation by good Bishop Gunning of Ely, the friend of Ken and the author of the beautiful prayer "for all sorts and conditions of men." Soon afterwards, the girl was named maid-of-honour to the Duchess of York—poor Ann Hyde, of whose desolate death, without the rites either of the Church she had forsaken or of that which she had adopted, her young attendant has a touching note: "none remembered her after one week, none sorry for her." But it needed no such warning to wean Margaret Blagge from the influence of her surroundings. In the midst of wantonness and debauchery (for what boots it to call such things by softer names?) her life was pure, innocent and holy; nor says her biographer, "used she to trick and dress herself up, though in so splendid and vain a theatre, to the purposes of vanity." Evelyn tells us how it was many years—almost seven, he conscientiously calculates—before he could convince himself that either she or

anyone else "in her Court circumstances" was what he found her to be when he had at last gained her friendship. Then, as the confidant of her highest thoughts, he came to understand her real life—a life of both active and contemplative piety, fruitful in good works, eagerly sympathetic with the sufferings and the struggles of others, a guide as well as an example. For what was evil, this Una shrank from it instinctively; "avoid those people," she writes in her *Diary*, "when I come into the drawing-room...be sure" (O for sacred Majesty!) "be sure never to talk to the King." And yet the sweet simplicity of her manner at times expanded into the most delightful gaiety; "'tis hardly to be imagined," says the sedate Evelyn, "the talent she peculiarly had in repeating a comical part or acting it, when in a cheerful humour and amongst particular friends she would sometimes divert them....Certainly she was the most harmless and diverting creature in nature."

After she had for some time served as maid-of-honour to the Queen, she received the permission she had long desired to retire from the Court. Though her troth was plighted to Godolphin, his fortune—or the road to it—had not yet been found; and her hopes were at first set upon country retirement in the West. While her uncertainty continued, she was brought back for a moment to the scenes to which she had hoped to return no more. A comedy or masque called *Calisto* was performed at Court by princesses and other great people of fashion, and in this she was commanded to play the principal part. "She had on her that day near £20,000 value of jewels, which were more set off with her native beauty and lustre than any they contributed of their own to hers; in a word, she seemed to me," says Evelyn,

“a Saint in Glory, abstracting her from the stage. For I must tell you that whilst the rest were acting, and that her part was sometimes to go off, as the scenes required, into the tiring rooms, where several Ladies her companions were railing with the gallants triflingly enough till they were called on to re-enter, she, under pretence of conning her next part, was retired into a corner, reading a book of devotion without at all concerning herself or mingling with the young company; as if she had no further part to act, who was the principal person of the Comedy; nor this with the least discernible affectation, but to divert and take off her thoughts from the present vanity, which from her soul she abhorred.”

Soon afterwards she was united to the husband of her choice, and accompanied him to Paris, where she had as best she could to bear with the empty life of fashion—talk and cards, and cards and “prate” again. On their return home they settled near Scotland Yard on the banks of the Thames, in the happy home which the good Evelyn took pleasure in helping them furnish with marble chimney-pieces and Indian curiosities. Here at last she could possess her soul in quiet, and enjoy the freedom she prized—the freedom of leading a peaceful virtuous and religious life. “Nothing in this world had she more to wish but what God soon afterwards gave her, that she might be mother of a child.” So passionately had she desired this that she had, in the third year of her marriage, taken home to her a poor orphan girl “whom she tended, instructed and cherished with the tenderness of a natural mother.” At last her prayer was granted, and all seemed well when she unexpectedly sank. I know of few things more touching in biography than the cry which went

up from her unhappy husband, whom history knows as an astute and cautious man of the world: "My poor wife is fallen very ill of a fever, with lightness in her head. You know who says the prayer of the faithful shall save the sick; I humbly beg your prayers, for this poor creature and your distracted servant." But it was ordered otherwise. After a brief struggle and delirium—in which, says her biographer, "This only was highly remarkable, that in all this disorder of fancy and almost distraction, she uttered not one syllable or expression that might in the least offend God, or any creature"—her innocent soul passed tranquilly away.

Alas, Deyth, what eyleth thee,  
That thou n'oldest have taken me,  
When that thou tooke my lady swete?  
That was so faire, so fresh, so free,  
So goodè, that men may well see  
Of all goodness she had no mete.

Ladies and gentlemen, the continuity of history of which the great teacher whom we have recently lost used to remind us so often lies not only in laws and institutions, or even in qualities of land or race. It lies also in the vitality of currents of another kind. Thin though they appear at times and liable to dry up like the streams of his own Sicily—their origin is not necessarily mystic like Arethusa's: and they are seen to revive when the spring returns, as return it does. Nay, it is even permitted to the generations that come and go to do their part towards cherishing and directing the flow of the element which fertilises and refreshes and delights—and therein to labour not for themselves alone, but for the ages which shall succeed them.

## 23. THE POEMS OF BISHOP KEN

(Lecture to the Owens College Literary Society, Nov. 21, 1894)

FOUR volumes<sup>1</sup>, which, though not exactly to be called rare, have of late come to be rather scarce, contain nearly everything known to have been written in verse by Bishop Ken, with the exception of a few recently discovered productions of no particular importance, and of the *Morning* and *Evening Hymns* with which hardly anyone of us is likely to be unfamiliar, and perhaps also of the rather less widely known *Midnight Hymn*. Now, as some of my hearers may be aware, there is a good deal about Ken's poems in the excellent biography of him by the late Dean Plumptre<sup>2</sup>, one of the very best books of its kind with which I am acquainted—the result of a vast amount of labour concealed beneath a perfectly unaffected style, and a work as full of instruction as it is of entertainment. But the most generous and the most candid critic (and the late Dean of Wells was both) cannot help a student to an opinion of his own concerning a writer in whom he is interested; and so, though Ken's reputation does not depend upon his verse, I was glad at last to be able to read his poems for myself. If you will allow me, I should like, on this occasion, to communicate to you

<sup>1</sup> *The Poems of Bishop Ken*. Ed. William Hawkins. 4 vols. 1721.

<sup>2</sup> *The Life of Thomas Ken, D.D. Bishop of Bath and Wells*. By E. M. Plumptre, D.D., Dean of Wells. 2 vols. 1888.

some of the impressions made upon me by the Poems of which I speak, although it may very well be that for many in my audience they possess no special interest. But I take it that one of the purposes for which you have widened the range of this Society's proceedings, was to enable each member in his turn to speak to the rest straight from out of the sphere of his own immediate literary interests, studies or tastes. I trust that I may not appear to be testing the wisdom of this change by too hopelessly dull a paper; but even were it so, I would ask your indulgence, because I believe that the variety and directness which our new freedom of choice will secure to our communications and discussions in this Society will more than compensate for the divergence between that which attracts some of us, and that which interests others. Nor do I think that one runs any serious danger of losing one's sense of perspective by not being always on the mountain-tops. Ken was not a great poet, and I doubt whether, except as the author of the two Hymns to which I have referred, he ever will be held a popular one. Yet his poetry was an integral part of his sweet and noble nature; and contact with it cannot but be refining and ennobling.

The life of Bishop Ken itself, although in a rather different sense from that in which this might be predicated of his poetry, is not, I need hardly say, above criticism. Apart from the fact that to some of us his conduct at its most critical season may seem Quixotic rather than heroic, he was by no means absolutely impervious to impulses with which only a very determined partisan could sympathise. When Bishop Kidder, who had been put in possession of Ken's see

on his own deprivation, was with his wife killed by the fall of a stack of chimneys through the roof into their bedroom, Ken was human enough to see a divine dispensation in the event:

Forc'd from my Flock, I daily saw with Tears  
A Stranger's Ravage two Sabbatick Years;  
But I forbear to tell the dreadfull Stroke,  
Which freed my Sheep from their Erastian Yoke.

But the critic would be keen-eyed indeed who should be able to point out many such blemishes upon the white record of his blameless life. Such was the purity of his conduct both in public and in private, such the simple sincerity of faith with which through his long career he sustained the burdens laid upon him in the flesh and in the spirit—twenty years of exclusion from the see and its work to which his heart was given up, and a not much shorter tale of years of prostrating sickness which would have paralysed the powers of a less trustful mind—such was the loyalty with which he sacrificed to conscience all the honour and power and wealth attaching to the episcopal office, and such was the moderation with which he refused to pass over with others into factious resistance and active aggression—finally such were the charm, the dignity, the beauty of his personal bearing in adversity and in prosperity alike, that he is accepted by common consent, and not by the voice of any single party or religious body, as one of our national worthies. It is of no use quarrelling with such preferences of public opinion—we meet with them in history and in literature as we meet with them in the experience of daily life; it is more profitable to try to appreciate what more or less, though not always



completely, justifies them. Ken was described by an accomplished French man of letters as the Fénélon of England, and their likeness in character and conduct is quite as striking as that between their tendencies of religious thought and feeling. Ken's gentle nature was true to itself in the conflict sustained by him with the hard and selfish age in which his lot had fallen; and thus his name is still loved by a posterity which has relatively little in common with him as to the principles which steeled him in his resistance to his times.

Ken, as we shall see a little later, was fond of comparing his own experiences with those of St Gregory the Nazianzene, who like him was driven from his pastoral charge by the *fiat* of secular authority, and who like him sought consolation and strength for bearing his misfortunes in sacred song. And, although such poetic comparisons do not call for any rigorous testing, and although William the Dutchman and his Latitudinarian Bishops were not an exact reproduction of Julian the Apostate and his Pagan priests, the religious and the political agitations of the period covered by Ken's life were violent enough; and the more one reads the history of that age, the more difficult does one find it to draw a clear line of distinction between its political and its religious interests. The side taken by Ken in these contentions was determined for him, in the first instance, by the tradition of personal descent; for, though he was not a man of family, his paternal ancestry seems to have been connected with the royalist side, and his elder sister was married to a man whose name, though he was but a London tradesman, counts for much among those who shaped and sustained the ideas

of the High Church party in the country at large. His name was Izaak Walton, who is more generally remembered for his *Compleat Angler* than for his religious biographies; yet those who have read the latter will bear me out when I say that there are few biographical essays in our literature which take hold of the imagination, and as it were possess the mind, more thoroughly than Walton's lives of Donne and Herbert and the companion biographies. We do not know how far Ken was in his youth introduced through Walton to the society of some of these representatives of Church sentiment in one of its most attractive phases (it is that which the genius of the author of *John Inglesant* has contrived to reflect upon a modern page). We may, however, rest assured that the impressions he may have derived from such sources were strengthened by the local admonitions of Winchester, where he went to school and where, like all pupils of that most conservative of English seminaries, he left a great part of his heart. Yet when Ken was carving his name in its cloisters, Winchester was already under Parliamentary *régime*, so that, even as a boy, Ken was "deprived" of some of the things his heart loved best, or at least only allowed to enjoy them in a curtailed or, as it must have seemed to him, mutilated form. The same was the case at Oxford, where he spent the years from 1656 to 1661—only that here the reaction against the change had already set in even before his arrival there as an undergraduate: the College chapels were gradually re-assuming their ancient garb, and music, the favourite art of the English Restoration age, was lending her aid to soften the severity of the rule of Puritanism.

The usages of Izaak Walton's house, of Winchester School and of New College gained the mastery over a willing pupil in Ken, and gave to his mind that tone which is recognisable in every page of his poetry. Though not, as yet at least, a poet, he was a singer before he became a divine—and his religious thought, already before the time when it began to take definite shape, had the *afflatus* of musical emotion. Thus, common thoughts began to drop off from his nature, and the grosser enjoyments of life, if I may so say, began to pall upon him before he had more than tasted of them. So I would interpret the quasi-confessions of *Hymnotheo*, in which, probably with that exaggeration of his actual experiences which may be pardoned in the author of an epical poem, he represents the hero of the poem, i.e. himself, as having in his youth wandered astray in the groves of Daphne. (Daphne is the name given in the poem to the haunts of luxury and indulgence at Antioch; it is also, as the readers of *John Inglesant* may remember, the name given at Oxford to the grove of Trinity College, which was used as a promenade for the gay world, more especially during the enforced sojourn of the court of King Charles I in the loyal university town.) In the poem, Satan the Tempter urges Hymnotheo to pay a flying visit to Daphne, well knowing that to eager Youth the first step into such surroundings rarely proves the last.

In Daphne, that sweet Grove, your entrance make,  
You'll of the joys of God's Elect partake,  
I'll with the Chariot your Return await,  
While all your youthful Appetites you sate.

And so it would have befallen with Hymnotheo, but that he was preserved by the Divine protection.

Soon as he enter'd the enchanting Place,  
 He lost all Sense of Evangelic Grace,  
 To gratify all Lusts was his sole Aim,  
 To silence Conscience, and extinguish Shame;  
 The full Delight of ev'ry Vice he try'd,  
 Yet something wanting in each Vice descry'd;  
 Often he ran the same polluting Round,  
 In Hope full Satisfaction might be found;  
 But sensual Joys defective are at Height,  
 They starve the Soul, while they the Flesh Delight;  
 And that Delight is Surfeit more than Feast,  
 Degrading God-like Souls below the Beast:  
 Kind Heav'n from Lusts unnatural him restrain'd,  
 Lest he should irrecov'rably be ban'd.

From which I think we may gather that it was certainly not the Puritan rules and regulations, which appear to have been stricter at Ken's College than at any other in Oxford, nor the satiety which overtakes those who have fallen victims to temptation, but the safe-guard of a noble nature, trained in what is good and pure, which prevented Ken from those early errors that corrupt so many a promising life in the very flower of its youth. But the passage, like others in his poems, proves that his eyes were not shut to what he had escaped.

In 1661 or 1662, we do not know exactly when, Ken was ordained, and, in 1663, he was appointed to the rectory of Little Easton in Essex, the seat of a stedfast royalist, Lord Maynard, who as such had been an active promoter of the Restoration. Ken was thus brought into relation which proved of importance to him with

the restored royal family; but of greater significance for his spiritual life was his friendship with Lady Maynard, one of those pure and at the same time highly cultivated women whose names shine like stars over the turbid sea of the age in which their lot was cast. Ken, whose gentle nature, refined taste and sympathetic spirit peculiarly fitted him (like Fénelon) for such intercourse, was afterwards intimate with other ladies whom we love to remember for the exalted piety which they united to remarkable intellectual gifts—with the high-minded Lady Warwick and with the Princess Mary, in whom suffering was only gradually developing the qualities which after she had mounted the throne her own modesty obscured hardly less than did the malignity of her enemies; but the friendship of Lady Maynard, whose best monument is the funeral sermon afterwards preached by him, was probably the most potent influence of the kind which helped to mould his nature. I do not know with which of the Good Women she should be specially identified, for whom in his series of poems severally entitled *Psyche*, *Sion or Philothea*, and *Urania or the Spouse's Garden* he has, after his fashion, invented allegorical names—Tranquilla, Electa, Cordelia, Devota—there is, in truth, no end to the names of these fair choristers of worship and praise; but indirectly it would be a mistake to suppose that he allegorised in so direct a fashion, and these figures merely possess the element of vitality which personal remembrance may have added to the fervour of his sentiment. So, without appropriating the picture of Lady Maynard more than to any other of the ministering angels whom Ken had known, or whom he had divined, I will ask you

to recall the many in the one—*Agapia*, the feminine personification of Charity:

Agapia, coming from above,  
Compos'd of perfect Loveliness and Love,  
I spy'd in her late Passage through the Sphere  
On Angel's wings with swift Career:  
Whither, said I, Blest Virgin, do you go?  
Pursue my Track, said she, and you shall know.

This track leads the poet to the haunts of distress and suffering, among which she moves and dispenses her angelic remedies.

She, when her Cargo she had spent,  
To Heav'n with the unladen Angels went.  
God, who in Acts of Mercy takes delight,  
With brightest Glory grac'd her sight;  
No Grace on Earth more Jesus-like appears  
Than Charity, none more to God endears.

At Little Easton, and afterwards at Brightstone near Carisbrook in the Isle of Wight, and then again at Winchester, where he became chaplain, prebendary and fellow of the College, Ken spent twelve tranquil years, living the life of a minister of religion and a student, and writing devotional works to which no reference need be made here. Then—a Hymnotheo no longer likely to turn aside to the groves of Daphne—he started on a long journey through France and Italy, as well as parts of Germany and the Low Countries, of which his poems contain only very occasional reminiscences, but which cannot have been without influence upon the mental and moral growth of which they offer contributory testimony. It is, however, only in rare instances that such outward impressions as those of travel

exercise a determining force, when received in the later years of life—and Ken was nearly forty when he set forth on his travels. We think of Milton when, a generation earlier, he visited Italy, and shall look in vain in the case of Ken for any similar effect to that which a face to face familiarity with the beautiful land, her art and her literature, lastingly exercised upon the great poet. In one respect, however, a parallel forces itself upon us between the two travellers—the Puritan and the Church divine alike came home, unmoved by such allurements as ecclesiastical Rome could still put forth to Englishmen of piety and learning. Ken had probably had some cognisance of those allurements in his younger days at Oxford, where Roman Catholic influences had not been wanting in the reaction against the Puritan *régime*; but, if he had remained untouched by them then, he was certainly not stirred by any closer acquaintance with them now. I had noted in his poems a number (not large) of references to Rome and her distinctive doctrines or claims, and they are all hostile, though not violently so. Dean Plumptre, I find on referring to his biography, has arrived at much the same result on much the same evidence. But the matter, in truth, while of direct importance to a biographer, hardly concerns students of his poetry except in so far as it shows a whole storehouse of suggestions, associations and illustrations—which was open to such a poet as Crashaw—to have been practically closed to Ken. The Blessed Blandina, one of the Martyrs of Lyons, is so far as I remember the only Black Letter Saint celebrated in his verse.

After his return to England, Ken entered into a

closer connexion with the Court, and as a consequence in part of the years 1679 and 1680 actually filled the position of chaplain at the Hague to the Princess Mary, then newly married to the Prince of Orange. His discreet conduct, in a position of which I cannot here enlarge upon the difficulties, further commended him to the goodwill of King Charles II; and he soon afterwards temporarily held the post of chaplain at Tangier, the Gibraltar of the Restoration age. The royal favours which these diverse services secured, Ken, as the testimony of a wellknown anecdote need not be invoked to show, scorned to make sure by unworthy means. Thus, his nomination to the episcopal see of Bath and Wells, when it fell vacant in the last year of the King's reign, honoured the bestower of the dignity as well as its recipient; and years of tranquil usefulness seemed to open for Bishop Ken in the midst of surroundings singularly congenial. For while, to not a few of us, the memory of Ken adds one of the most attractive associations to those which animate the charms of the beautiful cathedral city of Wells—how easy it is to understand what it soon became to him and remained to him after he had been personally severed from it! St Andrew, to whom the Cathedral is dedicated, became as it were his patron saint, and in the Introduction to his poems appears in that character, descending from Heaven with his divine commission, and hovering awhile ere he alights on Theodorodunum, in the turret of Avalon (Glastonbury).

With the fateful accession of James II to the Throne of these Islands began that portion of Ken's life which is so well known to fame that I need say little



or nothing about it here—his period of trial and suffering and—I do not scruple to use the word, though I use it only in its true and not in its technical sense—of martyrdom. For he was a witness, not (as I view it) to the truth of any particular doctrines or to the value of any particular principles of ecclesiastical or political government—but to the spirit of self-consistency which is at the bottom of all true loyalty, and to the spirit of love which underlies all true religion. You know how soon the public troubles of the land came home to the good Bishop in his Western home after the accession of James II. The first warning which the Roman Catholic King received with callous disdain—Monmouth's rebellion—had Ken's diocese for its principal scene; and he was one of the prelates who accompanied Monmouth on the scaffold. More heartrending to him was the spectacle which met him on his return to Wells, where the prisons were filled with the rebels captured at Sedgmoor, awaiting their trial by Judge Jeffreys at the Bloody Assize. It is probable that Ken's exertions prevented the continuance of the application of martial law before the assizes opened; but when they opened he was powerless except in relieving the sufferings of the imprisoned and perhaps here and there mitigating some of the details of their punishments. When not long afterwards King James by his First Declaration of Indulgence commenced his fatal policy of bribing—or rather of attempting to bribe—Protestant Non-conformity at the risk of falling out with the established Church—a policy fatal because it was woven out of ropes of sand—Ken waited long before he took up a decisive attitude. But, though he paused as became a

supporter of the Crown and one whom the reigning family had specially befriended, no act or word of his belied the convictions that were in him. When the Second Declaration of Indulgence set the seal upon the King's political self-destruction, Ken as we all know was one of the Seven Bishops whose refusal to become the instruments of this policy proved the signal of its overthrow. But, when the Revolution swept the ill-advised author of the Declarations from the Throne, Ken refused to act with those who—without attending much to the logic of words—declared for the logic of facts. In the Convention debates his vote was for the Regency—in other words against the declaration of the vacancy of the Throne which enabled William and Mary to mount it. But he had voted in favour of the declaration that it was inexpedient for the country to be governed by a Popish Prince; and thus he had in a sense accepted the Revolution, without renouncing his allegiance to the King.

And on this fine edge he and other good men—but few of them with more deliberation and with calmer and more sorrowful resolution than he—resolved to take his stand. But though a Non-juror, and one who unlike many of his fellows, refused for the sake either of profit or of peace to do violence to his conscience, he was content with this passive attitude, which, however, involved his declining to join in any service wherein the *de facto* Sovereigns were prayed for by name. In other respects, he submitted to their authority, took no part in any conspiracy or attempt at a conspiracy against them, and after he had been deprived of his episcopal see, forebore from cooperating in the futile endeavour

to set up and carry on a Non-jurors' episcopacy. For it was union not division to which he looked forward, and thus though he could not reconcile himself to the Bishop whom the Revolution government had substituted in his place, he, on that bishop's (Kidder's) death welcomed the appointment of a successor (Hooper), an old associate of his own with whom he had remained on terms of friendship. He might in truth have himself returned to Bath and Wells soon after the accession of Queen Anne, could he have consented to take the Oath of Abjuration; but to this his conscience could not consent, and moreover the infirmities which beset his last years were already upon him. Thus he remained excluded from the functions of his episcopal office to the end which came in 1711, when he was eighty-four years of age. The latter years of his life, from a period dating from before the beginning of the century, had been full of bodily sufferings due to a subtle disease which is supposed to have been what is commonly known as lithiasis; and he was unwilling to relieve his pain by opiates, which he regarded as an attempt to evade the divine dispensation:

Opiates my Pow'rs internal doze,  
For Pray'r my Spirit indispose;  
I should the Graces lose  
Pains sanctified infuse;  
In a Fool's Paradise remain,  
And gracious God forget, as well as pain.

Friendship and sympathy however were not wanting to him through all the long years of his trials; and to the kind and gracious patron Lord Weymouth (not himself a Non-juror), whose beautiful and historic seat

of Longleat was Ken's home in his later years whenever he chose to make it such, he dedicates his poems.

To these poems, if you are sufficiently interested in their writer, we now for a few moments exclusively turn. He tells his friend and protector in the *Dedication* that the poems that follow are the expression of the writer's mental condition in his years of suffering—a translation into words of his endeavour to resign himself to God's will and to draw from affliction material and opportunity for the praise of God. And in telling him this he recurs to the historical parallel on which he loved to dwell—comparing his own case to that of Gregory Nazianzen, though in truth the comparison, like most such quasi-analogies, is superficial only. For, when in his old age, and after many trials and disappointments, Gregory Nazianzen was against his wish installed by Theodosius in the See of Constantinople, the responsibility proved to be one which his strength was unable to meet; and the last years of his life were spent in retreat in his native land, among cares, thoughts and reminiscences to which he gave memorable expression in both prose and verse. (I may, by the bye, remind you that the sacred tragedy, the *Χριστὸς πάσχων*, formerly attributed to St Gregory the Nazianzene, is now by scholars no longer held to be his; so that we ought to think of him mainly or only as a lyrical poet, which rather improves the parallel than otherwise.) At the same time, you must remember that the conflict between St Gregory and Julian the Apostate, of which Ken liked to think as typifying his own resistance to Latitudinarianism—he introduces the Latitudinarians scornfully into his verse more than once (the name involved

all that was reprehensible and abominable to a High Churchman of his age, and Ken possibly liked to introduce it for another reason: because it was such a very long word)—I say (to wind up a long sentence), that the conflict between St Gregory and Julian the Apostate belongs as a matter of course to the earlier part of the career of the former. In the *Dedication* Ken mixes up the poet and the controversialist Gregory, and he also mixes up the motive causes which he assigns to the composition of his poems, which are at once it seems a sacrifice and a belief—a confusion, if we are to call it such, which is at least very natural and very pardonable.

Bless'd Gregory, from his Flock when forc'd away,  
Resolv'd in Verse Truth heav'nly to display.  
I, by a stranger from my Fold exil'd,  
While my Flock stray on the unhurdled Wild,  
Still for my Charge a tender Care retain,  
Expos'd to Latitudinarian Bane;  
Like Greg'ry, of bless'd Paul I learn'd to teach  
And warn in Hymn all souls within my reach.

Sacred song—or “Hymn” as he calls it—is then, to his nature and in his conduct of his own life, both a duty and a refuge; and there is no doubt that, from both points of view, poetic composition became to Ken one of the most absorbing occupations of his later years. Yet, though he recurs not unfrequently to the subject of the profane poetry of his age (and it must be allowed that he had reason enough for his reflexions on it and its self-prostitution), it is not for a moment to be supposed that he purposed putting his own strains into competition with verse dedicated as he says to mere toys,

to wantonness and to wine. As soon might he be thought to have intended his couplets to exercise a political influence, because here and there, following the irresistible impulse of the satirico-didactic age of poetry in which he wrote, he launches an arrow at those who make light of their allegiance, or upholds the Church of England against Papistical claims or Sectarian inroads. For one thing, his poems were never published in his lifetime, nor was he specially solicitous about their publication after his death. The main motive of his composition was the true poet's motive—he felt impelled to sing, and what was truest in him to his own nature passed into his song.

Accordingly, the lyrical element predominates over the epical in Ken's poetry, even where, as in most of his longer works, the epical form is the one chosen, and the metre employed is one more usually associated with epical poetry. The only poem which can properly lay claim to a narrative character is the epic of *Edmund*, which fills thirteen books (one more than *Paradise Lost*) and is written in heroic couplets: two circumstances which alike preclude it from being very easy reading as a whole. The hero is the martyred Anglican King, whose figure seems to have had a special attraction for Ken, perhaps because of the comparison which suggested itself, and which in one of his Hymns on the Festival, Ken not very felicitously carried out, between this and another royal martyr only recently bowed out of our Prayer-book. There are some interesting passages in this epic of *Edmund*—more especially those which clothe in verse of manly vigour the author's conception of an ideal Christian State; but, on the whole, it is neither

one of the most captivating nor one of the most characteristic of its author's performances. What will most surprise the reader, is the use in it of that poetic machinery which it is impossible to call by any other name than Miltonic, but which we may be excused for being struck by as odd when transferred to so modern an age. The poem opens with a council held by the Prince of the Devils in Hecla—a not unfitting *rendezvous* (to use one of Ken's favourite expressions) for evil spirits interested in the historical development of Northern Europe. Satan's speech, which is not without spirit, and contains a reference to his emissaries the "busy Latitudinarian Ghosts," who "fly every day around the Anglican coasts," is answered by *Anelpis* a rather feeble reminiscence of Belial, "timorous and slothful," in *Paradise Lost*. The voyage of Edmund to England is sought to be arrested by evil spirits raised by Dagon in the form of Sirens—a far from unskilful touch but in Cowley's manner I think rather than in Milton's and so artificial that it might have served Sir Noel Paton for one of his highly moral, if rather frigid, pictorial allegories. On land, Edmund is exposed to the more insidious temptations of Satan himself, in the guise of the Archangel Michael, and of Aselge—a false Una—whom he delivers from Satyrs so that she may attempt to cast him into a worse bondage. But Edmund withstands temptation and establishes a throne worthy to stand high in the sight of heaven and men:—as I have said, what may be called the didactic portion of this epos is, to my mind, the most interesting; at all events it contains some real matter and refuses to be brushed aside. In the end, fortified for the struggle

by religious exercises, among which his visit to the Spouse's Garden and its ministering maidens is noteworthy—mindful of the parallel, one thinks of King Charles at Little Gidding at or near the time of the outbreak of the Civil War—he goes forth to meet the Danish invader, and is martyred like another St Sebastian at the fatal tree.

Far more attractive, however, as a whole, to my mind is the long poem, in which epical and lyrical treatment are freely intermixed and of the consecutive course of which it would be difficult to give a brief summary, of *Hymnotheo* or *The Penitent*. The name suggests, and much in the earlier portion of the poem in particular, bears out the supposition, that the leading motive or idea of this poem is autobiographical, or at least has a direct autobiographical bearing. The slender thread of argument takes its beginning from an anecdote related by St Clement of Alexandria concerning St John the Evangelist in his old age and a young catechumen of Smyrna, whom the Apostle is supposed to have rescued from a life of audacious crime into which he had fallen and to have restored to the fold. Thus it is at Smyrna that the poem begins and ends; and the author has with considerable effect utilised the association which connects Smyrna with what is at once the most venerable and the most popular name in the whole literature of heathen antiquity. In *Hymnotheo* before he fell away, the Smyrniotes hoped for a second Homer—and, when at the close of the poem after his trials and wanderings he returns to his native city, now confirmed enduringly in the service of the Cross, he finds Smyrna engaged in a Homeric festival, and—in the spirit of



certain modern interpreters who find everything in Homer that they take into him—attaches to the suggestions of Homeric lore his exposition of the message of Christ.

You will see that, though within the limits of conceptions beyond which it had become impossible for the poet's imagination to stray, the story of Hymnotheo is only another instance of the modern life-drama of which Faust is the most familiar form, though the variations are legion. Indeed, near the opening we find the machinery of Good and Bad Angels—though to Ken it was something more than machinery, but I am speaking now from a literary point of view only—in operation once more; there is *Phylacter*, the Good Angel, and there is Satan, who, acting the part of the *Secret Agent* of the *Book of Job* and in the *Prologue to Goethe's Faust*, is licensed by the Divine Wisdom to try Hymnotheo. He watches his opportunities accordingly and assaults in the first instance with the aid of his pride, then by sensuality. Then Hymnotheo falls among thieves, and is rescued by the intervention of St John. The most interesting part of the poem, though I have no time for pursuing its course, begins with the process of training through which Hymnotheo now passes before by penitence he is purified. We see him—the image is very beautiful—lying at the portico of the Church among “a lazaret of wounded spirits”; we watch him under Salvian's guidance gazing into the mirror of his own heart; we behold him chastising, nay crucifying himself, while malicious fiends mock at him, and “the World in all its Vanities arrayed” tempts him to lead a “natural” life,

Not be inhuman to become a Saint,

and come down from the cross. But he is stedfast, and in time he quits the house of mourning, and under the guidance of the Angel Uranio sets forth on a wondrous journey which brings him at last to Ecclesia's comforting care and to a haven of rest. He resolves to follow the one exemplar, and to become a shepherd after the pattern of the Good Shepherd Himself. And so he returns to Smyrna and to the work to which he is Divinely called.

The incidents and digressions by which this roughly-sketched plot or argument is embroidered cannot be described here. But I must mention that, as if to place himself in direct competition with the great poet to whom, consciously or unconsciously, Ken's mind seems so often to have turned, the poet makes Uranio on their aerial journey relate to Hymnotheo the story of the Fall of the Angels<sup>1</sup>. Elsewhere, there is an allegorical description—not ineffective or devoid of telling satirical touches—of the house of Moria or Folly. And in yet another place we find a catalogue of sinners raised in mockery for the delight of the damned—but all in vain, for the mirth of such is unreal—which has something of the intensity of the best satirical poetry of Ken's own contemporaries. Intermixed, however, are those recurring strains of prayer and praise which—even where the form is not lyrical—are essentially lyrical in character, and the like

<sup>1</sup> Towards the close of the poem in the course of his addresses to the Smyrniotes, there is a narrative of the Fall of Man—with a Song of Adam to the Creator and a pathetic speech after the Fall to the innocent birds. These are not copies—but it is strange that Ken should have been so addicted to treading Miltonic sward.

of which, in point of fact, form the staple of the great body of Ken's verse.

I have already mentioned the *Psyche-Sion-Urania* series, which forms a species of counterpart to *Hymnotheo*.—In the case of the remainder of Ken's poems, the several series are for the most part each tied together by no very rigid bond. We may, however, distinguish between those which have a directly personal reference, and those which are purely spiritual tributes of praise and offerings of devotion. Among the latter are the Hymns on the Festivals<sup>1</sup>. These, together with *Hymns Evangelical*, the *General Introduction* and the so-called *Essay on Hymn*<sup>2</sup> and a series called *Christophil, or Songs on Jesus*, occupy the first volume of the collected edition. *Christophil* can hardly be called a connected poem: its argument flows from the fancy that the hero or author—for *Christophil* is both—who has resolved to devote himself to the praise of the Saviour, sends forth while he is himself asleep his *Mind* to take its flight

O'er the Expanse all Creatures to inspect,  
Of Love Divine all Creatures to collect  
Which may to Jesus keep my Spirit chaste.

<sup>1</sup> All these series consist partly of hymns, partly of poems on the events of the Gospel story which are partly narrative partly lyrical and is put into the mouths of a succession of Saints. What I have called the Miltonic machinery of the conspiracy of the Infernal Powers is very effectively introduced into the story of *On The Infanticide*, also into that of *On The Temptation*, and that of the beginnings of *On The Passion*.

<sup>2</sup> This is the piece in which Ken ventures on the assertion that mankind had sunk to prose before the advent of Christianity brought back hymnology. Hymns, he declares in the same poetical Essay, are

This notion of the mind being in sleep released from the body is a favourite one with Ken; as I need hardly remind those who remember a very significant stage of his *Evening Hymn*:

The faster Sleep the Sense doth bind,  
 The more unfetter'd is the mind;  
 O may my Soul, from Matter free,  
 Thy Holiness unclouded see!

Elsewhere, *Thought* is sent on a similar voyage of discovery to that here imposed upon *Mind*; and as to the longing to see the Deity face to face, there is a very beautiful passage in a series in the second volume, the *Hymnarium or Hymns on the Attributes of God*, where the Guardian Angel Phylax lays restraint as it were upon a thought which the souls of angels and men may cherish, but of which it is given neither to angels nor to men to see the consummation. Altogether, I am not sure that I do not prefer the poems of which I have spoken and certain others in which the poetic genius of Ken soars to the greatest heights of which it is capable to the more popular verse in which he dwells on his own sufferings. No doubt the series called *Anodynes* is pathetic as well as sincere; but it is difficult at the same time to sympathise with the physical sufferings of a poet and to rise with him to a sense of the conquest of soul over body, of mind over matter. Ten years of pain—the Fury Pain—living entombment—these piteous outcries affect me, whether they be uttered by a Bishop

the distinction between men and brutes (he forgets that in another poem he makes sheep bay a chorus to a hymn). See also the account of the origin of Hymns in *Sion*, or *Philothea*.

Ken or by a Heinrick Heine; but they make discords, which I would gladly see suppressed in a strain of song.

You will wish me to be brief, if in conclusion I attempt to say a few words about the literary characteristics of Ken's verse. Although, here and there, the imagery is laboured, and although the diction, chiefly in consequence of certain mannerisms to which I will immediately refer, is often wanting in simplicity, the poetry of this writer unmistakably possesses the quality—why should I not call it the *merit*—of spontaneity. He is, to use his own phrase, "big with hymn," and he rejoices in his song as the parent rejoices over the newly-born. When we remember of how large a mass of religious poetry precisely the contrary may be asserted, how much of it is consciously or unconsciously made to order, we recognise how far more readily that speaks to heart and soul which has its procedure thence. Connected with this quality is another, which cannot fail to strike any reader of Ken who compares him with some of our most gifted religious poets. This is his fulness of matter, which yet as a rule finds adequate expression in his verse. He repeats himself, no doubt; but never from poverty of thought or deficiency of associations. All qualities, however, are apt to bring with them their defects, and Ken's spontaneity and fulness seem to have engendered in him an unwillingness to pause, to sift, and to suppress. I know few poets of distinction—unless it be Cowley, with whom, as was inevitable, considering the literary ascendancy of that poet, Ken has other points in common—who are so prone to prosiness, and are so fearless of bathos. It would be unfair to Ken to quote particular examples of

this defect, which are of course far more noticeable when isolated, and which I should dislike to hold up to ridicule<sup>1</sup> like a barren journalist reviewing a prolific minor poet. But, in Ken, this want of taste—which probably is usually half want of care—is all the more observable, because he could hardly be a contemporary of Cowley and the later members of what has been called the Metaphysical, but what to my mind is far more appropriately called the Fantastic, School of English poets, were he not in the habit of occasionally indulging in far-fetched and extravagant simile. I have indicated how constantly he recurs to the subject of Angels, Bad and Good—figures which no doubt had a very real meaning to him, but which not the less form as it were the stock imagery of his verse. Like others accustomed to the traditions of sacred and legendary art and literature, he cannot conceive of an angel without wings, and on this attribute he is never tired of dwelling, expanding the fancy, or refining on it, at times with real imaginative power. Take for instance, his Gabriel, in the poem on the *Annunciation*, seeking to fly down to earth on his errand to the Virgin Mary with the aid of the wings on which her prayers had mounted to heaven:

Oft to fly down he made Essays in vain,  
 His Wings still bear him to the throne again.  
 Swift-wingèd Pray'r to God with Vigour tends,  
 And from his Sacred Footstool ne'er descends.

Or take, in another vein, and quaint almost after the manner of Quarles (from the *Preparations for Death*), his explanation to his Guardian Angel, whose mighty wings he has been permitted to measure.

Ah me! said I, my thoughtful Breast  
Has with a Scruple been oppress'd.  
When I from Matter free'd  
Shall fly with you tow'rds Heav'n full speed  
I fear I shall not reach the Height,  
Or waste all my Eternity in flight.

From such a passage as this you will see that Ken is full of figure as he is full of sentiment, but it would be an error to suppose him to incline to a dark profundity of symbolism—just as his theology is clear and precise and, as I think I could show, anti-mystical. His allegories go a very short way in the direction of looking up thoughts or conceptions for those who are not possessed of the Key. He is singularly fond of pregnant names which reveal their meaning at the first glance, and his poems bristle with a whole army of such designations as Christophil, Staurophil, Philhymno, Philothea and even Phylarmat “Guardian of Chariots to the Lord of Hosts,” who harnesses fallen Angels with thunderbolts for bits; and again, Fidelio, Elpidio, Hilario, Devoto, Vigilio, Sophronio and Tranquilla, Electa, Fiducia, Urania and her opposite Terella.

While Ken's diction is on the whole clear and free from involution or inversion—often reminding us of Dryden and almost of Pope in the strong evenness of the flow of his language, his vocabulary is coloured—not to say streaked—by his extraordinary fondness for long words. Wherever he can introduce a long Latin word—if it is out of use, or at least out of common use, so much the better—he seems unable to resist the opportunity—“minacious”—“salvific”—“quotidian”—“inflammatives”—“excinding”—

“residuous” — “intenerating” — “complacential” — “frustraneous” — “evanid,” which he uses in the sense of vain, empty—all crowd upon the reader of the first volume of his *Poems*. When he can make a line out of one or two of such words, a palpable thrill runs through his soul

—In indivisible eternity—

—Hereticasters anathematise—

nor does he scruple to apply a Procrustean process of his own to certain words already long enough by nature. His favourite substitute for “aversion” is “aversation” and for “majestic” “majestatic.” In addition, certain words and phrases have an irresistible attraction for him—“refly” for fly back, “antarctic” for opposite; and he uses certain words after a fashion of his own which may not be unjustifiable, but which by the reiteration of use becomes mannerism—“philanthropy” in the sense of the love of man as applied to God, “languor” in the sense of a religious yearning or longing. Finally, he allows himself a particular license of word-formation which I find it difficult to account for—I mean the employment of the prefix *co* in the sense of “jointly.” Thus we have out of a large number of instances the following strange compounds: co-etaneous, co-created, co-harmonised, co-apostate, co-immense, co-votary, co-spire (in the sense of jointly breathe or breathe forth), co-divine, co-unal, co-agonise, co-crucified, co-amiable, even co-enamourments—all these I have marked in the first volume of the *Poems* only.

Finally, in the management of his metre Ken shows a natural mastery of verse. The heroic couplet is his



ordinary metre, and he shares the belief of his age and of that which preceded it that this metre is all-sufficient and equally suitable for all varieties of poetry. As I have said, he is not sufficiently careful to avoid occasionally flat lines; but they are exceptional, and are certainly not due to any want of agility in suiting within the limits of this metre the word to the sense. He rarely resorts to the shorter or four-foot line in which his famous *Morning* and *Evening Hymns* are written; on the other hand, he uses with predilection the rather complicated stanza of the poem of which I just now quoted to you the earlier portion, and manages it with ease. I much prefer, however, the other lyrical metre which he affects, and which seems to me, simple as it is, eminently suited to his themes and to his manner of treatment.

I have a thousand things to say,  
To weep, joy, hymn, confess and pray;  
With me, whilst thou withdraw'st Thy Light,  
'Tis doleful Night.

My Tears soon stop, my Love grows cold,  
My Faith obscure, the Tempter bold;  
Oft when I a glad Hymn would sing,  
Dry'd is the Spring.

While I with Thee pass happy Hours  
I freely can employ my Pow'rs  
Thou by Thy Presence dost excite  
Love's utmost Might.

Evanid World, forbear your Charms,  
One Minute in my Jesus' arms  
With an Eternity o'erpoise  
Of your false Joys.

May I midst Objects foul or vain  
Internal Solitude retain;  
And like the Angels, who here ply,  
Keep Heav'n in eye!

A Drop of Oyl unmix'd abides,  
And o'er the Waves triumphant rides;  
I'll thus live with the World unmix'd,  
On Jesus fix'd.

But I have given you enough of quotation, and enough also of my imperfectly digested notes on a poet who, I think you will at least agree, deserves a less restricted remembrance than that due to his authorship of two widely known and cherished hymns. These notes were put together when I was away from books, or I should like to have looked a little more closely into Ken's relations, in both manner and matter, to those of his contemporaries by whom he was unmistakably influenced—Milton, Dryden and above all Cowley. As to the predominant influence of the last-named upon the epical and lyrical style of Ken there can I suppose be little doubt; but the remarkable and certainly not accidental parallelism between the machinery of Ken and that of Milton is at least equally interesting, unless it be for the circumstance that part of the machinery of the *Paradise Lost* is also that of the  *Davideis* (in stating which fact I am not coming forward as a would-be Lauder) and that Cowley died in the year of the publication of Milton's poem. Perhaps some of my hearers may be able to make some suggestions on this part of my subject either tonight or incidentally at some other time, in which case I should be obliged by being placed in possession of them. Not that I pretend that

the poetry of Ken as a whole, apart from its biographical interest, is deserving of any very prolonged or profound study. But his individuality—his personality—is as unmistakable in his poems as it is in any other activity of his long and memorable life; and I think that these should, not only because of special morning and evening associations, receive more general attention than is in our days vouchsafed to them.

## 24. HALIFAX

(*Sir Henry Craik's English Prose*, vol. III. 1906)

AMONG the most celebrated productions of Halifax's pen, it is usual to assign the first place to the *Character of a Trimmer* (1688), the mere title of which would have sufficed to make its fortune as a tract. But, although his sole or joint authorship has long been generally assumed, and is confidently taken for granted by Macaulay, the fact remains that the first three editions attribute the treatise to Sir William Coventry, Halifax's kinsman—the third, however, stating it to have been revised by Halifax himself. Coventry appears to have denied his authorship, and since the inclusion of the *Character* in Halifax's *Miscellanies*, first published nine years after his death, it has been usually regarded as his. All that can be said with certainty is that he had a good deal to do with it, and that it suits his principles as well as it matches with what we know of his style.

To Macaulay modern readers of English history may be said to owe their appreciation of Halifax's rare qualities as a politician and a patriot; nor has any character in his long and brilliant gallery been drawn more generously by the great party historian than that of the *Trimmer*—who had a soul above party. A whig record of the reigns of Charles II and James II may indeed, without arrogance, claim some inner affinity with the spirit of one who thought so nobly of Liberty as did Halifax; and, if the passage extracted in our text

was not actually written by him, it may stand as one which he would have entirely approved. The tract as a whole breathes a patriotism of the most conservative type, and, like everything that was written by Halifax or that commended itself to him, is the work of one who loved England above everything. Nor need we blame him because in thinking of England he was apt to remember Rufford, his inherited part and parcel of his country.

A *Trimmer*, then, is one who trims or balances in order to preserve—whether a boat in the river, or the good ship Commonwealth in a sea of troubles. Whether the designation implies honour or dishonour, depends altogether on the *bona fides* of the individual; just as was the case with the analogous designation of the *politiques* in France, in the days of the internecine struggle between the League and the monarchy. The famous *Character*—which with the exception of its section on foreign policy hardly deviates from the broad path of apparent, though often highly significant, commonplace—thoroughly vindicates its fundamental conception. “Our Trimmer” stands for a “mixt monarchy”—in other words, he is a constitutionalist of a type which during a full century remained the standard of political Liberalism for all practical men, but which in Halifax’s day was by no means trite. The “classes” of his generation, it must be remembered, knew something by experience of republican government; while of the evils of monarchical despotism, the Trimmer could give, without passion, an exposition worthy of the admiration of Montesquieu. On matters ecclesiastical his “opinion” is equally enlightened; and he represents

that religious Liberalism—equally far removed from fanaticism and from indifference—which in later periods of English life has again become as rare as it was in the reigns of our last two Stewart Kings. What, however, it would be futile to seek in the *Character of a Trimmer*, is political philosophy which looks far beyond a given situation. The author is only concerned to apply a few broad principles to matters as they stand; and this he does in language which, though here and there it glows with an unfeigned warmth, disdains neither trivial illustrations nor familiar figures, and rarely rises to so ambitious a height as that of the wellknown passage at the close of the tract, which it seemed right not to omit below.

Another wellknown tract attributed to Halifax, though the signature T. W., reversed, was held by some to point to Sir William Temple, is the *Letter to a Dissenter*, published on the occasion of James II's first Declaration of Indulgence (1687). It was an admirably devised and most opportune attempt to convince the Protestant Nonconformists of the correctness of the *timeo Danaos* attitude which, with a combination of long-sightedness and fortitude almost unparalleled, a large proportion of their body assumed, and, in spite of discouragement upon discouragement, maintained. The argument of the solidarity of the Protestant interest was in itself excellent; the weakness of the position taken up by the writer of the *Letter*, which he did his best to cover with the help of a style full of liveliness and wit, lay in the paucity of the examples at his disposal of the readiness of the Church of England to acknowledge the solidarity in question. The *Letter*

called forth a full score of replies; but while I perceive no reason for doubting Halifax's authorship of it, I cannot suppose him to have written the dogmatic *Second Letter to a Dissenter*, etc. (1687), which followed in the course of the controversy. Among other political pieces that have been attributed to Halifax are the happily-named and shrewd, but rather drily written, *Anatomy of an Equivalent* (i.e. for oaths and tests); the very interesting *Cautions offered to the consideration of those who are to choose Members to serve in the ensuing Parliament*, which apparently belongs to the year 1689, and contains a most curious picture, drawn without narrow-mindedness, of the social composition of a House of Commons of the times; and *A Rough Draft of a New Model at Sea* (1694). In this pamphlet, which, if written by Halifax, was probably his last political piece, he seeks, not very effectively, to "trim" between the two different systems of appointment to commissions, which in the Navy and elsewhere it long proved so difficult to blend. The brief *Maxims of State* printed among Halifax's *Miscellanies* have considerable vigour, and conclude with the following:—"That a people may let a king fall, yet still remain a people; but if a king let his people step from him, he is no longer king."

Of much the same type are the *Political and Moral Reflexions*, which were published in 1750 from Halifax's MSS. by his granddaughter, the Countess of Burlington. But aphoristic literature has no claim to survive, unless when distinguished by real excellence; and these sentences, while rarely devoid of the kind of wisdom that is the fruit of experience, as rarely show what

deserves to be called wit. At the same time was given to the world Halifax's *Character of Charles II*, to which posterity has turned with more interest than to his censures on Edward II and Richard II; yet the latter are of some significance. They appeared in the very crisis of the Revolution settlement (January 1689), under the full (something too full) title of *Historical Observations upon the Reigns of Edward I, II, III, and Richard II; with Remarks upon their Faithful Counsellors and False Favourites; written by a Person of Honour*. Yet in truth Edward I and II only come in towards the close in a series of *antitheta* of no particular interest; the point of the essay lies in the parallel between Edward II and Richard II, and possibly James II *subauditus*. The Introduction, which exhibits Lord Halifax himself in the character of a highly self-complacent latter-day Doctor Faustus, rejecting theology, giving philosophy the go-by, and, in default of being able to make way with uncontentious mathematics, venturing upon a bit of solid history in their stead, is quite worth perusal, though containing no passage of notable force. It should not remain unmentioned, in this connexion, that Halifax was a keen-sighted collector of original historical documents, a selection from which, published in 1703, must not be confounded with the other *Miscellanies* of his own inditing.

As a quick-sighted observer, who had every opportunity of supplementing his own observations by those of the clever men, and more especially of the gifted women, whose intimacy he enjoyed, and as a judge raised above all prejudice, whether partisan or personal, Halifax was uniquely qualified to sum up the character



of a Prince, usually, but not altogether correctly, supposed to have had no character at all. And, in my opinion; the result is the best extant summary of the subject from the personal, or in other words the one biographically satisfactory, point of view. Here I have extracted parts of the concluding chapter, which has something of the gracefulness inseparable from the true generosity of disposition that distinguished Halifax.

Nor is this quality altogether missing in the last of Halifax's literary productions on which I propose to touch, *The Lady's New-Year's Gift, or, Advice to a Daughter*. This once famous little treatise might almost be described as its author's offering to the beloved young wife of whom (in 1670) he was suddenly bereft, as well as to his daughter Anne (afterwards Lady Vaughan) to whom he devoted a not less genuine affection. This Manual of Conduct ran rapidly through sixteen editions, and was translated into French and Italian; and I have met with it, in curiously mixed company, in a guinea gift-book, entitled *Angelica's Ladies' Library, or, Parents' and Guardians' Present*, illustrated by Angelica Kauffman and H. Bunbury, and dedicated to good Queen Charlotte (1794). It has many undeniable merits; for it is not only, as a matter of course, full of shrewdness and commonsense, but it likewise, as observed, displays on such questions as those of domestic economy the broad and liberal spirit of a true *grand seigneur*. And again, more especially in discussing the management of children, it reveals a genial and loveable side of Halifax's character, not elsewhere apparent except in his familiar letters. Yet when one reads that in the *vade mecum* composed by

him for his child, our author tempered "maxims of exalted piety with a curious mixture of worldly wisdom," one can only wonder at the willingness of able writers to accommodate themselves to foregone conclusions. Halifax's standpoint in this work is dangerously near to that of another celebrated nobleman—a grandson by the way of Halifax and his second wife—in his *Letters to his Son*. In both instances, the father's admonitions are inadequate, not so much because of what they contain as because of what they omit. Halifax's conception of religion, for instance, as here developed, is consistent and calm; it is cheerful; it is charitable; it is what you will; but I cannot discern in it anything "exalted." He moves, not more at his ease (for he is always quite at his ease), but more to the tune of his times, in the succeeding sections under the headings, "Husband," "House, Family, and Children," "Behaviour," "Friendship," "Diversions," and so forth. We here see him to be sincerely intent upon his daughter's prosperity in the world which he knew both *intus et in cute*, and offering her the very best of advice, quintessential, indeed, in the strength in which it is distilled from his unrivalled experience. If her husband has faults or vices, if he is too fond, for instance, of sitting over his bottle or of counting his money-bags, let her not so much give way to these defects as *utilise* them, and she will find her reckoning. If her friends of her own sex are discussed in her presence, let her not be too eager to defend them with generous warmth. Nobody can predict what may or may not prove true; and it is never advisable to be found to have taken the wrong side. On the other hand, if you must blame, if

you must strike, "do it like a *Lady*, gently; and assure yourself that where you care to do it you will wound others more, *and hurt yourself less* by soft strokes, than by being harsh or violent." Accustomed though Halifax was to the society of some of the most honourable, cultivated, and within their lights, both high-minded and high-spirited women of his times, he could not think, so far as in him lay, of training up his daughter except in one way, *the way that would pay*. Thus his social, not less than his political, philosophy had its limits.

## 25. ABRAHAM A SANCTA CLARA<sup>1</sup>

(*The Saturday Review*, June 15, 1867)

IN a fine passage of his Essay on Charles Kemble, Mr Bodham Donne dwells on the hard condition of the actor, whose art, unlike that of the poet and the painter, is for the present only, who has no patent for futurity, and whose image and influence pass away with the generation which beheld them. The remark may, with certain modifications, be applied to a class of performers who would scorn to reckon themselves among the followers of Thespis, but whose profession presents many analogies to that of the week-day actor. Popular preachers can rarely hope for more than contemporary fame; when their names live after them, they are, except in rare instances (in which, as in the case of Latimer or Wesley, the character of the man ennobles his preserved utterances), mere shadows, of which posterity fails to realise the substance, and whose merits it is content to take on trust. The purpose of the popular preacher is, after all, to "mightily encompass living men"; and it is only a combination of gifts, such as rarely falls to the lot of this class of orators, which can convert an effective pulpit-address into a literary "joy for ever." Neither the Lenten harangues by which the Jesuits are to this day in the habit of exciting exhausted sinners to annual repentance, nor Mr Spurgeon's *Penny Pulpit*,

<sup>1</sup> Th. G. von Karajan, *Abraham a Sancta Clara*. Vienna, 1867.

are likely to become European classics; and, as for the ordinary run of popular sermons, the day is sufficient for the thrill thereof.

Abraham a Sancta Clara was the Spurgeon, but something more than the Spurgeon, of the Viennese in the last quarter of the 17th and the first years of the following century. It was his mission to titillate an exhausted generation and a tolerably coarse people into religious emotion; and he performed his task with unflagging zeal and energy. Vienna has always been an inviting, if not a promising, field for the exertions of a pulpit moralist. "There is only one Imperial city," the Viennese sing to this day; and certainly, in the interests of morality, it were well if the apophthegm were beyond dispute. Interpreted, it signifies that in no other city are there more theatres, better concerts, and a fuller variety of dancing-gardens, *et hoc genus omne*. In the age in which Abraham a Sancta Clara lived and taught, Vienna was in its normal condition of recovering from the terrors and dangers of a great and unsuccessful war, or preparing for the terrors and dangers of another, by singing and dancing on the plank between the precipices. The long reign of Leopold I was one of those epochs in Austrian history in which a feeble Government was in vain endeavouring to consolidate the exhausted provinces of a heterogeneous empire. When the discontent in Hungary, fostered by Ottoman agents, rose to a head, its paternal Sovereign, by one stroke of the pen, altered the constitution of the kingdom, and found himself thereupon in the midst of a formidable insurrection, followed by a Turkish invasion. Vienna was, it is true, saved by

the King of Poland; and Leopold, instead of losing Hungary, gained Transylvania for his fortunate House. But the rival potentate in the West had severed the bonds of the Grand Alliance which had cost the Austrian statesmen so complicated an effort to bring about; and the Peace of Ryswyk left the Emperor stranded upon a diplomatic shoal. He lived to see the first years of the War for that Spanish succession upon which he had been so long intent, but not its conclusion, with the collapse of the last great effort of the House of Hapsburg to assert its dynastic omnipotence in Europe.

In such times as these, when foreign intrigue took the place of national statesmanship, when the welfare of subject populations entered in an infinitesimal degree into the calculations of their rulers, and when even personal loyalty towards the sovereign, the only feeling which has at any time strongly tied the Austrian to his Government, was exposed to a rude test, it was not wonderful that public and private morality should both be at their lowest ebb. The 'Thirty Years' War had all but ruined the moral as well as the intellectual development of the German nation. It had made the name of religion little more than a mockery and a sham. The Catholic countries retained only its bare forms, the Protestant scarcely these. In the latter, it was only gradually that a partial revival of religious feeling began to take place. The "Quiet in the Land," of whom we hear towards the end of the 17th century, were, notwithstanding their tendency towards what seems to us a feeble sentimentalism, the salt of the Protestant part of the nation; and to them was due the earliest important development in modern German literature.

But a different kind of food from that which sufficed for the cravings of these pious souls (*Pietists*, as they soon came to be generally termed) was required by the coarser natures of the Catholic inhabitants of Austria and Bavaria. These populations were not adapted to be melted away into religious sentimentalism, but required to be stimulated into religious excitement. To effect this, only two methods seemed to suggest themselves—the scourge of terror and the whip of ridicule. Abraham a Sancta Clara, the most popular Catholic preacher of his times, adopted the latter method—the Democritian, as he called it. Nature had marked him out for a satirist, but he was well aware of the risk he ran, and by no means relished being reminded of it by his detractors:

Oh, Patriarch Abraham! e'en as thy consort Sarah  
Burst out into a laugh instead of giving thanks,  
So all the world doth laugh at Abraham a Clara,  
When at St Austin's church the preacher plays his pranks.

The most recent biography of the famous Augustine friar, by Th. G. von Karajan, is, like many similar German works, an admirable monument of literary conscientiousness. It contains an almost inexhaustible fund of materials for a most amusing as well as instructive book. But as the author, whose modesty appears to equal his industry of research, professes to have had no intention of writing a complete life of his hero, we can only express our regret that he should have felt himself unequal to what, after all, is no extraordinary task. Why a gentleman who appears to have cheerfully submitted to endless labour in the accumulation, sifting, and arrangement of a mass of more or less obscure

details, and who moreover himself writes in an easy and pleasant style, should have contented himself with collecting the bricks and left others to build the house, is one of those problems which no experience of similar industry and similar self-denial on the part of German authors will ever enable us to determine. Many an honest English bookmaker must look with hearty contempt upon these plodding Germans, who devote years to the study of a subject, and then produce a book which lacks only one element of success—namely, that of being readable.

There are in truth very few facts in connexion with the personal biography of Abraham a Sancta Clara in which posterity is likely to take a more than languid interest. His real name was Ulric Megerle, and he was born (probably in the year 1644) at the "Grapes" inn of an obscure village, not far off the high road leading from Salzburg to Munich. His parents were not only peasants, but technically serfs; though the bond of villenage was a mild one, the service annually paid by a male serf to his lord consisting in a horse, and that paid by the female serf in a hen. His father kept the one inn of the neighbourhood, yet his profits must have been slender in a district which had indeed remained free from the actual presence of war, but where dry bread had long constituted the sole food of the impoverished inhabitants. Thus Ulric-Abraham belonged to that class from which the Catholic Church has at all times derived so large a proportion of its most effective apostles; nor, in truth, was the coarseness of his original texture ever completely concealed under the gloss of an excellent education. At the school of



the neighbouring town of Messkirch, at the Jesuit gymnasium in Ingolstadt, and at the High School in Salzburg, he amassed an amount of multifarious learning which afterwards, with the help of an excellent memory, stood him in good stead. He seems to have had an inexhaustible stock of anecdotes, derived from his reading in German history; and to have been well acquainted with the standard works in moral and exegetical theology, as well as homiletics. We need not follow his biographer through his anxious enquiry as to whether Abraham was acquainted with the French and English tongues; that he was familiar with Italian, there can be no doubt, for this language had ever since the times of Ferdinand II been in vogue at the Austrian Court, and throughout the rest of the century Vienna swarmed with Italian ecclesiastical and military adventurers. In the eighteenth year of his age (1662) Ulric Megerle was received as a novice into the Order of the barefooted brethren of St Augustine, assuming on the occasion the name of Abraham a Sancta Clara. His noviciate and first years under the rule he spent at the monastery of Mariabrunn, near Vienna, and he was in 1667 ordained priest in the capital itself, where, with intervals of absence in the business of his Order, or as a starring preacher, he remained for the rest of his life. He died in 1709, after attaining in succession to the dignities of doctor of theology, Court preacher, and prior and provincial of his Order. The general belief that, during the siege of Vienna by the Turks, Abraham was actively engaged in his ministry among the sick, is unfortunately without foundation; the aid which he gave to the cause with which his name is associated was

a purely literary one. The year 1683, in which the famous pamphlet *Up, up ye Christians!* made its appearance, was spent by its author in Styria. It is this curious production—half treatise, half sermon—to which Schiller was indebted for the general notion, as well as the details, of the Capuchin's sermon in the *Camp of Wallenstein*. "Pater Abraham," Schiller writes to Goethe, "is a splendid original, whom one is forced to respect; and it is an interesting and by no means an easy task to imitate, still more so to outdo, him in madness and cleverness. But I will do my best."

The style of Abraham a Sancta Clara is in truth unique. It is the glorification of every kind of play upon words and sounds. Puns, good, bad, and indifferent, follow one another with a prodigality beyond that of a modern burlesque; and what with these and the constant rhymes, the style is eminently calculated to take away the reader's breath. As for good taste or beauty of language, they are of course out of the question; but there is a manliness and vigour about the friar in the midst of all his patter, and a certain dignity of sentiment beneath all his verbal trivialities. We conclude with one or two specimens of his style, though it is obvious that its characteristics are of a peculiarly untranslatable kind:

#### *On the Legal Profession.*

The Colonel-Devil Lucifer at times giveth a banquet to his superior officers, in which for the first course he hath four meats served in four dishes. In the first dish lie the fingers of excisemen...in the second the tongues of rude and evil fellows...in the third the brains of jackpriests...in the last the ears of lawyers, roasted. Why the fingers of excisemen? Because they cannot

keep them from picking and stealing. Why the tongues of evil men? Because they all too rudely and lewdly think to lord it over their pious wives. Why the brains of priests? Because there be clerks too who know full well what ought to be done and yet leave it undone, and neglect their spiritual offices and the services of God. Why, lastly, the roasted ears of lawyers? Because some of them play so vile a game that, an' a man give them not and send them not what they list, and they have not the sound of money in their ears, their client is gravelled.... Unjust lawyers are like unto the bird *Caprimulgus*. This bird at the night season creepeth under the herd of goats, and while they are at rest sucks out their milk to the blood, *elicit sanguinem*. Such goat-milkers you shall at times find in certain lawyers who will not end a suit till their client's bag be empty and void, and then they counsel an amicable compromise. Some lawyers are like unto the camel, which, before drinking out of a brook, maketh the water turbid with his foot, *turbida placet*.

*On Fashionable Piety.*

Sitting before her mirror, she forces her hair upward with pomatum, tips it and snips it, smears herself with ointments, and sticks herself round with the costliest of hairpins, glittering all over with silver and gold. At last she comes into church at twelve o'clock like unto the starry heavens, and takes up her seat in front in the great chair, that every one may look upon her, and that she may be looked upon by every one. Her lacquey bears a red velvet bag of books richly embroidered with gold, from which he deposits half a library of prayer-books. Meanwhile, the chaplain has his orders to read a quick mass; if he can hit upon the first best hunting-mass, 'tis so much the better. During the mass she turns over the leaves of the books a little, but is in truth more intent upon the question as to where she shall spend her Sunday? Where will society meet to-day? What play will be acted? What visits are to be paid in the afternoon?... And so the mass comes to an end; nor has God even in his own sacred church the least part in this hypocritical devotion. The other *politici* and men of state stand there in powdered wigs,

turn their backs upon the altar, offer snuff to one another, read letters, tell the news, etc. Others lean against a pillar surveying the new fashions or eyeing a pretty woman...And this is the divine service of Christians, and the forenoon of the nobility.

The following *replica* of the same picture is almost more excellent than the first:

“How now, Pater? Am I to pass my days like a common woman in spinning? Ah!” quoth many a noble lady, “you have not had knowledge enough of noble society...In the morning I rise at eleven of the clock; when a *Schocolata* must be ready at hand. Meanwhile I am dressed. Then twelve o’clock strikes. So I am carried to St Stephen’s. Am sure to be in time for the beginning of the last mass but one.” During the mass devotions begin. “Dear Countess, how did you rest last night?” “Excellently well.” “I very badly; I had a queasiness.” “How was that, my golden darling?” “Ah! I ate too much of the cold brawn, and forgot to drink *limonadi* after it...After dinner I shall amuse myself with Pamphilo, till litany-time.” At church glances are cast around upon those who enter and those who stay. “Paschy! go bid the Countess come to my chair.” “Sweet, how rude the common people are. They pay no reverence to the high nobility, such as ourselves. Dear heart, how is it with you? What news from your lord the Count? Look, look, dear Countess, at the array of that Secretary’s wife. Her husband could not have bought her that brocade. It must be a *present*.”... “Lord, sister, how come you to be at church to-day?” “Don’t ask questions. Time hangs heavily on my hands; for my lord has a committee, and after committee has a letter to write at the post.” “Where shall you go, Countess, after litany?” “To this or that party.” “How long shall you stay there?” “Till twelve o’clock at midnight.” Then the *Sabathine* begins, and that lasts *nunc et semper*, now and evermore.

Such are a few specimens of the style of popular preaching at Vienna at the close of the 17th century. Manners change more swiftly than morals; and the

vices and the follies which the goodhumoured friar castigated are those of all great cities of the world, of Alexandria and imperial Rome, as well as of Vienna and other modern Babylons. But they certainly never attained to a ranker luxuriance than in the age of political and social decadence in which the worthy Abraham laboured. He faithfully kept the resolution with which he had assumed the monastic habit, "not to quit the world, but henceforth more than ever to busy himself with it"; and it is no derogation from the acknowledgment due to a useful career to say that his literary remains are now chiefly valuable on account of their lifelike picture of the social conditions which it was their author's purpose to amend.

## 26. THE POEMS OF JOHN BYROM<sup>1</sup>

IT forms no part of the purpose of these few introductory pages to abstract either from the *Poems* to which they are prefixed or from the ample biographical materials already in the hands of the members of the Chetham Society, a character of John Byrom—one of the best known, as he is assuredly one of the most memorable, of older Manchester worthies. Such a task may possibly await some better qualified writer of the future, to whose lot it may fall to revise, for the benefit of a later generation, a book which, if more widely known, would rank among the popular works of English biographical literature—the late Canon Parkinson's edition of Byrom's *Private Journal and Literary Remains*. Speaking for myself at least, having of late years become thoroughly familiar with these volumes, I have learnt to love them for their own sake and for that of their perfectly natural and accordingly always delightful style, and likewise for the sake of their author, as true a gentleman as ever loved learned leisure while working for his daily bread. Familiarity, says a rather musty proverb, breeds contempt; but experience shows that, on the other hand, ignorance is at times apt to breed familiarity. Of Byrom's literary qualities as a writer of verse I shall have occasion to speak immediately at some little length; while of the merits

<sup>1</sup> *The Poems of John Byrom*. Edited by A. W. Ward. 2 vols. Printed for the Chetham Society, Manchester, 1894-1912. Vol. I. Introduction.

of his system of shorthand, whether as compared with other methods that competed with it, or with those by which it has been superseded, I must leave the tachygraphers upon whom his mantle has descended to pronounce an opinion. But I feel sure that a change would come over the condescendingly contemptuous tone frequently adopted towards Byrom by critics whose acquaintance with him is manifestly slight (it was only the other day that I found him described in a sympathetic article on William Law in a wellknown London weekly journal as "that odd fellow, Dr John Byrom of Manchester"), would their engagements but permit them to become really acquainted with him through his *Remains*. For they would find in him, among other rare and exquisite qualities, a high moral conscientiousness and a profound tenderness of heart, which, when blended together, suffice of themselves to lift a man above the multitude;—and Byrom was so conscientious, that an unkind word into which he had been betrayed by haste burnt itself into his mind, while his heart went out towards the helpless and the unfortunate with the tenderness of Oliver Goldsmith himself. And again, the most fastidious of his censors might go far before they would meet with another mind so singularly free as was Byrom's from the slightest taint of vulgarity. Whether or not his physical sensitiveness to what was gross or coarse should count for something in this innate refinement, it is certain that many of his intellectual and moral aversions—such as, *imprimis*, his repugnance to the contemporary stage, of which feeling his poems contain many illustrations, both grave and gay—were in a large measure due to no other

cause. Finally, unless I mistake, these worthy gentlemen would not fail to perceive in Byrom a kind of piety which is something more than a religious tone of mind, and which is not to be regarded as merely the natural concomitant of excellent qualities shared by Byrom with many good men and women of his own and other ages. For, besides being a tender husband and parent, a faithful friend and a loyal partisan both in fair weather and in foul, he had a reverence for higher things to which—so far as it is possible to judge—he was through life not even momentarily untrue, and which stamps his character (I will not scruple to use the word) with something of the nature of holiness. Neither his love of disputation, which the course of his academical training and the singularly contentious habits of his age combined to encourage, nor his eager temper, nor his love of goodfellowship and his lively sense of humour, could hurry him into even a passing oblivion of the reverential awe which controlled his being. Yet, although this consciousness was, as it were, never absent from him, nothing could conceivably have been simpler than his bearing through life. “True religion, Ralph,” he writes to one of his most intimate friends<sup>1</sup>, in a letter printed for the first time in this edition, “is the plainest thing in the world. It is not a word but a thing; not a matter of dispute, but of practice.”

I cannot, as I have said, in due conformity with the plan of the present edition, pause to dwell upon those personal qualities in John Byrom which (as it seems to

<sup>1</sup> Ralph Leycester, the “Sir Peter” of his *Poems*. See *Chetham Library MS.* (Appendix to vol. II of this edition of the *Poems*, p. 600).



me) would of themselves distinguish him sufficiently among his contemporaries, even had he never written a verse or connected his reputation with that of writers more celebrated than himself. But I have not thought it superfluous to avow both my conviction that the qualities in question were among the moral characteristics of John Byrom, and my belief that they would render his journals and letters worthy of attentive study, even if his verse had deserved the most rigorous of the cavils to which it has been exposed, or although we were to judge his "incontinency" on religious subjects, of which so much of this verse treats, as severely as it was judged by Law on an occasion when Byrom, perhaps, talked "without his book<sup>1</sup>." The immediate subject of this *Introduction* is, however, Byrom's verse alone; and I propose, so far as the space at my disposal admits, to examine its literary qualities, although I am well aware how futile it is, in judging either of religious or of other poetry, to attempt to dissociate from these qualities the intellectual and moral characteristics of its author.

In the present edition, as in its predecessors of 1773 and 1814, the old-fashioned plan has been pursued of dividing Byrom's poems, according to their subjects, into a "secular" and a "religious" volume. Very reasonable objections might no doubt be taken to this method of division; and they will, I do not doubt, readily present themselves to the minds of my readers. On the other hand, there are assuredly poets—Herrick occurs to one as a sufficiently striking example; in the case of Donne, plain-sailing may perhaps not be quite

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Remains*, II. 271.

so easy—in whose works such a division not only naturally suggests itself, but is hardly to be avoided without very obvious peril. Now, Byrom, I am ready to allow, is not one of these; for although in the facetious verse thrown off by him in his early London days, or, for that matter, in the *Pastoral* which may be said to have formed the basis of his poetical reputation, it is difficult to divine Law's "laureate<sup>1</sup>" of a later period, yet, so far as purity of tone or sentiment is concerned, there was nothing that in his honoured old age he need have desired to blot out from the most vivacious or facetious productions of his salad days. But, more especially since, in accordance with the main object of the present edition, as put forth by a Society devoted to the preservation and elucidation of historical as well as literary antiquities, the whole of Byrom's extant verse, whether or not published, or intended for publication, by himself, has been here reproduced, a grave injustice would have been done to the conduct of his life as well as to the spirit of his writings by refusing to maintain in substance, though not invariably in detail, the broad division adopted in the earlier editions. For my part, I venture to think, albeit aware of examples to the contrary, that editors should show some feeling for their authors. What would Byrom have thought of the juxtaposition of *Tunbridgiale* (I forbear from more striking contrasts) and one of the Paraphrases of the *Psalms* which he was composing in the same period of his career? This, however, by no means implies that,

<sup>1</sup> Law to Byrom, March 26th, 1757: "My dear Laureate, whom I love and esteem with all the truth of Christian fellowship," etc. (*Remains*, II. 588.)

from all points of view under which the whole of it can fairly be considered in common, Byrom's verse should not be judged in its entirety; though, of course, the purely occasional or *extempore* sort of pieces, the stray leaves of a note-book, ought, assuredly, to be left out of account in any critical estimate, as they would have properly been excluded from any edition not mainly antiquarian in its plan. For, in truth, when I think of Byrom's Poems, Miscellaneous and Sacred, as a whole, I can recall very few English writers who have committed to paper an equal amount of verse, who might, if the expression be allowed, so freely challenge a general criticism on their poetical compositions. From motives of which he made no secret, and which, with his usual ingenuousness; he readily avowed, he had accustomed himself to turn the most heterogeneous kinds of materials into rimed verse that never sought to disguise the family likeness between the several specimens issuing from the common mint. The *arundines* of Cam and Thames—and Irwell—readily whispered back the music breathed into them by this faithful votary of their Naiads. The gift of riming which was his—Mr Leslie Stephen<sup>1</sup> calls it "a morbid faculty of riming," but no matter!—was incontestably open to abuse; and Byrom now and then indulged it in moments of desipience, even when engaged on compositions which will be found in my second volume. It was also

<sup>1</sup> *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (2nd ed.), II. 393. Nothing, I must take this opportunity of saying, could be kindlier in tone than the notice with which Mr Stephen has honoured Byrom in vol. VIII. of the *Dictionary of National Biography* (1886).

liable to the censure which such misuse provokes, and to the ridicule attending upon its unrestrained exercise. By all his critics, in their various ways, his possession of this gift, and the drawbacks accompanying it, have been alike recognised—by none in terms at once more reasonable and more polite than by the *Monthly Reviewer* of the first collected edition of the *Poems*:

“It will be natural,” the *Reviewer* wrote, “for our Readers to expect much excellent poetry from the Author of the celebrated song in the *Spectator*; but making poetry the vehicle of his sentiments on almost every subject, familiar or abstracted, he threw them off in the form of verse, seemingly without regard to what the verse itself might be. It is generally, however, as good as could reasonably be expected, considering the subjects he frequently set the Muses to work upon. He made them, what surely they have been seldom made before, casuists, antiquarians and, in pity of them be it spoken, polemical divines. However, a reason is assigned for it in the preface, and we are satisfied<sup>1</sup>.”

In an earlier tribute, published at Manchester in the year after Byrom’s death by a friendly writer, he is not infelicitously described as having been in the habit of

So wisely temp’ring profit and delight,  
He scarce took aim, yet seldom miss’d the white<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See the *Monthly Review*, vol. XLIX. pp. 241 *seqq.* (October, 1773). The *Reviewer* remembered Pope’s:

“In Quibbles Angel and Archangel join,  
And God the Father turns a School-divine.”

<sup>2</sup> See the lines *To the Memory of the late ingenious Dr Byrom*, cited from Whitworth’s *Polite Miscellany*, Manchester, 1764, in *Remains*, II. 652. Candour obliges me to relegate to the twilight of a note the further compliment in this memorial poem, asserting that Byrom

“Too many lines, without remorse, destroy’d  
Which, save himself, pleas’d every judge beside.”

More prosaically, it was said of him by his friend and correspondent, the learned antiquarian Dr Samuel Pegge, when discussing the question of the identity of St George, on which Byrom had formerly hazarded one of the most audacious of his paradoxes in verse<sup>1</sup>, that “amongst his other qualifications, he had a particular knack at versification, and has accordingly delivered his sentiments on this subject, as well as on all others, in a metrical garb; for, I presume, we can scarce call it a poetical one<sup>2</sup>.”

What, in sum, shall be said of this *facility*—occasionally I fear beyond dispute a fatal facility—which friend and foe of Byrom’s manner as a writer of verse must agree in allowing to have been one of its most distinctive characteristics? It is, to begin with, correctly described as an inborn instinct; and this circumstance itself deserves to be reckoned with in any attempt at analysing the idiosyncrasy of a literary genius certainly not deficient in the force which flows from originality. We all remember Pope’s assertion, to which, as on this occasion he avoided mentioning a date, no exception can well be taken, that he “lisp’d in numbers.” Byrom was by nature less audacious; so that he may easily be allowed credit for accuracy, when he tells us that in his “younger” days the rimed couplet, which lorded it over the contemporary Parnassus, completely mastered his own youthful efforts in literary composition:

<sup>1</sup> See the lines *On the Patron of England*, *infra*, vol. I. part II.

<sup>2</sup> *Observations on the History of St George*, in *Archæologia*, vol. v. p. 13 (1779).

Me, Numbers flowing to a measur'd Time,  
 Me, sweetest Grace of *English* Verse, the Rime,  
 Choice Epithet, and smooth descriptive Line,  
 Conspiring all to finish one Design,  
 Smit with delight, full negligent of Prose,  
 And, thro' mere liking, tempted to compose,—  
 To rate, according to my Schoolboy Schemes,  
 Ten lines in verse worth half a hundred Themes<sup>1</sup>.

Yet it should not be overlooked, in this connexion, that Byrom's style as a prose-writer was an admirable example of an admirable species. His, to all intents and purposes acknowledged, contributions to *The Spectator* (which I have thought it worth while to reprint in this volume) were published during his college days, previously to the "Colin and Phœbe" *Pastoral*; but when, at a later date, he printed a set piece of prose composition in the shape of the *Letter* prefixed to the Poetical Essay *On Enthusiasm*, his pedestrian style proved to have lost nothing of its simplicity and force. Indeed, holding as I do the theory that there is no man of two styles any more than there exists a man of two characters, I am inclined to think that the excellence of our author's literary manner as a diarist and a correspondent is attributable to the same union of perfect naturalness with instinctive self-restraint, which, in prose as in verse, had come to be to him a sort of second nature.

But of facility there are different kinds, as well as different degrees. Frequently, we may conclude, Byrom permitted his pen to take things easily, and this, even when it might be occupied with themes of greater importance than the annual gift of a hare from the Squire

<sup>1</sup> See *An Epistle to a Friend on the Art of English Poetry*, ll. 17-24, *infra*, vol. I. part II.

of Toft. This license he may be supposed to have accorded on the general principle

That if Verses were willing, one might as well write 'em<sup>1</sup>.

But he repeatedly gave expression to a conviction, which was no doubt as serious as it was sincere, that no method of *preserving*—or, to use a longer word, *crystal-lising*—a thought or an argument commended itself to his mind equally with that of reproducing it in one of his favourite kinds of verse. “Labours of this kind,” he writes apologetically to Law, who had reason enough to think anything but meanly of them, “afford the most agreeable occupation to me<sup>2</sup>.” But it was not in his lighter hours alone that he was apt to resort to them, or merely when in that mood for desultory trifling from which elegant or fashionable rimesters of his own or later generations have drawn their chief inspiration, like the waggoner who whistled “for want of thought.” “I perceive,” he writes late in his life<sup>3</sup>, “by a blotted paper that I had put some of the thoughts” (in Howe’s *Meditations*) “into rimes as my custom is now and then when I steal a little prose for my own memory, or that of an acquaintance or two who can retain a meditation better in that shape, such as these for instance.” And, with a winning amiability, he, in accounting for this tendency, even ventures far enough in self-depreciation to make us at last understand how, in an age of letters more conscious of its own dignity, he should have come to be called “an odd fellow”:

<sup>1</sup> To R. L., Esq., on receiving another Hare, l. 10; *infra*, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> Byrom to Law, October 10th, 1751 (*Remains*, II. 518).

<sup>3</sup> Byrom to Bishop Hildesley, October 8th, 1757 (*ib.* 597).

Since diff'rent ways of telling may excite  
 In diff'rent Minds Attention to what's right,  
 And Men (I measure by Myself) sometimes,  
 Averse to Reas'ning, may be taught by Rimes<sup>1</sup>.

I will immediately consider the question whether Byrom's method was specially appropriate to the didactic species of poetry in which he essayed his most elaborate efforts; at present I am rather concerned with his quite extraordinary love of versification at large, and with the facility which it bred in him when employing the poetic form of speech.

Of course, I may be met at once by the weighty objection, which I must, however, beg to be excused on the present occasion from discussing, that Byrom was fundamentally wrong in his conception of the purpose of the poetic art. An illustrious modern critic of our literature, the late M. Taine, has demonstrated the full significance of the theory, such as it is, that poetry is prose "to advantage dressed<sup>2</sup>." This theory, which was put into practice throughout the age of Pope, and which Wordsworth is supposed to have definitively overthrown, may perhaps not be so altogether barren as it seems to be at first sight; but its insufficiency may be taken for granted. Byrom never made a pretence of writing verse with any purpose beyond that of heightening, broadening, or otherwise (to use a modern phrase)

<sup>1</sup> *Epistle to a Gentleman of the Temple*, ll. 425-8; *infra*, vol. II.

<sup>2</sup> "Buffon finit par dire, pour louer des vers, qu'ils sont beaux comme de la belle prose. En effet, la poésie devient à ce moment une prose plus étudiée que l'on soumet à la rime. Elle n'est qu'une sorte de conversation supérieure et de discours plus choisi." (Taine, *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise* (2nd ed. 1866), IV. 203.)



accentuating effects which he might have conveyed in prose, or which the prose of other writers had already sought to convey. As a matter of course, this does not preclude his having been possessed of poetic gifts of other kinds. And, in point of fact, the *Pastoral* to which, during his lifetime at all events, he chiefly owed his wider celebrity as a poet, displayed a promising spontaneity of lyric utterance—however trivial might be the particular kind of sentiment conveyed in the lilting lines of this singularly successful piece. Nor was this promise to remain unfulfilled; for, apart from a few lyrical efforts of merit scattered through his secular verse<sup>1</sup>, he vindicated to himself a distinguished place among our writers of hymns, and of psalmodic poetry, both adapted and original. The qualitative wealth of English hymnology is not so excessive that we can afford to neglect among the contributors to it the author of a carol so sweet and quaint as *Christians, awake*, which will live as long as Christmas is kept in England, and of a series of versions or adaptations of the *Psalms*, among which the *Divine Pastoral* is, as it seems to me, an example, almost perfect in its kind, of fluid directness<sup>2</sup>. Byrom belongs to the small band of writers who redeem our English hymnology of the 18th century from the uninteresting sameness which (to speak distinctly) characterised its main course. These writers differed largely from one another in manner and in substance; but most of them drew

<sup>1</sup> I direct particular attention to the really excellent *Song* ("Why, prithee, now, what does it signify, etc."), *infra*, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> "The Lord is my Shepherd, my Guardian and Guide,  
Whatsoever I want, He will kindly provide," etc.

—See vol. II. *infra*.

their inspiration from channels of thought and sentiment which, to the ordinary literary public at least, were unfamiliar, distasteful, or obscure<sup>1</sup>. Perhaps, now that the materials for a history of our English hymnology have at last been compiled and digested by competent scholarship<sup>2</sup>, such a history will before long take its proper place in surveys of our poetic literature.

Byrom, as some of the shorter pieces in the first volume of this edition will, I think, suffice to prove, was not devoid of a distinct gift for narrative poetry, especially in short "moralised" tales, fashioned—*mutatis mutandis*—on models of the kind in which such writers as Prior and Parnell excelled<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, the vivacity of some of his *Dialogues*<sup>4</sup> suggests the possibility that he might, under different literary as well as social conditions, have been attracted to dramatic composition; from which, as it was, he averted his eyes, except on the unique occasion when he helped to caricature one of its most eccentric species<sup>5</sup>. The balance of such an estimate as this would hardly be disturbed by the large quantity of his occa-

<sup>1</sup> See C. J. Abbey, *The English Church and its Bishops, 1700–1800* (1887), II. 201, *seqq.*; and cf. his essay on the subject in the first edition (but omitted from the second) of Abbey and Overton's *English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, vol. II (chap. v).

<sup>2</sup> I refer to the *Dictionary of English Hymnology*, etc., edited by Mr John Julian, 1892; a work of which I have made frequent use in the notes to vol. II of the present edition of Byrom's *Poems*.

<sup>3</sup> *The Nimmers—The Beau and the Bedlamite—Moses's Vision*, etc. I refer entirely to manner, not to matter.

<sup>4</sup> See especially the excellent Derby *Dialogue between a Gentlewoman and her Maid*.

<sup>5</sup> See the *Epilogue to Hurlothrumbo*, and, perhaps, the text of that "Opera" itself.

sional—largely humorous—verse; because even of those (chiefly early) pieces of this kind which were not only made public by him but achieved a legitimate success after their kind, it may, I think, be safely asserted that their merits are due, partly to a geniality of disposition, which cannot be regarded as more than a subsidiary poetic quality, and partly to an attractiveness of outward form, which is more or less common to all Byrom's elaborated productions in verse.

Our author's "note," or (to use a more pedestrian phrase) his "speciality," as a writer of verse lay in his power of paraphrasing in verse prose writings, which, excellent in themselves from the point of view of style, gained rather than lost by his metrical rendering. Doubtless, he had exercised his powers in this direction upon lyrical portions or passages of Holy Writ—thus submitting himself to the severest test which he could have undergone. For, in comparison with the endless series of tentative endeavours, how very remarkably few "versions" (ancient or modern) of the *Psalms* or of cognate portions of Scripture, have survived—or at least have deserved to survive! From the considerable number of paraphrases of Scripture contained in Byrom's library<sup>1</sup> it may be conjectured that he had sedulously endeavoured to select the best models of this kind of literature. Not that his lyric vein, even when thus fed and stimulated, was in any sense opulent in its flow. His habits of mind, half contemplative, half argumentative, naturally reflected themselves in the qualities of his favourite species of literary production;

<sup>1</sup> See *Catalogue of Byrom's Library* (1848, privately printed), p. 140 *et al.*

and Warburton hit the nail on the head, when he averred of Byrom's two masterpieces in this form of composition<sup>1</sup>, that, "were it not for some unaccountable negligence in his verse and language," they "would show us that he has hit upon the right style for familiar didactic epistles in verse." A Warburtonian sting is traceable in this felicitous compliment; for "familiarity" and "negligence" are near neighbours, and Byrom's foible in literature as well as in life was—if I may so describe it—a love of his dressing-gown rather late in the morning and rather early at night. But his almost invariable good taste, good feeling and good sense made him an incomparable versifier of prose which in almost any hands but his own must have suffered from any translation of the kind, and which, indeed, even in his hands could not but undergo something of impoverishment in the process. But this impoverishment, unlike the attenuation to which Bolingbroke was deliberately subjected by Pope, was chiefly in the way of omission<sup>2</sup>. If his versions of portions of Law's later treatises are conscientiously compared with those treatises themselves, it will, I think, be generally found that the interpreter has not passed beyond the outer courts of the sanctuary, to the *arcana* of which he has, for reasons best known to himself, declined to introduce the uninitiated. This remark in some measure applies also

<sup>1</sup> *The Epistle to a Gentleman of the Temple, and Enthusiasm* (see vol. II. *infra*). Cf. *Remains*, II. 522.

<sup>2</sup> I should like thus to modify Mr Leslie Stephen's statement (*History of English Thought*, etc. II. 394), that "Byrom was perfectly serious in versifying Law's sentiments with a closer fidelity than Pope exerted in turning Bolingbroke's philosophising into poetry."

to Byrom's treatment of the writings of "Jacob Behmen" himself, although his acquaintance with these was necessarily less complete and thorough, notwithstanding that he had learnt German on purpose to understand them. But the prose "master" whose spiritual influence Byrom sought to enhance and intensify by means of his verse was, above all others, William Law. I do not know whether many readers of the present day (and they must be students as well as readers to care for such things) will be found prepared fully to appreciate Byrom's literary identification of himself with Law's teaching. Law, it is needless to say, was not and could not be altogether "popular" in any age, and least of all in that in which his lot was cast. Through life, almost, he could have told his disciples on the fingers of his two hands; and, although both authority and liberty in religious matters in turn found in him a most forcible defender, he was, as a theologian, far too unfettered and unbiassed a thinker to be accepted on either side as an acknowledged auxiliary. When, as a writer, he had arrived at the height of his power, the mysticism to which his religious opinions were ultimately subdued isolated him from all but the few disciples whom he had irresistibly attracted to his side; and it may be doubted whether, notwithstanding recent indications to the contrary, masterpieces such as the *Spirit of Prayer* and the *Spirit of Love* will ever command the sympathy of numerous readers. While his intense moral force, together with his singularly concrete humour, which agreed excellently with the literary taste of his age, had commended his *Christian Perfection*, and far more emphatically his *Serious Call*, to a wide area of readers, his finest writings,

in which his peculiar system of doctrine is, with much reiteration, expounded, were left by his contemporaries, and will probably continue to be left by future generations, to unfold their high literary qualities only to devoted, or at least to protracted, study.

Among these qualities the most notable were, perhaps, an argumentative power unsurpassed at all events in the cardinal quality of internal as well as external self-consistency, and an imaginative sublimity of conception which may be compared to Milton's, all the more so that it specially addressed itself to subjects which engaged the maturest labours of Milton's genius. But these are qualities whose presence is but rarely brought home (as it was in Milton's case) to a large public; and it was to such a public that, speaking comparatively, Byrom sought, if not to bring home, at least in some measure to introduce, the later writings of Law. The generosity of this endeavour in itself reflects no mean credit upon the singleminded enthusiasm of Law's disinterested "laureate"; and if the execution was not always adequate to the design, may not the translators of great writers be allowed occasionally to nod, when the same shortcoming is condoned in their originals? Byrom's paraphrases of Law are now and then wanting in strength; on the other hand, Law's prose itself is at times deficient in "distinction." Moreover, in justice to our poet, his plea that want of time prevented him from giving some of his paraphrases the proper finish should at least be recorded<sup>1</sup>. The reader of the present edition will be interested in comparing, with the religious verse of Byrom which was immediately in-

<sup>1</sup> See his letter to Law in *Remains*, II. 518.

spired by Law, a series of pieces suggested by the productions of other religious writers, who at a rather earlier period of his life were specially admired and revered by our author. For his nature was beyond all doubt, as Law told him, more "easily wrought upon" than "the harder strings" of Law's own; Byrom resembled, as he himself confessed, "an instrument that was pinned too soft, and wanted to be better quilled<sup>1</sup>." Among the writers in question, Antoinette Bourignon, "*bewundert viel und viel gescholten*," excited in him a sympathy from which he was only gradually weaned by becoming accustomed to the stronger food with which he was fed by the great English mystic of his own day; but most of his versions from, or tributes to, her works, were of the nature of unrevised jottings; and I own to a qualm of conscience at having printed them in this edition by the side of more finished compositions on cognate subjects. But, in the case of a writer with whom, as with Byrom, publication was rarely more than an accident<sup>2</sup>, while hardly anything that he wrote was altogether without the impress of his personality, these indiscretions may, I trust, find pardon.

Byrom's taste in poetry was under the control of tendencies and convictions which were far from being

<sup>1</sup> *Remains*, II. 275.

<sup>2</sup> So much may be gathered from the fact that only a few of his numerous poems were published by his own authority, and still fewer, if any at all, with his name during his life. As to his carelessness concerning the preservation of his poetical pieces, copies of which he seems by no means always to have kept, see the interesting letters of Dr Vernon in *Remains*, II. 612-3 and 615. Cf. an early utterance of Byrom's on the printing of his occasional effusions (1724), *ib.* I. 70.

of their essence literary or æsthetic, and on which it seems unnecessary, after what has been hinted, further to enlarge. They were, however, engrafted upon a classical training, of which the scholarly influences are (happily or otherwise) apt to prove ineradicable, even in a writer who professed himself comparatively ignorant of the masterpieces of ancient pagan literature, and who scouted the notion that the classics, and more especially those of the lighter poetic kind, form the appropriate staple of the intellectual training of a Christian gentleman. Thus, though he was fain to treat Horace *de haut en bas*, he was to some extent influenced by the study which in his youth he had devoted to the pleasantest of all the classics<sup>1</sup>, and which, after his College days, he carried on as a critic belonging to Bentley's school, though by no means partaking of Bentley's power. He exhibits little interest in the poetic literature of modern foreign peoples, except in the case of hymns or other religious verse of a more or less mystical type. On the other hand, he was, in common with the literary age to which he belonged, surprisingly unfamiliar with our English poetry of the Jacobean and Caroline periods, with the Donnes and Crashaws and Herberts and Vaughans, to whom it might have been thought likely that he would be attracted by something of an elective affinity. He was, however, a reader of Spenser, who, in some sense, was the poetic ancestor of these *epigoni*<sup>2</sup>; and he spurned with indignant contempt a notorious

<sup>1</sup> "In ancient classics tho' but little read,  
I know and care as little what they said."

—*The Art of English Poetry*, ll. 40-1.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Remains*, I. 86.



endeavour to cast discredit upon the genius of Milton<sup>1</sup>. His love of quaint humour—and odd rimes—could not but give him a relish for *Hudibras* (to the elucidation of which a near kinsman of his<sup>2</sup> was a notable contributor); although, as it chanced, Butler's satire was largely directed against those eccentricities of belief with which, or with the like of which, Byrom openly or latently sympathised<sup>3</sup>. But, after all, the Augustan age, in which he lived, must claim him as one of its literary children.

True, he had no blind admiration for Pope himself, though in his younger days he had been naturally eager to make the acquaintance of so prodigiously successful a writer<sup>4</sup>. But in his didactic verse, as in a less marked degree, in the rest of his poetry, Byrom modelled his diction and versification more or less consciously upon Pope and the school of Pope; and, indeed, it would have been difficult for him to do otherwise. For the drier and more pompous poetic fashions which set in towards the close of his life he felt little liking; he had formerly pronounced Glover's *Leonidas* "stuff<sup>5</sup>"; while the lyrics of Akenside and William Whitehead were effectively satirised by him as alike pretentious in form and empty of matter<sup>6</sup>. To his contempt for mere prettiness like

<sup>1</sup> See the lines on *Lauder v. Milton*, *infra*. p. 178.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Byrom. See Grey's *Hudibras*.

<sup>3</sup> "He Anthroposophus, and Floud,  
And Jacob Behmen understood."

—*Hudibras*, Part I, Canto I.

<sup>4</sup> See *Remains*, I. 167. As to his critical attitude towards the *Essay on Man* and the *Imitation of Horace*, cf. *ib.* II. 55 and 137.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *ib.* II. 149.

<sup>6</sup> See below, Part II, the verses on the patriotic lyrics of these two worthies.

that of the English "Aristippus" it is hardly necessary to refer<sup>1</sup>. Byrom's "art of poetry," like Pope's, amounts in truth to what he states to be his *vade mecum* on the pilgrimage to Parnassus, viz., a determination to keep

Good verse in prospect, and good sense for guide<sup>2</sup>.

It was in no other way than this that both the chief of the Augustans and the kindly *dilettanti* who followed in their wake sought to make "the sound an echo to the sense."

And this brings me, in conclusion, to a few remarks on the versification of a writer who, it will hardly be gainsaid, is to be reckoned among those gifted with "the nicer taste of liquid verse<sup>3</sup>." Byrom was, in the first instance, a staunch and consistent upholder of rime, which he felicitously called "the sweetest grace of English verse<sup>4</sup>," and on behalf of which he gallantly broke more than one lance, as against the claims of its persistent rival. There is no proof, so far as I am aware, that he wrote more than one copy of blank-verse in his life<sup>5</sup>. It would of course be easy to argue hence that rime was with him the rudder of verses; but of this I see little evidence either in his graver or in his lighter productions. In the latter he was, to be sure, much

<sup>1</sup> See below, Part II.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *An Epistle to a Friend on the Art of English Poetry*, Part I, l. 202, *infra*, Part II.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the conclusion of the lines on *Horace*, Bk. iv. *Ode* iii, vv. 13-15; *infra*, Part II.

<sup>4</sup> See especially *The Contest* with Roger Comberbach; also, *Thoughts on Rime and Blank Verse*, *infra*, Part II.

<sup>5</sup> A paraphrase of the verses concerning the resurrection of the body in 1 *Corinthians*, chap. xv; see *Remains*, I. 98. It is not extant.

addicted to odd rimes, which occasionally, but not invariably, are Hudibrastically surprising<sup>1</sup>; but it must be allowed that these rimes generally come in "pat," instead of being, after the fashion of second-rate artists, dragged in by the hair of their heads. In his serious verse, more especially in the best of his paraphrases, Byrom's rimes, as it were, drop from his quill with delightful facility, and add most distinctly to the music of his verse<sup>2</sup>.

Neither Byrom nor any other competent authority ever regarded rime, or the equivalents of rime, as more than an adjunct to metre. Byrom's metrical genius was, beyond all dispute, remarkable; and sheer ignorance alone could suppose this gift to stand on the same level as his facility in riming. The only question is, whether his altogether exceptional readiness and skill in metrifcation were generally under the control of a taste at once sound and refined. I say "generally"; for no poet, small or great, should be judged by inelegant any more than by elegant extracts; false concords may be found here and there in Lord Byron, and Shakespeare gives his name to a whole grammar of exceptions. Byrom's treatment of the heroic couplet—his metre-in-ordinary, as it was that of his age at large—was in my opinion, as

<sup>1</sup> Vicious—Acrisius; faith is't—Ath'ist; metropolis—populous; Theseus—facetious; pulpit—gulp it, etc., etc.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, *A Divine Pastoral*, and *A Thanksgiving-Hymn* (vol. II). To quote particular instances would be to ignore the heightening of effect which is produced by their succession to one another; but I confess to being, as it were, carried away by the combination of rime and metre in such a couplet as this:

"By His wonderful Works we see plainly enough  
That the Earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

a rule, vigorous, varied, and effective. His didactic verse lacks the continuous glitter which dazzles us in the best Augustan silver; but it will serve. That occasionally he could catch the essence of (may I call it) the Twickenham manner—and even at times of an earlier manner which the master himself never quite mastered—might, I think, be exemplified to the satisfaction of any candid critic<sup>1</sup>.

On the other hand, it is not to be denied that there is some speciousness in the censures which Byrom has

<sup>1</sup> I can only append in a brief foot-note one or two instances, varied as widely as is possible:

*Epping Forest:*

“A dreary landscape, bushy and forlorn,  
Where Rogues start up like mushrooms in a morn.”

*Collins and Middleton:*

“Collins himself th’absurdity forbore;  
That height was left for Middleton to soar.”

*Contentment:*

“The more we gather, still the more it thrives,  
Fresh as our hopes, and lasting as our lives.”

*Adam and the Trinity:*

“Partner of their communicated breath,  
A living soul, unsubjected to death.”

The following two couplets are more like Dryden, who would not have disdained to own the Alexandrine in the second:

*A Second-hand Author:*

“He moulds a matter that he once was taught  
In various shapes, and thinks it to be thought.”

*The Blessings of a Sober Life:*

“Sweet health, to pass the present moments o’er,  
And everlasting joy, when time shall be no more.”

incurred from critics obsolete and recent, by his fondness for a different kind of verse, which he undoubtedly employed for a curious variety of themes. It is nothing but a variety of that kind of measure which Mr Gosse calls "the cantering metre," and of which he has traced the genesis with a learning and acumen familiar to all students of our later English literature<sup>1</sup>. The particular variety of verse much affected by Byrom, and used by him both in the *Pastoral* which established his literary reputation in a large circle of friends, and in his subsequent *Divine Pastoral* and other paraphrases or versions of sacred psalmody, is amusingly called by one of his censors "the ambling *Haunch of Venison* metre<sup>2</sup>." But this allusion to Goldsmith's lines, written several years after Byrom's death and about seventy after the publication of his *Pastoral*, which directly suggested to him the use of the same measure in sacred verse, is not very damaging to the earlier writer. The *Divine Pastoral* obviously announced itself as an experiment in form; and, to my mind, the experiment proved successful both in this poem and in nearly all of those which followed in the same measure from the same hand. I am of course prepared to admit that not every metre can be married to every theme; and that a rhythm may suit Prior's and Tom Moore's Chloës and Houris which is less appropriate to Beattie's *Hermit*<sup>3</sup>; but I venture,

<sup>1</sup> See *From Shakespeare to Pope* (1885), pp. 188-190. Cf. the very interesting and generous, though necessarily brief, notice of Byrom in Mr Gosse's *History of Eighteenth Century Literature* (1889), pp. 214-5.

<sup>2</sup> See Overton, *William Law* (1881), a biography largely cited in vol. II of the present edition of Byrom's *Poems*.

<sup>3</sup> "And darkness and doubt are now flying away,  
No longer I roam in conjecture forlorn," etc.

with all deference, to point out that the expression of religious feelings is entitled to be not less varied, whether in poetry or in music, than those feelings are themselves, and that a "voluntary" may be played with effect on the organ as well as a "fantasia" on the violin.

Few poets—or, since I claim for Byrom not more than he would have claimed for himself, few writers of pleasing verse—have ever achieved success without having been distinguished by a manner of their own; and any such manner is apt to be accompanied by its characteristic excesses and defects. In the case of Byrom, who was by nature inclined in all things to moderation and self-control, these mannerisms are very slight and pardonable of their kind. He was fond of a certain oddity of accentuation, largely provoked by his favourite anapæstic metre<sup>1</sup>; while it was probably the exigencies of rapid versification which led him to indulge in what cannot but be termed awkward inversions of construction<sup>2</sup>. Other peculiarities of a similar kind might very possibly be noted; but I am not of opinion that these faults of verse or style, taken altogether, seriously impair the effect of his material writing.

That effect, viewed as a whole, is, in my judgment, principally due to the sweetness, simplicity, and purity of its author's nature, nor can it be said to be materially

<sup>1</sup> *Amphitheâtre*; *enthusiásm*; *ástonishíngly*; *únmércifúllly*; *god-désses*; *incórruptible*, etc., etc.

<sup>2</sup> "The willing to be saved"; "The parched with thirst"; etc., etc.; together with probably intentional effects like the following:

"And of all Worship, that deserves a Name,  
The Word of Life by faith to apprehend  
That was in the beginning—is the end."

affected by anything that was peculiar in his subjects or in the tastes and tendencies which had led to their selection. Without vanity, or even volatility, his "honest muse<sup>1</sup>" ranged from the topics which interested or amused himself and a kindly circle of like-minded friends in their hours of work or play, to themes which may be said to have verily absorbed his innermost spiritual life. He held that to an English poet

All within bound of innocence is free<sup>2</sup>;

nor, I imagine, will those of his readers who agree with me that his verse merits preservation both for its own sake and because it completes our intimacy with its author, be of opinion that this particular poet used his freedom of choice and of treatment otherwise than worthily.

<sup>1</sup> See *Dulces ante omnia Musæ*, l. 2, *infra*, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> See *An Epistle to a Friend on the Art of English Poetry*, l. 309, *infra*, Part II.

## 27. SWIFT'S LOVE STORY IN GERMAN LITERATURE

(*Macmillan's Magazine*, February 1877)

NOTHING, it may perhaps be convenient to observe at the outset of this brief paper, could be further from its author's intention than to advance or discuss any theory concerning the true history of Swift and Stella. The hand which would have at least arrayed in lucid order the whole of the evidence existing on the subject, and which had already dispelled some of the most inveterate and perverse legends obscuring it, has been arrested in the midst of its labours. Had the late Mr Forster lived to complete the last and most interesting of his biographies, the substance of what follows might, perhaps, have served as a note illustrating the strange kind of immortality which even fictions destined to be refuted by research may secure to themselves in fields of literature not exposed to the criticism of facts. Should any future writer ever complete Mr Forster's fragment<sup>1</sup>, I hope he will not neglect to note in wider circles than I shall attempt even to approach, the traces not only of a particular legend concerning Swift's life, but also of the influence of his genius in other literatures besides our own.

The period of German literature lying between the years of bondage to French models and the times of

<sup>1</sup> [Sir Henry Craik's *Life of Swift* was not published till 1882; the second edition, in 2 vols., followed in 1894.]



emancipation and of independent achievement is known to have been both deeply and variously affected by English influences. The writers of this transition period severally followed models more or less congenial to themselves; but these examples were to a large extent English. Even Gottsched, whose feet still rested upon a French *parquet*, was at least fain to imitate an English imitation of Racine, and to let another *Dying Cato* teach propriety to the German theatre. Bodmer, the chief of the rival school, sought happier examples in the real masterpieces of Addison and Steele, the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, and did honour to the great name of Milton which Addison had recalled to his countrymen. Klopstock, the real herald of the change which was to come over German poetry, drew his inspiration for his most sustained flight—if flight it can be called—from the same source. Even Gellert's homespun genius delighted the sentimental of both sexes with an imitation, rivalling the original in length, if not in any other respect, of *Clarissa Harlowe*. But in Lessing, the representative proper of the transition period which was to end by liberating German literature from its bonds and by opening its own classic age, the love of English literature went hand in hand with the desire for rational freedom, and may be almost said to have coincided with it. Lessing emancipated German literature, and more especially the literature of the German drama; and in the accomplishment of this task one of his chief aids was the power of appealing to English examples.

The critic who, gifted with strong but not transcendent creative genius, seeks himself to translate theory

into practice, and to furnish examples of what is better after exposing what is bad, is ill-advised if he attempts to take the public by storm. Nearly all Lessing's dramatic works must, however, be described as noteworthy, and while some will be enduringly treasured by the student, some justly retain on the national stage a popularity which is not a mere popularity of esteem. *Minna von Barnhelm*, even if Frederick the Great wrote the best part of it (as the King says in Grillparzer's amusing Dialogue of the Dead), or in some degree perhaps for that very reason, will always remain a true national comedy. Of Lessing's tragedies, *Emilia Galotti* mingles genuine passion with rhetorical reminiscences of the student's lamp; in *Nathan the Wise*, the drama is lost in the dialogue, but that dialogue preserves the inmost spirit of its author's intellect. In both *Minna* and *Nathan*, however, Lessing had freed himself from the conditions of mere passing efforts; in the one he had a nation, in the other humanity, in view. He began his career as a dramatist with a humbler aim, though he would never allow it to be a false one. In *Miss Sara Sampson* his immediate object was to break the fetters which in choice of subject as well as in form still held the German theatre; and, on this occasion, he did not scruple to seek to reproduce a dramatic species—that of domestic tragedy—of which the contemporary English stage furnished examples no longer treasured among the glories of our literature. Lessing, who was as little respectful to the tearful twin-sister of domestic tragedy—sentimental comedy—as Goldsmith or Piron themselves, had intended to defend, in a preface, the species to which *Miss Sara Sampson* belongs; at all events, it

must be allowed that this tragedy, whatever its defects, surpassed its more immediate English model.

That model one must maintain to be no other than Lillo's *London Merchant*, better known to the shilling galleries of many generations by its *alias* of *George Barnwell*. This circumstance, notwithstanding the protests of Professor Caro, is to my mind rendered certain by a comparison of the two plays, even were it not a fact (cited by Hettner) that Lessing declares he would rather be the author of the *London Merchant* than of the *Dying Cato*. Of course there is a considerable difference between Lillo and Lessing; but the resemblance is not confined to the second syllables of the names of the monstrous Millwood and the monstrous Marwood; it extends to the very principle thus formulated by the worthy tradesman-poet, that "the more extensively useful the moral of any tragedy is, the more excellent that piece must be of its kind." The difference which interests us, however, in connexion with the subject of this paper, is of a special kind.

In Lillo's "Pathetic Drama," which, according to Cibber, speedily met its reward by "being patronised by the mercantile interest," the infatuated hero learns only at the last moment, when he and his ruthless but declamatory tempter are preparing for the gallows, that a virtuous love might have been his. Lessing's Sara, on the other hand, falls a victim to the vengeance of her fiendish rival; but this vengeance has been made possible (though not, as in a better-constructed plot it might have been, actually brought about) by the fatal irresolution of her miserable lover. In this irresolution lies the real dramatic conflict of Lessing's play. When it is

added that some of the names, and something in the situation, are clearly derived from *Clarissa Harlowe*, and that in the plot much turns on the (pretended) delay of an inheritance, in order to obtain which Mellefont continually postpones his marriage with the unhappy Sara, enough has been said about the play for the present purpose. It was produced in the year 1755.

More than twenty years after this date, Lessing was involved in the heat of theological controversy; and in the year 1778 published the last and "the boldest and strongest" of the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments*, in which he contrasts the developments of Christianity with the teachings of its Founder. In this very year 1778, when he had just discontinued his *Antigoeze*, not so much from want of breath as because of the absence of articulate opposition, it occurred to him to try whether he would be allowed to "preach a sermon from his old pulpit, the stage." "An odd fancy," he writes to his brother, "occurred to me last night. Many years ago I sketched a drama, the contents of which have a kind of analogy with my present controversies, of which I probably never dreamt in those days." This play he now proposes to print by subscription; of the plan, he merely reveals that it is taken from the story of the Jew Melchisedec in the *Decamerone* (i. 3), and that he has invented a very interesting episode in addition. Boccaccio's story is the apologue of the three rings, there, as in Lessing's play, told to the Sultan Saladin. Lessing, as is well known, makes use of the narrative to express, in brief, the moral of his drama, the essential didactic object of which was avowed by himself and is manifest to every reader. The plot of the play, as distinct from its

idea, is adapted from another story in the same inexhaustible treasure-house of dramatic materials; and yet another novel in the *Decamerone* supplies the name and one of the most characteristic features—the unsurpassable generosity—of Nathan himself.

The plot of Lessing's *Nathan the Wise* is, as every admirer of this immortal work will be ready to concede, its weak side. In Boccaccio Lessing had found the story (v. 5) suggesting the main points in the adventures of his heroine Recha, with differences on which it is here unnecessary to dwell. Recha, who lives in the house of Nathan as his daughter, has been rescued from a fire by a Knight Templar, for whom she thereupon conceives an affection of which her faithful attendant Daja is the confidante. The Templar returns her passion, and at one time designs to carry her off. In the end, however, it is discovered that they are brother and sister, the children of the same father; and with this *dénoûment* (including the discovery that this father was the brother of Sultan Saladin) the drama closes—tame enough it must be confessed, so far as dramatic interest is concerned.

Three elements are, therefore, blended in this play. Its central idea is that of religious tolerance, based on a philosophical indifference to the accidentals of creeds. Its hero is a philosophical Jew of unboundedly generous character. Its plot turns upon the love of a brother and sister unaware of their true relations to one another. What had suggested to Lessing the strange association of these apparently heterogeneous elements? The second of them was a mere addition to the first, and may be neglected for our purpose; the paradox of making the

representative of tolerance a Jew was not paradoxical in a follower of Spinoza and a friend of Moses Mendelssohn; it was suggested by the story in Boccaccio, and commended itself by the nature of the situation of the period in which that story plays—the period of the Crusades, when Christians and Mussulmans contended, and the representative of a third creed was therefore placed between the representatives of theirs. But what association of ideas connected the moral of *Nathan the Wise* and its plot in Lessing's mind?

To this curious question the ingenuity of Professor Caro has suggested a not less curious answer. Lessing, as has been seen, had first sketched his play "many years" before he executed it. At the time when he was actively engaged as a dramatist and was writing his *Miss Sara Sampson*, Lord Orrery's *Remarks on the Life and Writings of Swift* had recently made their appearance (1752). In 1754 followed Delany's *Observations*, in 1755 Deane Swift's *Essay on the Life* of his namesake. In this very year (1755), when *Miss Sara Sampson*, the woeful story of Sir William Sampson's daughter and her fatally irresolute lover, appeared, was published Hawkesworth's memoir of Swift, and his edition of Swift's works was issued in that or the following year. Swift's works, doubtless including the *Tale of a Tub*<sup>1</sup>, were for the first time translated into German in 1756-7. Lessing might have seen any or all of these publications. It is certain that he not only saw, but constantly read

<sup>1</sup> See as to the Lutheran Martin Rinckhart's *Christian Knight of Eisleben* (with its Peter, Martin and John) Hose's *Miracle Plays and Sacred Dramas*, p. 156 (E. Tr.), acted at Eisleben in 1613 (shortly before the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War).

and studied, the *Dictionnaire* of Bayle, and that the edition he used (for he actually published a review of it) was that of Chauffepié, containing supplements. Of this edition, the fourth volume, which includes an article on Swift, was published in 1756.

Now, the *Tale of a Tub* may or may not have struck Lessing's fancy and prepared his mind to seize with avidity upon the story of Boccaccio. Hettner, in his admirable History of the Literature of the 18th century, has shown what hardly needed showing, that the resemblance between Swift's and Lessing's apologues is after all only a superficial resemblance; and many readers of Swift may, like myself, have long been in the habit of contrasting in their minds, rather than comparing, the morals of the two stories. Hettner points out that not only had Lessing in two of his juvenile comedies already treated similar themes, but that in his *Rehabilitation of Hieronymus Cardanus* he introduces a disputation between three representatives of Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity which takes a strictly dramatic form. Now, this disputation, taken from Cardanus, but defended by Lessing and supplemented by him with a speech in which a Mahometan defends his own religion, occurs in an essay which, as Caro remarks, was in all probability suggested to Lessing by his studies of Bayle, whose life of Cardanus (in vol. 1 of the *Dictionary*) contains, it must be confessed, matters for "rehabilitation" of another kind than those which interested Lessing. In any case, there can be no doubt that Lessing was a diligent reader of Bayle and Chauffepié, and that the article on Swift in the *Dictionary* could not have escaped his attention.

Now, this article (which is at present before me) not only contains a reference to the *Tale of a Tub* as one of Swift's wellknown productions, but gives a life of the Dean, entering at some length into those episodes in which we are here more especially interested. Lord Orrery's *Remarks* had been consulted by the author, and the account which that solemn gossip furnishes to his "dear Ham" is reproduced in its essential features. Chauffepié mentions in a note the rumour that Swift and Stella were both the natural children of the "Chevalier Temple," and that this circumstance accounted for Swift's treatment of Stella, to whom the secret had become known as it had to himself; though he also quotes Lord Orrery's refutation of the story as to Swift's relation to Temple. In another note, he gives an account of Swift's treatment of Vanessa, to whose money difficulties he refers in passing. Here again, he follows Lord Orrery; and in his text he states as a fact that Swift married Stella, without ever recognising her as his wife. This is the account given by Lord Orrery of the relation between Stella and Swift, "who scorned, my Hamilton, even to be married like any other man"—an account which was afterwards accepted by Dr Delany, and of the truth of which Deane Swift expressed his conviction. The story of Esther Vanhomrigh's treatment by Swift is likewise given by Lord Orrery (who teaches us to pronounce her name "Vannumery"), though not with all the details which afterwards accumulated around it.

The reader may now be left to draw his own inferences from the above materials, and to judge in how far the story of Swift, Stella, and Vanessa suggested



to Lessing the main dramatic motive of *Miss Sara Sampson*, a drama which, as the first German tragedy of domestic life, exercised a most noteworthy influence upon the history of German literature; and, secondly, in how far the story of the original relation between Swift and Stella, together with the influence exercised upon Lessing's intellectual fancy by the apologue of the *Tale of a Tub* (strengthened and modified by his study of Cardanus), gave the first impulse to Lessing's conception of the noblest and maturest, though as a drama by no means the most perfect, of the creations of his genius. In arriving at a conclusion on the subject, such coincidences as "Sir William Sampson" and "Sir William Temple" or as "Temple" and "Templar," will probably only weigh with a particular class of minds; but the entire association of ideas will hardly be placed in the same category of critical hallucinations.

The story of Swift's life, with its attendant fictions, necessarily spread with the fame of his works. In 1766, Hawkesworth and others added to these the bulk of Swift's correspondence, including the later part of the so-called *Journal to Stella*, from some of which a series of extracts had been previously published by Deane Swift. The earlier letters were published shortly afterwards, in 1768. No new biography attempted to apply the tests of historical criticism to the current story of Swift, Stella and Vanessa; and, even at a later date than is of value for our purpose, Johnson and Sheridan essentially accepted it. Thus, about the year 1775, the story remained in the eyes of the literary and sentimental world—and the two epithets to a great extent

coincided in those days—the psychological problem which it has since continued for generations of readers. Meanwhile, in Germany the love of English literature (though chiefly directed into channels with which we have no concern here) continued and increased. Goethe's youth fell in the period of the most extravagant Shakespeare worship which perhaps even Germany has ever known; and in this as in other matters Lenz was Goethe's caricature. But the youthful poet had enthusiasm to spare for more than one species and period of English literature. His Sesenheim adventures were, as he tells us, Goldsmith's idyl translated into life; and Goldsmith's pretty ballad of *The Hermit* afterwards (in 1774) furnished Goethe with the idea of the charming pastoral opera of *Erwin and Elmira* (where Erwin is Edwin). And, since it was in this period of his career that Goethe was so greatly under the influence of Herder, who taught him to love Goldsmith and to worship "Ossian," and since Herder was so ardent an admirer of Swift that his friends jestingly called him "the Dean" in allusion to this predilection, it would be wonderful if Goethe had not been attracted to the study of a genius with whom his own had at least one preeminent characteristic in common—directness of reproductive power. Nor was the vigour, or even the frequent coarseness, of Swift's manner likely to repel a young author who had not yet wholly freed himself from the influence of the *Kraftgenies*, who as late as 1775 undertook, much to Merck's disgust, a journey to Switzerland with two such *Burschen* as the Counts Stolberg, and who in the previous year, 1774, produced two *jeux d'esprit* very much in the poetic and prose

manners of Swift himself—*Plundersweilen Fair*, and the *Prologue to Bahrdt's Revelations*, in which the sceptical theologian holds a "polite conversation" with some of the strangest guests who have ever entered a professor's study.

But it was something very different from literary admiration or sympathy which about this time could not but interest Goethe in Swift's unhappy love-story. That he was acquainted with it, may, in any case, be assumed as a matter of course; and it is a mere coincidence that in 1774 Goethe, too (as we know from his studies of Spinoza), was reading Bayle's *Dictionary*. Goethe was in this period of his life—the period which he spent at Frankfort previously to his removal to Weimar—what Mr Lewes calls "the literary lion" of his day. In 1771, he published his *Götz von Berlichingen*, and, in 1774, his *Sorrows of Werther*. For a season, he was not engaged upon any work of primary importance, though he was already composing fragments of his *Faust*—more especially some of the Margaret scenes. His productivity was at the same time intense; and among his minor works belonging to the year 1774 is the tragedy of *Clavigo*. If, however, at no time was Goethe's personal life absorbed in his literary pursuits, except in so far as these reflected that personal life itself, least of all was such the case in these years of buoyant self-consciousness. At no other time was he with more regal certainty the favourite of the society in which he moved. All men thought him irresistible; and hundreds would have echoed what one of his friends, Frederick Henry or "Fritz" Jacobi (whose name is of significance for us), expressed, that "one

needs to be with him but an hour to see that it is utterly absurd to expect him to think and act otherwise than as he does." It hardly requires to be added that what many men felt for Goethe, and something more than this, was felt by many women. This was the period of his life in which, as he afterwards stated in his *Autobiography*, he conceived the first, and also the only, true love of his life—his love for Lili, to which the most exquisitely beautiful perhaps of all his lyrics owe their origin. He was, however, at or shortly before the time of this passion, in relations of indefinitely varying kinds with more than one other woman. With Countess Augusta Stolberg he was engaged in a correspondence which begins with a declaration to the effect that the names "friend, sister, beloved-one, bride, wife," are individually or collectively inadequate to express the sentiment he entertains towards her. In 1774 he wrote his *Clavigo* for Anna Sibylla Münch. There was a Christiane R.—of name unknown—to whom he addressed one of the most jocund (as Herrick might have called it) of his love-lyrics. And it was early in the same year that Maximiliana Laroche had gradually obscured in his heart the memory of Lotte Kestner, to whom he was at that time giving immortality in his *Werther*: "it is," he writes in his *Autobiography*, "a very agreeable sensation, when a new passion begins to more in us before the old one has quite died away. It is thus that at sunset time one likes to see the moon rising on the opposite side, and rejoices in the double splendour of the two heavenly luminaries."

I am not discussing the psychological problem, if it be such, of Goethe's loves any more than that of Swift's;

but what some may call blameworthy irresolution, and others a saving power of self-emancipation, and neither will perhaps call by a wholly wrong name, was certainly a characteristic feature of this, more than of any other, season of his life. That he was keenly alive to the possible consequences, as well as to the ethical bearing, of the concurrent or conflicting relations in which he found himself, is beyond question. Many times in his life, and by no means only in the case of Frederica, he showed himself capable of efforts which, whether tardy or not, were made from motives which only ignoble minds will glibly stigmatise as ignoble. Perhaps it was the enduring remembrance of the fact that in Lili's case "the maiden bowed to circumstances sooner than the youth," which in his later manhood gave so exceptional a significance to this passion. That irresolution may be fatal to the happiness of the beloved as well as the lover, was a truth which was very distinctly present to his mind. In *Götz von Berlichingen*, Weislingen is the victim of his miserable unmanliness; in *Clavigo* it is Marie whose heart is broken, and whose life is sacrificed.

Thus, there would seem no antecedent difficulty in accounting for the impression which such a story as that of Swift must have made upon Goethe, and more especially upon Goethe at this period of his career; and the problem of which in his drama of *Stella* (1775) he attempted a poetic solution is one which might seem naturally enough to have suggested itself to him in connexion with Swift's story, even without the addition of any such "biographical element" as Mr Lewes is unable to discover in the play. Such an element, however, or one which may be fairly so described, has

recently been discovered, or thought to be discovered, by a German literary scholar. Professor Urlichs holds that the correspondence of Goethe and F. H. Jacobi, and the more recently published correspondence between Goethe and Jacobi's aunt, Johanna Fahlmer, furnish the desired clue. His arguments and conclusions have been rigorously, but respectfully, criticised by two of the most eminent German authorities on such questions, Professors Scherer and H. Düntzer, and a lighter but equally skilful lance, that of Julian Schmidt, has likewise touched what to some may be not the least interesting part of the subject.

It would carry me too far were I to obey my inclination and endeavour to pursue the course of that controversy in its details. It must therefore suffice to say that Goethe was engaged upon his *Stella* immediately after a visit which Jacobi paid him at Frankfort early in 1775, and that the play was communicated during its progress to Johanna Fahlmer and (either in its completed state, or with its fifth act still wanting) to her nephew. Jacobi had already, at an earlier point—probably through his aunt—become acquainted with its plan or progress—as Düntzer thinks, up to the close of the third act, and had signified his liking of it. When, however, the play itself—whether with or without its fifth act—had been sent to Jacobi, the latter, to Goethe's great disappointment (“It almost makes me wild, though not angry, with Fritz”), signified his strong disapproval of the manuscript, which the author besought him to return, in a letter containing the curious exclamation—“If you but knew how I love it, and love it for your sake.” The good feeling between the friends was for a time restored,

till Jacobi in his turn began the composition of a novel (*Aus Edward Allwill's Papieren*), which Goethe in his turn heartily disliked. The hero of this novel had certain features of which it was easy to recognise the original in Goethe; or rather, in the manner of the youthful master himself, Jacobi had in the character of Allwill, as he afterwards did in that of the hero of another novel, *Woldemar*, mingled features taken from the author, and others taken from the author's friend. Their intimacy after this slackened, and gradually fell into an estrangement which lasted for some years.

F. H. Jacobi, whose life was in some respects as typical of the age in which it fell as was what Goedeke calls his "philosophical dilettantism," had led an irregular youth, but was now happily married, though he had recently lost a child. His aunt, Johanna Fahlmer, who was two years younger than her nephew, was for four years an inmate of his household, until (in 1770) she quitted Jacobi and his wife, and for a time stayed with a female companion at Aix-la-Chapelle for the waters. Here she was taken seriously ill, and she describes this period of her life "as a great crisis, of sufferings which were not all bodily." Not long afterwards (in 1772), she settled at Frankfort, remaining, however, on terms of intimacy and interchange of visits with Jacobi's wife, who in 1773 writes to Goethe, "that my aunt and I go our even and straight way by the side of one another without hobbling or stumbling, is a fact, although it still remains a riddle for the worshipful Doctor Goethe." These, together with certain coincidences of detail (of local description in particular), to which I am certainly inclined to think with Scherer

and Düntzer that Urlichs attaches quite undue importance, are the circumstances which suggested to him the following conjectures:—the triple relation between the rather erratic Jacobi, his amiable and true-hearted wife, and his more romantically and sentimentally disposed relative, was, in Urlichs' opinion, the personal basis of Goethe's dramatic conception; the outward change in these relations which occurred when Johanna left the family, is to be explained by the gradual growth of sentiments between her and Jacobi which rendered her departure advisable; and lastly, Jacobi's confidences to Goethe on the occasion of the visit of the former to Frankfort turned on that subject; all of which explains Goethe's subsequent declaration that he loved the drama of *Stella* "for the sake" of his friend.

Of this series of conjectures, the first alone seems entitled to anything like serious consideration. The second is a possibility indeed, but one which cannot justifiably be advanced in the absence of all evidence to support it, while the third is a possibility resting upon a possibility. On the other hand, it appears a not improbable supposition that relation between Goethe's triad of friends presented itself to his eager imagination as a more or less actual type of the situation which, suggested by the story of Swift, fascinated him by its resemblance to dangers he must at times, consciously or half-consciously, have apprehended. It seems, however, to be demonstrable that Johanna Fahlmer, after the first four acts of the play had been communicated to her, had not the slightest suspicion of any reference being intended in it to her own life. Nor is it at all clear that Jacobi's objections to *Stella* were grounded on any



personal feeling. And they might well both be free from any such thoughts, for there is not a jot or trace of proof that Jacobi and Johanna Fahlmer ever entertained any affection for one another beyond that of friendship and kinship. The reason for which she separated from him and his wife in 1770 has been satisfactorily explained by Scherer; it was the discovery of an early error of Jacobi which had given rise to an outburst of anger against him on the part of his father, and which—though totally unconnected with Johanna—may very probably have rendered it expedient for her to leave his house. Her subsequent mental sufferings might seem sufficiently accounted for by the same cause; but they admit of other explanations at least as probable as the quite unproved one suggested by Urlichs; thus, it is known that Johanna differed from her mother on religious matters. At the same time, the relation between Johanna and Jacobi, united in affection after their separation, was peculiar enough to strike an imagination prepared to find problems in such a situation as theirs—so much so that Jacobi himself afterwards appears to have given it a literary expression (of a perfectly innocent kind, be it observed) in his later novel, *Woldemar*. It may be added that in an age such as this there was nothing unnatural, though there might be something striking, in the relation Goethe may have supposed to exist, or dreamt of as existing, between Jacobi, Betty, and Johanna. How much stranger—and yet it was a reality attested by his own confession—was the relation between the poet Bürger and Molly Leonhardt and her sister, his first wife, after whose death he married Molly, whom he was fated so soon to lose! The wildest

legends which have gathered round the history of Swift's life are hardly more improbable than this authentic record, from which charity itself seems forced to turn aside.

Such, with the possible addition of a contemporary piece of fashionable scandal of an ordinary type<sup>1</sup>, were the antecedents of the strange "drama for lovers," as he called it, which, after its completion, Goethe laid at Lili's feet, and which he thought would prove to Augusta Stolberg that he was still the same that she had always known him to be. Its design was, in a word, that of finding a poetic solution for the problem of a double love. Fernando, married to Cecilia, has deserted her and her child, without—little as he knows it—having ceased to love her. After, not before, this, he has conceived a passion for the beautiful Stella; but her also he has quitted in order to seek his abandoned wife. Unsuccessful in his search, he has returned to Stella, when accident brings his wife and daughter into the very village where Stella dwells. The difficulty thus brought about is intensified by Fernando's affections being now altogether distracted between the devoted and innocent Stella and his suffering and faithful wife. The original solution was not—as the public insisted, because of the daring recital of the legend of the Count of Gleichen—bigamy, but a resignation of her lover

<sup>1</sup> "*Eh, mais c'étaient des femmes,*" the Don Giovanni of this adventure (it took place in Portugal, though its central figure was a German, which perhaps accounts for Goethe calling his German hero Fernando) is said to have apologetically observed of his victims—as if brutally to parody the tenderest of all Swift's cynicisms: "Only a woman's hair."

by Cecilia to Stella, with a claim for herself to an equal share of his affection. I think that, on this head, Scherer has fully vindicated Goethe from a coarse misinterpretation of his meaning, pardonable only in readers of incurably restricted imaginations. "We will part," she says, "without being separated. Your letters shall be my only life, and mine shall seem dear visitors to you.... And thus you will remain mine, and not be banished with Stella in a corner of the world." She is willing to resign all but his love; for she has "learnt much in suffering," and she has solemnly prayed to Heaven to look down upon her, and strengthen her. Surely, it is time that the stigma thoughtlessness has cast upon Goethe's strange, but not ignoble idea, should be declared to be what it is—utterly and radically unjust.

The poet had thus ventured to suggest a solution for a not impossible difficulty wholly irreconcilable, not only with the moral traditions of society, but with the realities of human life. He had dared everything, without taking into careful consideration even the necessary artistic conditions of success. For though *Stella* is in many respects a production of true genius—lightly, but effectively constructed, written with the fresh flow of natural sentiment, and even humour, which Goethe in these days of his most abundant poetic creativeness had at his command, and in some of its passages rising to a picturesque beauty of dialogue recalling the loveliest parts of *Egmont* itself—it has two radical faults as a drama. In the first place, the hypothesis of Fernando's first abandonment of Cecilia is left unnecessarily obscure; sympathy with the hero is thus effectively destroyed at the outset, and he becomes not only

despicable, but absurd. Secondly, as Julian Schmidt well observes, this is a domestic drama; and a solution which the author himself could not regard as other than ideal was thus, as it were, advanced as a practical expedient for the use of men and women in actual society. The matter-of-fact public, and the matter-of-fact critics, who at all times best represent the public, judged and condemned the drama accordingly. One anonymous wag immediately produced a sixth act, and another a *Stella Number Two*; and even one of Goethe's most judicious advisers, the sturdy-minded Merck, wrote an epigram in which he doubted the blessings likely to result from this exposition of bigamy following in the wake of the same author's exposition of suicide. And many years afterwards, Canning tickled English morality into one of its heartiest laughs by his famous parody upon poor Cecilia's proposal to Stella—"A sudden thought strikes me. Let us swear an eternal friendship." Under such circumstances, it must have been small consolation to Goethe that Lenz, according to his wont, sought to outbid his friend by producing a drama of his own, entitled *Friends Make a Philosopher*, designed to exhibit the converse of Goethe's theme. *Stella* itself, when many years afterwards produced on the Weimar stage, was, as Goethe with his usual imperturbability informs us, found to contain a situation irreconcilable with "our manners, which are quite essentially based on monogamy." "The endeavour of the sensible Cecilia to harmonise the difficulty" was found to prove "fruitless"; and the play was turned into a tragedy, by the death of Stella and the suicide of Fernando being added. The public was

satisfied, and, as a contemporary observed, the *xenion* had been realised:

Œdipus tears out his eyes; her own hands hang Iocaste,  
Innocent both; and the play finds a harmonious close.

Such is in brief the history of a play which no lover of Goethe can afford to neglect, and the literary and theatrical fate of which is full of lessons for the student of that very difficult and delicate question, too large for discussion here, of the relations between the drama and ethics. I have rather been desirous of indicating, with the help of such materials as were at my command, the use made in Goethe's *Stella*, as well as in two of Lessing's dramas (to one of which, *Miss Sara Sampson*, it should be by the way noted that *Stella* again alludes at least by the reminiscence of a name), of the story of Swift, *Stella*, and *Vanessa*, in the form in which tradition, and something besides tradition, had brought it to the knowledge of two great German authors. For that *Stella* in Goethe is the dramatic embodiment of Swift's *Stella*, and that *Cecilia's* unexpected appearance is the appearance of *Vanessa* in Ireland, there can be no more doubt than that the changes introduced by Goethe into the situation are not such as essentially affect its moral significance.

I am by no means unaware that such enquiries as the present are regarded by many as mere idle pedantry; but they seem to me at times worth pursuing even when they lead only to imperfect or approximate results. In a work of art, much depends on the choice of subject, more on the treatment. To watch different minds at work upon the same, or upon parts of the same, theme, is to obtain a clue to the differences in their methods,

and the differences in their idiosyncrasies. The attempt to separate accidental elements from essential, to distinguish between the various sources of the various motives which contribute to an artistic composition, may often prove unsuccessful, and at times futile. But if conducted with sobriety and candour, it can never prove a wholly useless exercise to those who engage in it, and will by the unthinking only be regarded as impugning those prerogatives of creative genius which it is the supreme object of all true criticism to vindicate.

NOTE.—It is unnecessary to cite the generally accessible authorities which have been used in this paper; but it is right, and may be convenient for those who may desire to pursue the subject further, to state that most of the special materials for the enquiry will be found in Caro, *Lessing und Swift* (Jena, 1869); in two essays on Goethe's *Stella* by Urlichs and Scherer published in the *Deutsche Rundschau* (July 1875, and January 1876); in a third on the same subject, by H. Düntzer in the *Allgemeine Zeitung* (January 5th, 1876); and in the biographies by Stahr, Viehoff, and Lewes.

## 28. LESLIE STEPHEN ON POPE<sup>1</sup>

(*The Saturday Review*, July 10, 1880)

MR JOHN MORLEY'S series of *English Men of Letters* already includes a goodly number of names both præ-Augustan and post-Augustan; but it is still very far from having exhausted even the list of those writers whom no school or sect of criticism could refuse to rank as "men of leading" in the periods of our literature to which they severally belong. A Life of Dryden is, we observe, not even announced as yet<sup>2</sup>; but the volume on Pope, in entrusting which to the experienced hands of Mr Leslie Stephen the editor seemed to have made an unusually happy choice, is now before us. Mr Stephen's intimate acquaintance with a most important branch of English 18th century literature, in which Pope acquired a fame so universal as to be in some measure puzzling to himself, might alone have marked him out for the task; and of the latter part of the poet's literary life few could be expected to write so well as a philosophical critic thoroughly versed in the works both of the friend who inspired and of him who interpreted the *Essay on Man*. Indeed, for ourselves, we confess to having been attracted beforehand to this little volume by the anticipation that in it Bolingbroke would be

<sup>1</sup> *Alexander Pope*. By Leslie Stephen. (*English Men of Letters*.) London, Macmillan and Co., 1880.

<sup>2</sup> [It has since (1882) been supplied, by the master-hand of Professor G. Saintsbury.]

spoken of with candour, and Warburton in the vein of one of the most delightful chapters of the *History of English Thought*. Pope's philosophy is, however, after all, but a very small part of himself and of his life; the day has, moreover, long gone by in which it could call forth either admiring comment or solemn refutation, while a quite sufficient analysis of the "exquisite mosaic" of the famous Essay has (as Mr Stephen reminds his readers) been already furnished by Mr Mark Pattison. But, in order that, generally as well as in special points, justice might be done to both the author and the man—and nothing could be truer than that the history of the one is the history of the other "in Pope's life, almost more than in that of any other poet"—the very combination of qualities was required by which Mr Stephen is widely acknowledged to be distinguished. He is both broad in his sympathies and cool in his judgment; and (if he will allow us to make use of one of "the floating commonplaces" in the *Essay on Criticism* "which have more or less suggested themselves to every writer") the truth which he tells or teaches is never likely to be disapproved because of a want of good breeding in the way of telling or teaching it. Such a biographer and critic—one who can stick to commonsense without lapsing into cynicism—was indisputably necessary in the case of Pope, more especially since the researches of the late Mr Dilke, and the evidence marshalled with so elaborate a conscientiousness in the volumes hitherto published of the Croker-Elwin edition, had rendered existing biographies of the poet more or less obsolete. It is not at all too much to say that a trustworthy popular Life of Pope had once more become a *desideratum*, un-



reasonable as the assertion may seem in view of the mass of literature on the subject, and of such useful books, in particular, as that of the late Mr Carruthers, of which we are glad to find a kindly mention in Mr Stephen's preface. This want seemed likely to be supplied by Mr Stephen himself, who often treats old themes not less freshly and fairly than he does new ones, and who, in the opening volume of Mr Morley's series, had achieved a conspicuous success by telling over again, with characteristic simplicity and force, the oft-told tale of Johnson's life. We cannot, however, think that, in the present instance, the result has altogether equalled expectation.

Very possibly, as is often the case, Mr Stephen may only have discovered while actually at work upon his present subject, that he lacks that closer sympathy with it which gives the pleasantest savour to every kind of biographical essay. If so, he deserves all the more credit for not having allowed himself to fall into a carping manner utterly destructive of the true interest of a biography. Nor, on the other hand, has he chosen, as a rule, to adopt that half-wondering, half-pitying tone which befits the humourist proper; although in reading some passages of this book one is irresistibly reminded of Thackeray's essay on Pope and some of his fellow-wits—a paper which, like so much written by its author in the happier hours of his later productivity, only gains by the keeping. Indeed, in what Mr Stephen says about one great writer it is difficult not to recognise an expansion of Thackeray's playful remark that Addison "might have omitted a virtue or two, of many." From a more serious point of view, one is apt to wax impatient

at being told that Addison's praises are not to be read "without a certain recalcitrance, like that which one feels in the case of the model boy who wins all the prizes, including that for good conduct." Is it really so hard to bear the good fortune of the good? In general, however, the impression conveyed by Mr Stephen's observations on Pope himself is that of an uncertainty of view which seems to hover midway between censure and apology. At one time, he takes refuge in Macaulayese antithesis, and denounces Pope as "a liar and a hypocrite," although "the foundation of his character was not selfish or grovelling"; at another, he contents himself with an "after all," such as seems most appropriate to a biography, as it does to a novel, without a hero. We need hardly say that on many questions of moral judgment, as of literary criticism, the sound sense of the writer asserts itself with its usual strength. He exposes sufficiently, but without dwelling upon it with wordy unctuousness, a certain affectation of vice in Pope, which he justly describes as more offensive than his literary affectation. At the same time, he waives aside, as very much out of place in so pitiful a case, the discussions in which others have engaged as to the morality of Pope's relations with the younger Miss Blunt. Unhappily, the little man's hatreds went for at least as much in his life as his loves; and, here again, Mr Stephen seems to us shrewdly near the mark when he observes (*apropos* of Pope's wrath against Addison about Tickell's Translation) that

Pope's suspicions are a proof that in this case he was almost subject to the illusion characteristic of actual insanity. The belief that a man is persecuted by hidden conspirators is one

of the common symptoms in such cases; and Pope would seem to have been almost in the initial stage of mental disease. His madness, indeed, was not such as would lead us to call him morally irresponsible, nor was it the kind of madness which is to be found in a good many people who well deserve criminal prosecution; but it was a state of mind so morbid as to justify some compassion for the unhappy offender.

But, as Mr Stephen elsewhere well shows, this very weakness in Pope had its pathetic as well as its pitiable side, and was not altogether unmixed with a self-respect for which, as we have always thought, our literature owes to him a debt of gratitude. To the friends in whom he trusted, and whom he always chose with that appreciation of real distinction which was natural to him, he clung with touching eagerness; towards the great of the world he bore himself unaffectedly as an equal, and as one whose breath was by no means taken away by his being treated as such.

Of Pope's writings it would certainly be absurd to expect much to be said that should be new; but a critic of Mr Stephen's keenness and candour will always find an opportunity of saying many things worthy of attention. The *Pastorals* he dismisses briefly, but not too briefly; indeed he might almost have contented himself with the grave piece of irony that "the *Pastorals* have been seriously criticised." The *Essay on Criticism*, on the other hand, we cannot but think entitled to a less condescending treatment than it here once more receives. Besides being "quite sufficiently coherent for its purpose," and full of brilliant "aphorisms coined out of common-place," it has always seemed to us skilfully exhaustive of the chief varieties of false criticism—no slight merit in the case of so juvenile a production

as this, which Warburton was certainly mistaken in terming the work of an author under twenty, but which, on the other hand, it is hardly generous of Mr Elwin to describe as "representing the capacity of Pope at twenty-three." We notice, by the way, that Mr Stephen cites the observation, illustrative of the poverty of rimes in this poem, that it makes ten rimes to "wit" and twelve to "sense." If there were a Pope Society in existence, we might wish some junior member would take the trouble to count the rimes to "mind" in the *Essay on Man*. To a poem of a very different stamp, which, like Mr Elwin, Mr Stephen has not failed to praise, that passion-flower of hot-house growth, *Eloisa to Abelard*, he has, we think, done injustice in overlooking its essentially dramatic conception, which rendered the creation of such an effect as that which the critic misses—"a disposition to cry"—less easy than it is in the case of a lyrical poem by Cowper or Wordsworth. It may be admitted, however, that real power of dramatic treatment, such as Pope was wholly without, would have led to a very different result. The *Rape of the Lock* Mr Stephen, as it seems to us, criticises with a very just appreciation of "the admirable beauty and brilliance" of a poem which, in M. Taine's eyes, fails to stamp its author even as a *poète de boudoir*, and only helps to establish our national incapacity for true gaiety. On one blemish, however, which appears with even greater distinctness in some of Pope's later writings, the French and the English critic are very justly at one. The unpleasant undertone in Pope's raillery of women is recognisable already in this charming trifle; but it must at the same time, be allowed that the Maids of Honour

at Hampton Court, who may be supposed to have suggested to the author of the *Rape of the Lock* his notions of the ethics prevalent among "nymphs" of quality, have not been vindicated from the aspersions of his satire by the revelations of their own correspondence.

Of Pope's more important works, Mr Stephen's judgment seems to us likewise, in general, just. He enters into an unexpectedly lengthy disquisition on that well-worn topic, the merits and shortcomings of Pope's *Homer*, turning the tables with much dialectical skill on those who think that all has been said, when a translation which was good enough for our grandfathers and grandmothers has been damned as too artificial for our better-informed generation. He has the courage, which we notice to be rare in these days, to aver that he reads the *Dunciad* with pleasure; yet he misses, we venture to think, the real spirit of the poem when he remarks that, to reconcile us to such laughter as the *Dunciad's*, "it should have a more genial tone than Pope could find in his nature." The real flaw in this satire seems to us the operation, though less intense than in the *Moral Essays* and *Imitations of Horace*, of personal motives which at times misdirect or falsify the satirist's indignation. But the main stream of that indignation has a source both deep and pure; nor was the contest waged by Pope one which could end, actually or metaphorically, in a shaking of hands. Even Dryden's wrath, as that of a satirist who was essentially a partisan, had more of manufacture in it than Pope's, which might almost be said to have at the same time sustained and consumed him. We are surprised to find Mr Stephen accord to

the Fourth Book in particular praise so remarkably scant. Is it not, with all the exceptions which may be justly taken to particular passages in it, a glorious onslaught upon pretentious Philistinism, more particularly of the type which on occasion wears "broad hats, and hoods, and caps"; and was not this perhaps the reason why Gray, to whom the University life of his times was at once irresistible and intolerable, expressed so cordial an admiration of this part of the poem? In discussing the remaining works of Pope's maturity, Mr Stephen appears to us altogether at his best. Of the *Essay on Man* he observes with cruel downrightness that "the best passages are those in which the author is frankly pantheistic"—an encomium which Pope, whose liberalism undoubtedly had its limits, would have received with considerable astonishment and displeasure. The poet's real masterpieces, however, because most thoroughly in harmony with his genius, were the *Epistles* and *Satires*. These (or the cream of them) have not unfrequently, perhaps because of the diversity of their themes, been treated with insufficient care in estimates of his prolix labours. Mr Stephen suggests the true nature of their excellence when he describes them as the pith and essence of the conversation of Pope's own circle of friends and acquaintances, "concentrated into the smallest possible space with the infinite dexterity of a thoroughly trained hand." The exquisite art implied in such a concentration differs of course as widely as possible from a mere process of faithful reproduction. This is pointed out by Mr Stephen, as it had been pointed out before him by a brilliant man of letters, who for many generations remained the acknowledged master

among our dramatists in the composition of comic dialogue. "I believe," writes Congreve, "if a Poet should steal a Dialogue of any length, from the *Ex-tempore Discourse of the two wittiest Men upon Earth*, he would find the Scene but coldly received by the Town."

There are, we should in conclusion remark, certain indications of something like haste in this volume, which allow us to indulge the hope that its author may not yet have said his last word on its subject. "*Elkanah Shadwell*" (p. 121) is of course merely the birth of an accident, though certainly a passing strange prodigy of the bicipitous sort. The quotations are by no means frequent; yet one of them occurs twice over (pp. 98 and 188), and on the second occasion is accompanied by a comment to some extent paralysing the effect of that offered on the former. There are other repetitions upon which it is unnecessary to dwell, but which suggest that the wearisome labour expended by Mr Stephen upon his lucid summary of the *Correspondence mysteries* laid bare in Mr Elwin's edition left him no time for retouching those parts of his biographical essay which really possess a far more enduring interest. The truth is that there is enough, and more than enough, in these scandals, now brought home irrefutably, to spoil the flavour of any *Life of Pope* for writer as well as reader. Mr Stephen has too much good taste and too high a sense of justice to surrender himself to a feeling of disgust; but we are not sure whether it is altogether the fault of the subject that his treatment of it is unlikely to take away the unsatisfied feeling left over by previous biographers.

## 29. LADY M. W. MONTAGU

(*Craik's English Prose*, vol. III. 1894)

“I NEVER studied anything in my life, and have always (at least from fifteen) thought the reputation of learning a misfortune to a woman.” Thus wrote, when seventy years of age and beyond a temptation against which even the cleverest women are not always proof—the temptation of saying a thing for the sake of saying it—the “Lady Mary” whom, now as then, it is impossible to designate by any longer assortment of names. The remark was true in the main, but at the same time (if it is permissible to use one of those French phrases, to which she so much objected in the style of Lord Bolingbroke) *tant soit peu* rash. As for the depth of her studies, that is of course a relative affair; in her young days, blue-stockings proper had not yet been invented; and, with all her effervescence, she was far too much of a lady (indeed, of a grand lady) to give herself airs. But she certainly was at the pains of corroborating the report that, as a child, she had laboriously taught herself Latin during long solitary days spent in her father’s library, where she was more usually supposed to have merely gratified an early love for novels and romances which grew into a lifelong passion. To be sure, she never attained to a real command over any language but her own; although that is something, and a something not always achieved by a strictly vernacular discipline. But she, at all events, entered into the spirit



of more than one foreign tongue; she understood Italian, and wrote it as well as Horace Walpole; she composed very passably in French, although she may have been perhaps a trifle bold in essaying a commentary in his own idiom on one of the maxims of La Rochefoucauld; she showed something more than the mere traveller's enthusiasm when gazing upon the Troad and the ruins of Carthage; and who, except Sir William Jones, has ever attempted to control her translations from Turkish erotic poetry? These literary excursions, in point of fact, gave a sort of catholicity to her taste in verse, which was facile in itself and responsive to the liberal notions of an age less rigorous in its canons than we are sometimes given to understand in literary handbooks. If she could imitate, as well as parody, Pope, she was even more successful in the vein of Gay, and had, I fear, some inclination towards the style of Sir Charles Hanbury Williams. In prose, which she mostly wrote with the object of pleasing others, and always with that of amusing herself, she is hardly ever anything but original and delightful.

It is, unhappily, matter of fact that Lady Mary suffered through life from her reputation for learning and letters; however much she might protest against the impeachment. It was not her fault that, as a young girl, she attracted by her talents as well as by her charms the admiration of Mr Edward Wortley, whose methods of conduct, whether as a lover or as a husband, need not here be discussed. After her marriage, she might possibly have acquiesced in the inevitable, and have contented herself with the rather trying lot of remaining the sympathetic wife of a very able man. Her excellent

sketch entitled an *Account of the Court of George the First at his Accession* is thought to have been put together at a later date than her husband's companion notes *On the State of affairs when the King entered*; if so, there was obviously a time when she could refrain from the use of her standish, even when her powers of observation were as keen as ever. But to persons born for prose composition self-restraint is one thing, and a heaven-sent opportunity is another. Such an opportunity was to Lady Mary her husband's embassy to Constantinople, which enabled him to render himself useful, and her to make herself famous.

It is true that the *Travels of an English Lady in Europe, Asia, and Africa*, were not published till after Lady Mary's death (in 1763), under circumstances in some measure mysterious, and that an additional volume published four years later was in all probability spurious. It has, moreover, been demonstrated with tolerable certainty that the letters comprised in the *Travels* were not those originally written by Lady Mary from the East, but portions of her *Diary* afterwards distributed by her among her former actual or probable correspondents. Yet there cannot be any doubt but that during the embassy she wrote many letters in a vein entirely her own to divers private friends, and that these were, like Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, handed about among them with a curiosity of which it is difficult to conceive in days when social as well as political celebrities convey their first impressions of distant countries through the medium of the daily press. Lady Mary's Turkish letters (for we may fairly name the whole series after the most novel and most characteristic portion

of it) unmistakably possess the irresistible charm of first impressions; nor are their merits exhausted by this particular kind of directness. She compared manners, and that which lies at the root of manners, with a pointed simplicity such as philosophers and historians frequently neglect to their cost, and after which mere masters of style, including Prosper Mérimée himself, sometimes toil in vain. She, furthermore, possessed the power of telling a short story, introduced in the way of illustration, with a terse distinctness worthy of the highest praise; while, within the limits of the range of her imagination, her descriptions were invariably both lively and lucid. I have attempted, in the extracts given here from this famous series of *Letters*, to furnish an example of the use which she made of her gifts in both directions.

What has more recently been published of her correspondence during her later years, comprises a large variety of letters written by her at home or abroad, chiefly addressed to her daughter Lady Bute, and referring, partly, to the fashionable gossip of her day (which she liked *high* in more senses than one); partly, to the foreign scenes in town and country amidst which she spent the last twenty years of her life, and, partly, to literature—in the main no doubt, to the literature of contemporary prose fiction, for which she could not be expected to have a more than half-deprecatory sympathy. But, with whatever subjects her letters deal, they must be allowed to be equal to the reputation which the most famous series of them had achieved for her as a traveller, a woman of the world and a woman of letters, and a writer of most pungent and exhilarating

prose. It is not difficult to understand why she should have been so successful as a diarist and letter-writer (for her few set essays are of small account). She was, to begin with, a woman of genuine wit, in any of the two-score or so of senses in which that term has been defined or understood. How this wit was capable of taking a personal turn, hardly requires exemplification, even if it be a mere tradition that has credited her with dividing mankind, in a moment of candour towards the most faithful of her friends, into "men, women, and Herveys." The suggestion which she threw out to Spence of a septennial bill for married couples was a signally felicitous application of a topic of the times. Her casual apophthegm, in one of her juvenile letters to her philosophical suitor, that "general notions are generally wrong," is, to my mind, not less apposite and equally irresistible. But her wit (when she was not writing fashionable ballads) was under the restraint of good breeding, and even, though this may not seem proved by an admirable passage in which she stigmatises the smartness of irreverence, exhibits the influence of good feeling. Her critical powers were excellent, although in her youth they may have been affected by her (Whig) political bias, and in her later days by her personal resentment of the "horrible malice," with which she had been stung by the "wicked wasp of Twickenham," and of the persistence with which she had been assaulted by other assailants only less cruel than her *ci-devant* pretended adorer. She saw through literary insincerities, such as Bolingbroke's; she was wide awake to the weaknesses of Richardson, though as ready as any of his own female friends to cry over his *Clarissa*;

and she appreciated the genius of such unfashionable candidates for literary fame as her kinsman Fielding and his rival Smollett. No doubt, she would have been more perfect as a critic, had her natural sympathies been less restricted: had she understood the force of emotion, as represented by poor Madame de Guyon, and the strength of absolute naturalness, as exhibited by her own counterpart, Madame de Sévigné. Yet the last, and crowning element in her own genius, and therefore in her own style, was her truthfulness to herself, to her foibles and to her convictions. She was one of those born to talk, with tongue or with pen; and never did her self-knowledge boil over so uncontrollably as when accident led her to study, and of course to comment on, the system of *La Trappe*. She had seen too much, and knew too much, to be *naïve*; but, though she could philosophise very reasonably and very effectively on the training and disciplining of the mind, she was not afraid of betraying the contradictions in her own nature. This frankness of feeling, to which her gay but not dishevelled spontaneity of utterance corresponded, makes her always good company; it is only in her earliest letters that there linger traces of the affectation rarely absent altogether from the writings of the young. The humour of her Turkish and later letters has a true ring. And, although she was tried more than the generality of women (whether literary or other)—in part, maybe, owing to the vivacity of her own temper and the freedom of her own pen—she had a brave heart; and her high spirit, like all qualities which are of rarer growth, faithfully reflects itself in the current of her style.

Unlucky as she was in many things, Lady Mary

Wortley Montagu is at least to be deemed fortunate in the editor of her literary remains, her great-grandson Lord Wharncliffe, whose original edition of her letters and works appeared in 1837. The introductory anecdotes contributed by her granddaughter, Lady Louisa Stuart, are excellent reading; and nothing could be more discriminating or fair than the memoir by W. May Thomas, added to the third edition in 1861, together with many fresh notes.

### 30. INTRODUCTION TO LILLO'S LONDON MERCHANT AND FATAL CURIOSITY<sup>1</sup>

*The London Merchant, or The History of George Barnwell*, when first acted at Drury Lane on June 22, 1731, seems to have been announced under the title of *The Merchant, or the True History of George Barnwell*. The sub-title in each case clearly shows the author to have desired it to be understood that his play was directly founded upon fact. Conscious of the innovation which this at the time implied, and as a dramatist who had not yet made his way with the public, Lillo seems to have preferred to produce his play on the stage out of the regular theatrical season. Yet, though the critics *ex officio* may have been conspicuous by their absence from the pit at the first performance, and may afterwards have declined to allow their judgment to go simply by default<sup>2</sup>, the arch-critic of the Augustan age is said to have been present on the memorable twenty-second of June, which heralded a literary revolution quite beyond his ken. Pope's criticism is on record<sup>3</sup>, that the author of *The London Merchant* had in this play "never

<sup>1</sup> *The London Merchant, or The History of George Barnwell, and Fatal Curiosity*. By George Lillo. Edited, with Biography and Introduction, by A. W. Ward. Boston and London, D. C. Heath & Co., 1916.

<sup>2</sup> See (Hammond's) *Prologue to Elmerick*:

"His *Barnwell* once no critic's test could bear,  
But from each eye still draws the natural tear."

<sup>3</sup> See the life of Lillo in T. Cibber's *Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland* (1753), vol. v. p. 339.

deviated from propriety, except in a few passages in which he aimed at a greater elevation of language than was consistent with the characters and the situation." In anticipation of the performance, the old ballad of *George Barnwell*, which is here reproduced as an Appendix, was reprinted in a large number of copies. Many thousands are said to have been sold in a single day; and the story has often been repeated, how on the first night many of the intending spectators had bought a copy for the purpose of making a "ridiculous comparison" between it and the play, but that, before the latter was finished, they threw away their ballads and took out their handkerchiefs.

The part of George Barnwell was on this occasion played by "Mr Cibber, junior"—Theophilus Cibber (the son of "King Colley"), whose life, as the *Biographia Dramatica* says with almost literal truth, "was begun, pursued and ended in a storm." He was at the time manager of the summer company at Drury Lane, of which theatre he was patentee from September, 1731, to June, 1732, in his father's place. The part of Millwood was taken by Mrs Butler, who is found acting with the younger Cibber so late as 1742-3. Genest<sup>1</sup> says that "little is recorded of her, but she seems to have been a respectable actress." Maria was performed by Mrs Cibber (Theophilus's first wife, who died in 1734); she also spoke the deplorable Epilogue. The part of Lucy was taken by Mrs Charke<sup>2</sup> (Colley Cibber's

<sup>1</sup> *Some Account of the English Stage*, vol. iv. p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Not Clarke, as given in the *dramatis personæ* of some octavos and the edition of 1810. Mrs Charke acted Mrs Wilmot in *Fatal Curiosity* on its production in 1736 at the Haymarket, where, also, it



youngest daughter, Charlotte). The play was thoroughly successful, and was acted for twenty nights to crowded houses. On July 2, 1731, Queen Caroline, whose moral *flair* was quite equal to her literary insight, sent to Drury Lane for the manuscript of *The London Merchant* in order to peruse it; and it was duly carried by Mr Wicks (who had not been in the cast) to Hampton Court. The manager, Cibber, behaved liberally to Lillo, procuring for him a fourth benefit-night in the winter season, so that he netted a sum of several thousand pounds by the success of his piece, which continued a stock play while Cibber remained connected with Drury Lane. It came to be frequently acted in the Christmas and Easter holidays, being esteemed a better entertainment for the city prentices than the coarse shows with which they were at such seasons habitually regaled on the stage; and this tradition, notwithstanding Charles Lamb's protest, lingered on to a comparatively recent day<sup>1</sup>.

was revived for her benefit in 1755. The name of Charke had of old a Puritan sound in London and Cambridge (where William Charke, the opponent of Edmund Campion, was expelled from Peterhouse in 1572.

<sup>1</sup> In a footnote to Lamb's essay *On the Tragedies of Shakespeare*, which, as his editor, Mr A. Ainger, truly observes, "contains some of the noblest criticism ever written," and from which an example of such criticism, though uncomplimentary to Lillo, will be quoted in my text. "If," says Lamb, "this note could hope to meet the eye of any of the Managers, I would entreat and beg of them, in the name of both the galleries, that this insult upon the morality of the common people of London should cease to be eternally repeated in the holiday weeks. Why are the 'Prentices of this famous and well-governed city, instead of an amusement, to be treated over and over again with a nauseous sermon of George Barnwell? Why *at the end of their vistas* are we to place the *gallows*? Were I an uncle I should not much

On December 26, 1751, and afterwards, the part of George Barnwell was played at Drury Lane by David Ross (that of Millwood being taken by Mrs Pritchard, who may not have felt it necessary to be too "genteel" on the occasion); and, many years afterwards, this gifted actor (whose own youthful indiscretion had led his father to cut him off with an annual shilling, "to put him in mind of the misfortune he had to be born") told a curious story in connexion with this impersonation. About the time of the revival of the play, Dr Barrowby<sup>1</sup> was sent for to see the apprentice of a "capital merchant"; when this youth confessed to the physician that, in consequence of an illicit amour, he had embezzled two hundred pounds of his master's

like a nephew of mine to have such an example placed before his eyes. It is really making uncle-murder too trivial to exhibit it as done upon such slight motives;—it is attributing too much to such characters as Millwood; it is putting things into the heads of good young men, which they would never otherwise have dreamed of. Uncles that think anything of their lives, should fairly petition the Chamberlain against it." I can remember *The London Merchant* being thus annually played at the Theatre Royal, Manchester. Sir Henry Irving, when a member of the stock company at that theatre, at the beginning of a career which was not only full of honours for himself but most beneficent to the national stage, frequently played George Barnwell. How I wish that, like our common friend Mr E. J. Broadfield, to whom Sir Henry mentioned this fact, I could have heard the great actor repeat the speech, which late in life he could still recall, of the unhappy youth on his way to execution!

<sup>1</sup> If this was the celebrated (or notorious) Dr Barrowby, there must be some error of date, as this personage—with whose reported character the story does not appear to be altogether in keeping—died, according to Dr Norman Moore in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, on December 30th, 1751.

money, but that, since witnessing a few nights previously the performance of *George Barnwell*, he had not had a moment's peace, and desired to die, so as to avoid the shame of discovery. Dr Barrowby intervened; the apprentice's father paid the money, and for nine or ten years anonymously sent to Ross an annual present of ten guineas as a tribute of gratitude.

In 1796, *The London Merchant*, after remaining unperformed for seven years, was revived, with Charles Kemble in the hero's part, and no less a personage than Mrs Siddons (who had thought that the revival might be to her brother's advantage) in that of Millwood.

The printed editions of this play are extremely numerous; not less than 22 are to be found in the British Museum, and to these not less than four have to be added, following the first and second, and preceding the seventh (of 1740). In the first and second editions, both of which appeared in the year of the first production of the play on the stage, the last act consists of eleven scenes, of which the tenth ends with Barnwell's departure to execution; and the eleventh is the short scene, which concludes the play in all the editions, between Blunt, Lucy, and Trueman. The intervening scene, which is laid at the place of execution, with the gallows at the further end of the stage, appears to have been performed on the stage for several years, but then to have been laid aside, till it was reintroduced on the revival of the play, at Bath, in 1817. Genest<sup>1</sup> adds that the fifth "genuine edition" of the play was announced for publication on February 8, 1735 (N.S.) "with a new Frontispiece, from an additional scene, never before

<sup>1</sup> *Some Account of the English Stage*, vol. III. pp. 295-6.

printed<sup>1</sup>." The additional scene appears in the edition of the play of 1740, and in both Gray's and Davies's collective editions of Lillo's Works, but in none of the single editions of the play, so far as they have been verified, after that of 1768.

The story of *The London Merchant*; to which the play assigns the date of Queen Elizabeth's reign, not long before the sailing of the Great Armada, is (as already observed) presented by the author as a reproduction of actual events. It had manifestly been suggested to Lillo by the old ballad already mentioned, which is to be found in Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*<sup>2</sup> and in *English and Scottish Ballads*, selected and edited by F. J. Child<sup>3</sup>, from which latter it is here reprinted as an Appendix. Bishop Percy observes: "As for the ballad, it was printed at least as early as the middle of the 17th century. It is here given from three old printed copies, which exhibit a strange intermixture of Roman and black-letter. It is also collated with another copy in the Ashmole Collection at Oxford, entitled: '*An Excellent Ballad of George Barnwell, an apprentice of London, who thrice robb'd his master, and murdered his uncle in Ludlow.*' The tune is *The Merchant*." Professor Child adds: "There is another copy in Ritson's *Ancient Songs*, II, 156.

<sup>1</sup> This edition is not in the British Museum; and the scene is printed in the present volume from the edition of 1740. The frontispiece may be the original of the sorry woodcut prefixed to the reprint of *George Barnwell* in vol. IX of Cumberland's *British Theatre* (1826). All endeavours to discover this edition, or an engraving of a scene in the play, have proved unsuccessful.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. III. pp. 297 *seqq.* Ed. Wheatley, 3 vols. 1876-7.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. VIII. pp. 213 *seqq.* Boston, 1859.

Throughout the Second Part, the first line of each stanza has, in the old editions, two superfluous syllables, which Percy ejected; and Ritson has adopted the emendation."

It will be seen that, while there is a general agreement between ballad and play, the former contains nothing as to the virtuous attachment of the master's daughter for Barnwell, or as to the friendship of his fellow apprentice; while, with regard to Barnwell himself, the story in the ballad takes a different close, sending him out to meet his fate "in Polonia," instead of bringing him to justice in company with his paramour at home. It is difficult, if not impossible, to resist the conclusion that the dramatist must have had access to some source or sources of information concerning the story of George Barnwell besides the old ballad itself.

It was probably the *éclat* given to the reputation of Lillo's play by the Kemble revival of it in 1796, which led to the publication of a three-volume novel by T. S. Surr, entitled *Barnwell*. This production is dedicated to Mrs Siddons, and a copy of it, in its fourth edition (London, 1807), is to be found in the British Museum<sup>1</sup>. That the author has caught the spirit of the dramatist's purpose is shown by the motto from Cowper which he prefixes to his story:

Studious of song,  
And yet ambitious not to sing in vain,  
I would not trifle merely;

<sup>1</sup> Of Thomas Skinner Surr, who died in 1847, a short but curious account is given in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. LV. He was a prosperous City man and a successful novelist, who knew the value of direct portraiture in fiction.

but, in the course of the novel, he is said to have deviated from the facts on which it is based more than Lillo himself had done in his play.

Are these facts to be actually found in a narrative, treating poor Barnwell's affair with much didactic exuberance, which was published not long afterwards and of which the preface is dated "St Gads, December 21, 1809<sup>1</sup>"? In this version of the story, which claims to possess unimpeachable authority, there is a profusion of personal and local names. The hero is a native of "the Vale of Evesham, where the family of the Barnwells flourished." The good merchant to whom the youth was apprenticed was "Mr Strickland, a very considerable woollen-drapeer in Cheapside." Barnwell has two fellow apprentices named Thorowgood and Trueman, while in the play the former of these names, which might seem to have come straight from Bunyan<sup>2</sup>, is bestowed upon the Merchant. As to the evil heroine of the tragedy, the *Memoirs* state that Sarah was the daughter of a respectable merchant at Bristol. There, instead of dutifully marrying a Mr Vaughan, she ran away with

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of George Barnwell, the unhappy subject of Lillo's celebrated Tragedy, derived from the most authentic source, and intended for the perusal and instruction of the Rising Generation.* By a Descendant of the Barnwell Family. Printed at Harlow [in Essex] by B. Flower for W. Jones...of No. 5, Newgate Street, London, 1810. An abridgment of this was published (London, 1820), under the title of *The Life and History of George Barnwell*, etc.

<sup>2</sup> That Thorowgood was a real name is, oddly enough, shown by an advertisement, in my copy of the *Memoirs*, of a story or tract against juvenile infidelity and vice, entitled *Philario and Clarinda*, and purporting to be by "the late Rev. John Thorowgood."

a less respectable member of society named Millwood, who with her assistance set up a barber's shop "near the Gun" in Shoreditch, but not long afterwards "lost his life in a midnight broil"; whereupon she converted their house into a brothel. The "general residence" of Barnwell's uncle was at Camberwell in Surrey; and the murder of him took place in Camberwell Grove. After the deed had been done, the old gentleman's body was carried to an old public-house hard by, "well known by the sign of the Tiger and the Tabby." Millwood received the assassin graciously: "I have a little leisure now to listen to you; how did the old codger meet his fate?" A brief, but telling, account is given of Barnwell's subsequent flight to Nottingham and Lincoln, where he is apprehended by the messengers of justice to whom Mr Strickland had imparted Millwood's information. In Newgate George Barnwell opens his mind to the Ordinary, who "was extremely attentive to him, and in writing down the particulars of his past life, for the benefit of young men who should themselves feel tempted to leave the paths of integrity and virtue." This chaplain has not handed down his notes; but it is tantalising that it should apparently be impossible to verify the further statement of the same narrative, that Barnwell was tried at the Kingston assizes on October 18, 1706, before Chief Baron Bury and Mr Justice 'Powel,' Mr Wainwright being counsel for the Crown, and Mr Price with him. The trial attracted a very numerous audience; "fathers, and others who had the care of the rising generation, came with their offspring and protégés, hoping much from the development of the progress of vice which would

take place, and the wretched appearance of the victim." Sarah Millwood, Robert Thorowgood, Thomas Trueman, and other witnesses, were examined. The speeches of counsel are condensed, but the convict's edifying speech at the close is given in full<sup>1</sup>. He was sentenced to be hung in chains on Kennington Common, and his speech at the gallows is likewise included in the *Memoirs*, which furnish no clue as to Millwood's ultimate fate.

The significance of the production of Lillo's *London Merchant* for the history of the modern, and in the first instance for that of the English, drama lies in his choice of subject and, though perhaps not in the same measure, in his choice of form. The last spark of originality seemed to have died out of English tragedy, together with the last trace of an occasional reaction towards the freedom of the Elizabethans; and the dead level of mere imitation of French classical models had remained undisturbed by the gentle eminences reached in the more successful of the dramatic works of Ambrose Philips, Charles Johnson, Fenton and Hughes, in the *Sophonisba* of Thomson, and in Young's *Busiris* and

<sup>1</sup> There is nothing in Lillo's play which directly recalls this speech. It is singular that of a trial of which time, place, and the names of the presiding judges are given (William Bury died as Chief Baron of the Exchequer in 1716, Sir John Powell as a Judge in the Exchequer in 1713), no record should appear to be accessible. But a communication to *Notes and Queries* (2 Ser., vol. v., 1858), stating that the writer had never met with any authenticated notice of the trial and condemnation of George Barnwell, elicited no response; and my own enquiries have proved equally unsuccessful. It appears that no record exists of ordinary criminal trials held at so early a date, except occasionally in newspapers.



*The Revenge*. In his present endeavour, Lillo renounced all aspirations for a theme worthy of

*Tragoedia cothurnata*, fitting kings;

and, reaching forth his hand no further than the seething human life immediately around him, thereby set an example of which, for better or for worse, the modern drama has never since lost sight. At the same time as an almost inevitable consequence of his choice of subject, he reclaimed for himself the use of prose, as the dramatic form alone appropriate for his purpose, and so removed another of the shackles which English tragedy, "hugging the chain she clanked," had chosen to impose upon herself.

It was thus that Lillo, by what to himself and his contemporaries seemed an innovation, gave a new and enduring vitality to the dramatic species known in literary history as "domestic tragedy." Of course, neither the extension of the range of the tragic drama into the sphere of everyday popular life, nor the use of prose as the vehicle of a tragic action, was a new thing in the history of the English theatre. It should, moreover, be noted that Lillo did not venture so far as to move the time at which his tragedy played forward to his own day. In the opening scene, he takes care to make it clear that the time of the action is the reign of Elizabeth; and it is even dated with a certain precision as not long before the sailing of the great Spanish Armada, when a loan for meeting the expenses of its outfit is supposed to have been refused to Philip by the Genoese<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> There is probably no kind of historical foundation for this refusal. At the time in question, the influence of Spain was dominant at Genoa, though King Philip could not meet the pecuniary obligations which he had incurred there.

Elizabethan tragedy had never disdained the treatment of themes derived from the actual, more or less contemporary, life of ordinary English society. Such a play was the very notable *Arden of Feversham* (afterwards adapted by Lillo himself) which was printed in 1592, but had probably been acted some seven years earlier. It is a dramatic version of the story of the murder of a Kentish gentleman, related by Holinshed, which had possibly already served as the theme of a previous play, *Murderous Michael* (1578). Both Tieck and Ulrici thought Shakespeare's hand discernible in *Arden of Feversham*; and the play certainly contains passages which recall his touch. Another extant early play of the same description is *A Warning for Fair Women* (1599). In the first decade of the 17th century several plays of the same or a similar type were published: among them *The London Prodigal*, printed in 1605, which contains the pathetic character of the faithful Luce. Lessing appears to have considered this play Shakespearean, and to have intended to adapt it for the German stage. Another play of the class of *Arden of Feversham* is *A Yorkshire Tragedy* (printed in 1608), a powerful dramatisation of a horrible story of real life, which Schlegel believed to be by Shakespeare's hand, but which Hazlitt thought rather in Thomas Heywood's manner. Thomas Heywood's undoubted masterpiece in the species of the domestic drama, *A Woman Killed with Kindness*<sup>1</sup> (acted not later than 1603), is true in colouring, and rises to a high pitch of tragic power in the thrilling scene of the husband's

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, Vol. III, Paper II.

unexpected return to his polluted home. Among later Elizabethan (or Jacobean) plays of a similar kind may be included George Wilkins's *Miseries of Enforced Marriage* (printed 1607), and perhaps also Dekker and Ford's *Witch of Edmonton* (printed 1658, but probably produced in 1621).

The tone and temper of the earlier Restoration drama could hardly favour the treatment of themes of domestic intimacy and trouble; but, towards the close of the century, a reaction in this direction set in with Thomas Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage, or The Innocent Adultery* (1694), afterwards revived under the name of *Isabella*, but known to so modern a young lady as Miss Lydia Languish under its more captivating title. This is a tragic version of an extremely long-lived literary theme, most widely familiar to modern readers through Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*, and bordering on the story of Lillo's own *Fatal Curiosity*. The interest in pathetic subjects of this description was kept alive by some of the tragedies of Rowe—such as *The Fair Penitent*, with the original Lothario—and more especially of Otway—*The Orphan* in particular. But the beginnings of Sentimental Comedy did not make their appearance on the English stage till some years later. Colley Cibber, in his *Careless Husband*, produced in 1704, professed to have deliberately sought “to reform by example the coarseness of contemporary comedy”; and to this end made the pathetic treatment of a moral purpose the basis of the action of this play. He cannot, however, be said to have carried much further the experiment which his theatrical instinct had suggested to him. The Dedication of his comedy *The Lady's Last Stake, or*

*The Wife's Resentment* (1708) declares that "a Play without a just Moral is a poor and trivial undertaking"; but the piece cannot be classed as a sentimental comedy, though it ends with the restoration of mutual affection between husband and wife. Of his later plays, *The Provoked Husband* (1728), an adaptation of Vanbrugh's *Journey to London*, provided this unsentimental comedy with a sentimental ending (largely written in iambs), so that coals of fire were heaped on the head of Vanbrugh, who in his *Relapse* had given an immoral turn to the plot of Cibber's first comedy, *Love's Last Shift*. Meanwhile, the hint given by Cibber's *Careless Husband* was taken and bettered by Steele. After, in his *Lying Lover* (1703), he had made a serious and pathetic addition of his own, in blank verse, to the action of Corneille's *Menteur*, he in 1705 produced *The Tender Husband*, a comedy in which virtuous affection between husband and wife is introduced as a dramatic motive. His *Conscious Lovers* (1722), in which the main interest of the comedy is sentimental, may be reckoned as a full-blown example of the new species.

About the same time, it was being assiduously cultivated in France, where already Corneille had shown, by example as well as by precept, that the sorrows and sufferings of people of our own class, or near to it, touch us more nearly than the griefs of kings and queens. The French growth was more abundant, but in this period hardly went beyond English precedent, and was in part influenced by it. Destouches, whose first acted comedy dates from 1710, resided in England from 1717-23 (three years before Voltaire's famous visit) and married an English wife. His *Philosophe*

*marié* (1727)—afterwards reproduced on the English stage in 1732 in a version by John Kelly—is a comedy with a serious basis and a morally satisfactory ending; and in his later productions he pursued the same vein—from *Le Glorieux* (1732), in which there is a suggestion of *Timon*, to *Le Dissipateur* (1753), which is (to speak theatrically rather than ethically) a serious drama in a comic form. More notable, from a literary point of view, are the delightful dramatic productions of Marivaux; but even his masterpiece, the imperishable *Jeu de l'Amour et du Hasard* (1730), whose grace and elegance are made perfect by a gentle undercurrent of pathos, is not so much a sentimental comedy as a comedy with sentiment in it. The transition to sentimental comedy proper, and the slight supplementary step to the *comédie larmoyante*—in which very rare comic islets are left floating in a sea of tears—were achieved by Nivelles de la Chaussée. He still adhered to the use of verse (for which his clever *Épître à Clio* offers a very agreeable apology), but in his comedy *La Fausse Antipathie* (1734) the sentiment already predominates over the gaiety; and, alike in the Prologue prefixed to it, and in the *Critique* with which according to custom he followed it up, he presents himself as the conscious representative of a school of dramatists in search of what is true, natural, and “dramatic to a fault.” His *École des Amis* (1737), his *Mélanide* (1741), and his *École des Mères* (1744), form a series of refined tributes to the domestic virtues, and are all, more or less, open to Frederick the Great's objection against turning the stage into a *bureau général de fadeur*. But Frederick's own philosopher and friend, Voltaire him-

self, had occasionally shown an inclination to essay the new style; witness passages of his comedy *L'Enfant Prodigue* (1736) and the whole argument of his *Nanine, ou Le Préjugé Vaincu* (1746), which is taken direct from Richardson's *Pamela*. Of this subject, afterwards a favourite stage theme of the Revolution age, a dramatic version, *Paméla*, by Nivelles de la Chaussée had appeared six years earlier (1743).

Meanwhile, it should be noted that, though in some of the plays of the above-named French writers sentimental comedy and its excess, *comédie larmoyante*, already rubbed shoulders with domestic tragedy<sup>1</sup>, there is nothing in these or in any contemporary productions to deprive Lillo's most important work of its title to originality. Indeed the large majority of these plays were actually later in date than *The London Merchant*. It is quite true that the moral growth and the social expansion in the life of the English middle-class, which were closely connected with its political advance, in the early Georgian period—the increased regard paid in this age to the demands of religion and morality, the combination of a fuller tolerance in matters of belief with a greater rigour in the conduct of life in some of its aspects, and notably as to the relations between the sexes, together with the influence exercised in most of

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire, in his preface to the *bagatelle*, as he calls it, of *Nanine*, distinguishes sentimental from "tearful" comedy. He says: "Comedy, I repeat, may have its moods of passion, anger, and melting pity, provided that it afterwards makes well-bred people laugh. If it were to lack the comic element and to be only tearful (*larmoyante*), it is then that it would be a very faulty and very disagreeable species."

these directions by the improved social position of Protestant nonconformists—all these made themselves felt in many branches of the national literature and art. Most notably was such the case in English prose fiction, as entirely recast in spirit as well as in form by Richardson, and in pictorial art, as nationalised, and at the same time “moralised,” by Hogarth. It should, however, be remembered that these changes did not precede, but followed, Lillo's innovation on the stage; for *Pamela* was not published till 1740, and Hogarth's earliest important work (*The Harlot's Progress*) was not issued to subscribers till 1732<sup>1</sup>.

The brilliant success of Lillo's play on the English stage and the remarkable attention bestowed upon his effort in France, Holland, and more especially in Germany (of which there will be something further to say), was no doubt primarily due to his choice of subject, and to the direct appeal thus made to the business and bosoms of the spectators and readers of his tragedy. *The London Merchant* undeniably falls short of the definition of tragedy implied in the admirably expressed statement by a distinguished living critic of both the ancient and the modern drama, that “every tragic action consists of a great crisis in some great life, not merely narrated but presented in act, through language,

<sup>1</sup> In his *Joseph Andrews* (1742) Fielding, in the humorous dialogue between the poet and the player (Bk. III. ch. 10), puts into the mouth of the latter the following ironical depreciation of the tragic poets of his own generation; “...but yet, to do justice to the actors, what could Booth or Betterton have made of such horrible stuff as Fenton's Marianne, Frowde's Philotas, or Mallet's Eurydice, or those low, dirty, ‘last dying speeches,’ which a fellow in the City or Wapping, your Dillo or Lillo (what was his name), called tragedies?”

in such a way as to move the hearts of those who see and hear<sup>1</sup>." The greatness of the life, as well as the greatness of the crisis in it—and in each case a greatness which, to quote the same writer, is "at once outward and inward"—is what raises such a tragedy as *Othello* above the region of the domestic drama, in which some critics have thought themselves warranted in including it. Charles Lamb, though from a slightly different point of view, has said much the same thing in his own inimitable way; and, though in my opinion the passage reflects somewhat severely on the shortcomings of Lillo's treatment, it is too admirable in substance not to be once more quoted at length:

It is common for people to talk of Shakespeare's plays being so *natural*, that everybody can understand him. They are natural indeed, they are grounded deep in nature, so deep that the depth of them lies out of the reach of most of us. You shall hear the same persons say that *George Barnwell* is very natural, and *Othello* is very natural, that they are both very deep; and to them they are the same kind of thing. At the one they sit and shed tears, because a good sort of young man is tempted by a naughty woman to commit a trifling peccadillo, the murder of an uncle or so, that is all, and so comes to an untimely end, which is so *moving*; and at the other, because a blackamoor in a fit of jealousy kills his innocent white wife: and the odds are that ninety-nine out of a hundred would willingly behold the same catastrophe happen to both the heroes, and have thought the rope more due to *Othello* than to *Barnwell*. For of the texture of *Othello's* mind, the inward construction marvellously laid open with all its strength and weaknesses, its heroic confidences and its human misgivings, its agonies of hate springing from the depths of love, they see no more than the spectators at

<sup>1</sup> See Professor Lewis Campbell's *Tragic Drama in Æschylus, Sophocles and Shakespeare* (1904), p. 29.



a cheaper rate, who pay their pennies apiece to look through the man's telescope in Leicester Fields, see into the inward plot and topography of the moon. Some dim thing or other they see, they see an actor personating a passion, of grief, of anger, for instance, and they recognize it as a copy of the usual external effects of such passions; or at least as being true to that symbol of the emotion which passes current at the theatre for it, for it is often no more than that: but of the grounds of the passion, its correspondence to a great or heroic nature, which is the only worthy object of tragedy—that common auditors know anything of this...I can neither believe, nor understand how it can be possible<sup>1</sup>.

Whether, within the limits of his subject, Lillo can be said to display dramatic power of a high kind, is a question as to which I should not be prepared to allow judgment to go by default. There can be no doubt that, although the characters of this play are taken from actual life, they are for the most part devoid of that inherent vividness which impresses us when human nature reveals its hidden depths under the searchlight of an awful calamity, of a great moral trial. Not only the eminently respectable London merchant, his blameless daughter, and Barnwell's friend—the very model of a virtuous apprentice—are of the stage, stagey; but there is no touch of poetry to soften the very truthful and very painful picture of Barnwell's own loss of that innocence which leaves the soul free. On the other hand, certain touches in the personality of the heartless harlot Millwood, and the suggestion at least of an impressive, however daring, apology for her wickedness, gave to this character a vitality of its own and prevented it from being submerged with the play to which it

<sup>1</sup> *On the Tragedies of Shakespeare.*

belonged. It must, moreover, be conceded that in the scenes where the dramatic action rises to its height, Lillo avoids redundancy of speech, and sustains the attention of reader or spectator by the force of the situation itself. Beyond this he does not go, at least in this tragedy, where he neither seeks nor finds an opportunity for essaying one of those subtler studies of the wild vagaries into which human nature deviates when corrupted by crime, or of the depths of elemental feeling which terror, remorse, and self-pity are capable of sounding—such as, in dealing with such themes, writers far inferior in power to Dickens, or even to Dostoïeffsky, have succeeded in stamping upon our imaginations. He can hardly have been held, though by an age not averse like our own from lengthy moralisings, to have made up for these shortcomings, in many passages of his piece, by a sententiousness which must have been like a second nature to him, since traces of it appear in all his dramatic productions, from the earliest and least commendable of them onwards. Not that this habit invariably lands him in platitudes even when he indulges in it, for clearness of didactic expression is in him by no means always accompanied by shallowness, and his favourite storehouse of gnomic illustrations is the Bible.

Very possibly, the popularity of Lillo's play was, in the first instance, enhanced by his use of prose instead of verse throughout the dialogue. Clearly a theme taken from everyday life is, in an English drama—and probably in a German, while French dramatic verse stands on a somewhat different footing—most satisfactorily treated without a metrical transformation of

the language in which it is clothed<sup>1</sup>; nor can Johnson's plea to the contrary be regarded as other than paradoxical. That illustrious critic "could hardly consider a prose tragedy as dramatic; it was difficult for the performers to speak it; let it be either in the middling or in low life, it might, though in metre and spirited, be properly familiar and colloquial; many in the middling rank were not without erudition; they had the feelings and sensations of nature, and every emotion in consequence thereof, as well as the great; even the lowest, when impassioned, raised their language; and the writing of prose was generally the plea and excuse of poverty of genius<sup>2</sup>." It will scarcely be thought a corroboration of Johnson's paradox that in *The London Merchant* Lillo largely falls into the practice of writing blank verse which he prints as prose<sup>3</sup>. This practice, for which precedents were to be found near at hand in Cibber, must, whether consciously adopted or not, be unhesitatingly set down as a fault in art, since it con-

<sup>1</sup> Diderot, in his essay *De la Poésie Dramatique* cited below, puts the matter admirably (section x): "I have sometimes asked myself whether domestic tragedy might be written in verse, and, without particularly knowing why, have answered, no....Is it, perhaps, that this species requires a particular style of which I have no notion? Or that the truth of the subject treated and the violence of the interest excited reject a symmetrised form of speech? Or is it that the status of the *dramatis personæ* is too near to our own, to admit of a harmony according to rule?"

<sup>2</sup> In Johnson's remarks to G. E. Howard, on receiving from him his play of *The Female Gamester*, in Baker's *Biographia Dramatica*, s.v. *The Gamester*.

<sup>3</sup> See especially the last scene of Act III, and the prison-scene in the last Act.

fuses the perceptions of the hearer by a wilful mixture of forms—although it is a fault frequently committed by writers of picturesque prose, and even by so great a master as Dickens.

We may safely conclude that the audiences which crowded to the early performances of *The London Merchant* troubled themselves little about either the artistic defects or the artistic merits of the play. What they welcomed in Lillo's tragedy was, in the first instance, the courage with which, resuming the native freedom of the English drama, he had chosen his theme from a sphere of experience immediately familiar to themselves; and, secondly, the plainness of the moral which he enforced, and the direct way in which he enforced it. As will be seen from the prefatory Dedication prefixed by Lillo to his published play, Lillo was quite aware of what he had accomplished on both these heads; but he showed himself to have been aiming at a wrong mark when he declared that he had "attempted to enlarge the province of the graver kind of poetry.... Plays, founded on moral tales in private life, may be of admirable use by carrying conviction to the mind with such irresistible force as to engage all the faculties and powers of the soul in the cause of virtue, by stifling vice in its first principles." True criticism, while recognising the great service boldly rendered by Lillo to dramatic art by legitimately vindicating to it the right of ranging over as wide as possible an area of subjects, cannot of course set its approval upon his avowed intention to force that art into the service of morality, and to turn the actor into a week-day preacher. Hettner, in the masterly section of his standard work on the

*History of 18th century Literature* devoted by him to the movement originated by Lillo<sup>1</sup>, quotes a passage from a letter written by Goethe to Meyer in 1793, which puts this matter at once so succinctly and so completely that it may well be requoted here: "The old song of the Philistine, that art must acknowledge the moral law and subordinate itself to it, contains not more than a half-truth. Art has always recognised that law, and must always recognise it, because the laws of art, like the moral law, are derived from reason; but, if art were to subordinate itself to morals, it were better for her that a millstone were hanged about her neck and that she were drowned in the depths of the sea, than that she should be doomed to die away gradually into the platitude of a utilitarian purpose."

But the age on which Lillo (though the actual term was not invented by him or by any other English writer or critic) bestowed the gift of *domestic tragedy* as a new dramatic species was, in the glow of its sentimental and humanitarian enthusiasm, impervious to the fear of any such purely æsthetic danger. On the English stage, where, as has been seen, Lillo had in truth only restored the freedom of an earlier and more spacious era, no great school of dramatists availed itself of the reemancipation (if it may be so called) achieved by him; but not the less, even though he himself returned to its beaten track, was the ascendancy of blank-verse tragedy on the French model henceforth doomed to gradual extinction. Lillo's *Fatal Curiosity*, as we shall see, besides his brace of adaptations from the Elizabethan

<sup>1</sup> *Litteraturgeschichte des 18 Jahrhunderts*, vol. I. p. 514 seqq. (edition of 1865).

drama, followed in the track of his earliest tragedy; and, before long, Edward Moore, in his monotonous, but tear-compelling prose tragedy of *The Gamester* (1753), provided the English stage with a second stock-piece of essentially the same class as *The London Merchant*—not less simple in its psychology and stilted in its rhetoric, but more clearly cut in form and even more signally exhibiting the force of action in a play. Comedy still maintained its general ascendancy in the productions of our dramatic literature; but the sentimental variety continued to predominate, and was only scotched, not killed, by the touch of nature supplied by Goldsmith. Richard Cumberland, who possessed a genuine power of characterisation, may be said to have carried on the dramatic species reintroduced by Lillo; but he at the same time, so to speak, broke it off as a tragic growth by yielding to a demand which (until these latter days) the theatrical public has persisted in preferring—the demand for a so-called “happy ending.” Thus, on the English stage, too, the species accomplished the evolution through which it passed in the French and in the German theatre.

Both of these were, as a matter of fact, far more strongly affected by Lillo’s innovation than was our own, but even they in different degrees. In France, as has been already mentioned, the tendency of several successful dramatists more or less contemporary with him was to give prominence in comedy to an appeal to moral sentiment. It is clear that Lillo’s play directly contributed towards the actual transformation of the *comédie larmoyante* into the ulterior species; in which the comic element was practically extinguished, and

nothing remained but a direct appeal to morality and the emotions. In 1748 there was published at Paris a French version of *The London Merchant* by Pierre Clément, who, born at Geneva in 1707, had relinquished his duties as a Calvinist minister to become tutor at Paris to the children of Earl Waldegrave, British Ambassador at that Court. He afterwards accompanied them to England and Italy; and, having then devoted himself at Paris to literary pursuits, including the production of plays, was invited by the Church authorities at Geneva to resign his title of minister. In 1767 he died insane at Charenton. Among his plays were two translations from the English, one of which was *Le Marchand de Londres*<sup>1</sup>. It reached a second edition in 1751; and there can be no doubt that to its direct influence upon Diderot was largely due the production of the plays by which he deliberately sought to revolutionise the French theatre, and which occupy an important place in its history as well as in that of dramatic literature in general. The earlier of these plays, *Le Fils Naturel*, published in 1757, was at once followed by the three *Entretiens*, dialogues in which Diderot expounds his dramatic principles and their application to his recent production, and in which he twice refers to Lillo's play as typical of the species which he is endeavouring to introduce<sup>2</sup>. In 1758 followed *Le Père*

<sup>1</sup> The other, *La Double Métamorphose* (1749), was a version of the celebrated ballad opera, by some half-dozen authors, *The Devil to Pay*.

<sup>2</sup> In *Entretien I*, he eulogises the natural pathos of the prison-scene between Barnwell and Maria in Act v of *The London Merchant*. (See note *in loc.*) In *Entretien II*, Dorval, after claiming for the new species the title of "*tragédie domestique et bourgeoise*", adds: "The

*de Famille*, accompanied by the *Discours sur la poésie dramatique*, addressed to Grimm, in the tenth section of which the theory of domestic tragedy and its application by himself is fully expounded. In 1760, Diderot composed an adaptation of Moore's *Gamester*, but as in 1762 a translation of this piece was printed by the Abbé Bruté de Loirette, Diderot's version remained unpublished till 1819<sup>1</sup>. His own early association of *The Gamester* with *The London Merchant* had led to a general and long-enduring belief in France that Moore's drama was by Lillo. But the amplest extant tribute by Diderot to Lillo occurs in the *Correspondance* of Grimm, who speaks of the great success of *The London Merchant* in England, and its high reputation in France since the publication of the French translation of it. He adds a *critique* by Diderot on the *Épître de Barnevelt*, by Claude-Joseph Dorat, a writer of quite inexhaustible fecundity, supposed to be written from prison by Barnwell (or, more metrically, "Barnevelt") to his friend "Truman," expanding into a "heroic" epistle the narrative of his parricidal crime. Diderot falls into the trap of confounding the excellent Thorowgood (softened into "Sorogoud") with Barnwell's unhappy uncle; but no better critical page was ever written than that distinguishing the lifelike method of Lillo from the pedantries of his adapter<sup>2</sup>.

Beyond a doubt Diderot's dramatic "innovation" would not have exercised the effect actually produced English have *The Merchant of London* and *The Gamester*, tragedies in prose. The tragedies of Shakespeare are half verse, half prose."

<sup>1</sup> *Le Joueur. Drame imité de l'Anglais.*

<sup>2</sup> *Extrait de la Correspondance de Grimm, 1<sup>er</sup> avril, 1764, in Miscellanea Dramatiques: La Lettre de Barnevelt; Œuvres de Diderot, VIII (Belles-Lettres, v), 449 seqq. (Paris, 1875.)*



by it, but for the great name of the editor of the *Encyclopédie*, and for the general fermentation of ideas into the midst of which it was cast. Equally beyond a doubt, this effect was literary rather than theatrical, so far as France itself was concerned. *Le Fils Naturel*, though performed at the Duc d'Ayen's private theatre at St Germain (where, in 1764, was also acted a French version of Lessing's *Miss Sara Sampson*), was not brought on the boards of the Comédie Française till 1771, where (with the help of all the actors except Molé) it proved a failure<sup>1</sup>. But its literary success was remarkable; and it has been well said that no impartial spectator could have failed to find in it a hitherto undiscovered pathos and a power which made it possible to forget the stage. At the same time, Lessing justly censured in it a certain preciosity and an occasional pedantry of philosophical formulæ. In *Le Père de Famille*, the domestic drama shook itself free from these adventitious elements; but, though the earlier acts are fine and flowing—full of the “movement” in which Diderot himself thought the play superior to its predecessor—and though the whole drama exhibits a conflict of souls rather than of mere words, the psychological interest is gradually more or less dissipated, and the end of the action falls flat. It was moderately successful on the Paris stage, when produced there in 1761, after being acted at Marseilles in the previous year<sup>2</sup>. On being reproduced at Paris in

<sup>1</sup> It was translated into English under the title of *Dorval, or the Test of Virtue* (1767).

<sup>2</sup> It was translated into English in 1770; and again in 1781 under the title of *A Family Picture*, by a lady. Its revival on the Paris stage in 1841 was not successful.

1769, it met with much favour, as again at Naples in 1773. But, though Diderot's influence upon both older contemporary dramatists (such as Sedaine) and younger (such as Beaumarchais, who essayed this species in his earlier, now forgotten plays) was considerable, its real success was remote. In the end the *drame*—a name which has no character at all—was to become the dominating species of the living French stage, and to survive through all the changes rung upon each by classicism and romanticism.

In the meantime, Diderot had contributed to give force and freedom to the development of the German drama, in the direction to which all his efforts had tended at home. Lessing, who in 1760 published an anonymous translation of Diderot's plays, and prefixed his name to its second edition in 1781, in the preface to the latter correctly states that Diderot had a greater influence on the German theatre than on that of his own nation<sup>1</sup>. To this influence no writer contributed in anything like the same measure as Lessing himself, both by his translation and by his memorable criticisms of the *Fils Naturel* and the *Père de Famille*, and of Diderot's dramatic principles in general, in the *Hamburger Dramaturgie*<sup>2</sup>. But it was an influence for the reception of which the soil had been long and diligently prepared in Germany.

Here, Gottsched and other faithful devotees of French literary influence by adaptation and imitation assiduously cultivated the dramatic species represented

<sup>1</sup> *Gesammelte Werke*, 1858 edn. iv. 360 *seqq.*

<sup>2</sup> Nos. LXXXIV–LXXXVIII. See the annotated edition by F. Schröter and R. Thiele, Halle, 1877, pp. 489 *seqq.*

by Marivaux and his successors, and the most popular member of the Leipzig School, Gellert, indited an academical dissertation *Pro comoediâ commovente*, the effect of the innovation on the English stage was even greater than in France. In Germany, the movement began at the top, and organically connected itself with the perception of the potent significance of the English theatre at large, which was beginning to dawn upon the leaders of German literature. The foremost of these leaders in critical courage and insight, as well as in formative promptitude and power, Lessing, seized upon Lillo's domestic tragedy as the model of his own earliest creative effort in the sphere of the drama. That Lillo's play was the model of *Miss Sara Sampson* (1755) would be rendered certain by a comparison of the two works<sup>1</sup>, even had not Lessing given utterance to the awful declaration that he would rather be the author of *The London Merchant* than of *The Dying Cato*. Although the personages in Lessing's drama belong to a rather more elevated class of society than those of Lillo's, *Miss Sara Sampson* is unhesitatingly to be set down as an example of "middle-class" domestic tragedy. Of course, this does not mean that Lessing's play (in which certain of the names and certain elements in the situations are alike taken from *Clarissa Harlowe*) is copied from Lillo's, or even that the monstrous Marwood is, except in her wickedness, tenacity, and furious invective, a copy of the more monstrous Millwood<sup>2</sup>. For the rest, although Lillo's tragedy found its way in a translation

<sup>1</sup> See the paper, suggested by Professor Caro's *Lessing und Swift* (Jena, 1869), reprinted above (No. 27).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ib.*

to the German reading public before 1772, as it did to that of Holland a few years later<sup>1</sup>, Lessing had by this time, urged by the invigorating and purifying force of his genius, passed on to the creation of *Emilia Galotti* (1772), a powerful drama that soars above the region of domestic tragedy and *bürgerliches Trauerspiel* from which it had issued. Thus, he had passed not only beyond Lillo, but beyond Diderot, after with the help of the former anticipating the latter. So late as the years 1779-83, however, *The London Merchant* was still to be seen on the German stage, where in these years the great actor Schröder produced it, though without success, in Hamburg and in some of the other leading German theatres. The *Rührstück*, of which it was the prototype, had too many affinities with certain qualities of the ordinary German mind not to have established itself on the national stage for many a long year to come. Such a play as Iffland's very effective *Verbrechen aus Ehrsucht*, and many another heart-rending production by that actor of genius and author of insight—not to mention the labours of Kotzebue and Frau Birch-Pfeiffer, which employed the pocket-handkerchiefs of later generations—may fairly be said to owe their literary paternity to *George Barnwell*. But the freedom which

<sup>1</sup> The British Museum contains copies of *Der Kaufmann von London, oder Begebenheiten G. Barnwell's*. Ein bürgerliches Trauerspiel, aus dem Englischen des Herrn Tillo [sic] übersetzt durch H. A. B. Neue Auflage. Hamburg, 1772; of the same in a later edition of 1781; and of *De Koopman von London*. Burgerlyk treurspel, naar het Engelsche van den Heer Tillo [sic]. Amsterdam, 1779. Neither the Dutch nor the German translation (of which the former seems to be a version) contains the additional scene to be found in some of the English editions.

Lillo so materially helped to impart to the modern serious drama, and without which it could hardly have been preserved from decrepitude or emasculation, entitles him to a grateful remembrance which no abuse of the acquisition ought to affect, and no lapse of time should render obsolete<sup>1</sup>.

*Fatal Curiosity*, the second of the two plays by Lillo reprinted in the present volume, was first acted at the Little Haymarket, on May 27, 1736, under the title of *Guilt Its Own Punishment, or Fatal Curiosity*. It is stated to have been, on its original production, played seven times<sup>2</sup>. It was announced for its first performance as "by Pasquin's Company of Comedians. Never acted before. Being a true story in Common Life, and the Incidents extremely affecting. Written by the author

<sup>1</sup> The satire of *George de Barnwell*, Thackeray's travesty in his *Novels by Eminent Hands*, applies, not to Lillo's play, but to certain of the earlier writings of Lord Lytton; the hero is a representation of "Devereux, or P. Clifford, or E. Aram, Esquires"; and the moral of the tale is "that Homicide is not to be permitted even to the most amiable Genius." The dramatic effectiveness of the original was, on the other hand, distinctly perceptible in an amusing extravaganza produced at the Adelphi some thirty or forty years since. Some playgoers of the past besides myself may remember the inimitable agility with which, in this piece, Mr Toole skipped over the counter, and the strength of passion which that gifted actress Miss Woolgar (Mrs Alfred Mellon) put into the part of Millwood. The "Travestie" of the story of *George Barnwell* in *Rejected Addresses* (one of the contributions of "Momus Medlar"), though included in Jeffrey's praise of being "as good as that sort of thing can be," is one of the few things in the famous volume whose wit will not keep them fresh.

<sup>2</sup> From a copy of Genest, with MS. notes, bequeathed to the British Museum in 1844 by Mr Frederick Latreille, vol. III. p. 488, note.

of George Barnwell<sup>1</sup>." The Little Haymarket had then been recently opened by Fielding (who, as has been seen, was a steady admirer and friend of Lillo) with his *Pasquin, a Dramatick Satire on the Times*. Thomas Davies, the dramatist's future editor, as well as author of a *Life of Garrick* and of *Dramatic Miscellanies*, took the part of Young Wilmot. He says that the play was not successful at first, but that Fielding afterwards tacked it to his *Historical Register* (which had so signal, though short-lived, a *succès de scandale*), and that it was then performed to more advantage and often repeated. It was reproduced at the Haymarket in 1755 with a Prologue by the younger Cibber<sup>2</sup>, which seems never to have been printed; and again, at the same theatre, by the elder Colman in 1782<sup>3</sup>. Colman, besides adding a new Prologue, introduced some alterations which, without affecting the general course or texture of the piece, were considerable as well as, on the whole, judicious. Their nature will be apparent from the following remarks, which form the earlier portion of the *Postscript* appended by Colman, with his signature and the date "Soho-Square, June 28, 1783," to his edition of the play, published in 1783<sup>4</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> *London Daily Post*, Thursday, May 7, 1736.

<sup>2</sup> So Genest says, IV. 425. The advertisement of the play in the daily papers of September 4, 1755, runs: "With ORIGINAL Prologue, spoken by Cibber's."

<sup>3</sup> It was the younger Colman who brought out, in 1798, a "dramatic romance," called *Bluebeard, or Female Curiosity*.

<sup>4</sup> For these changes see the footnotes to the text in the present edition. The remainder of the *Postscript*, with the exception of its concluding sentence, is reprinted in Appendix II: *The Source of Fatal Curiosity*.

“Though the *Fatal Curiosity* of LILLO has received the applause of many sound critics, and been accounted worthy of the Graecian stage, and (what is, perhaps, still higher merit) worthy of Shakespeare! yet the long exclusion of this drama from the theatre had in some measure obscured the fame of a tragedy, whose uncommon excellence challenged more celebrity. The late Mr Harris, of Salisbury<sup>1</sup>, has endeavoured, in his PHILOLOGICAL INQUIRIES, to display the beauties, *the terrible graces*, of the piece, and to do justice to the memory of LILLO. His comment is in general just, yet he seems to have given a sketch of *the Fable* from an imperfect recollection of the circumstances, without the book before him. He appears to have conceived that the tragedy derived its title from the *curiosity* of Agnes to know the contents of the casket: but that LILLO meant to mark by the title the FATAL CURIOSITY of Young Wilmot, is evident from the whole scene between him and Randal, wherein he arranges the plan of his intended interview with his parents; which arrangement Mr Harris erroneously attributes to his conference with Charlot. The principle of CURIOSITY is openly avowed and warmly sustained by Young Wilmot, and humbly reprehended by Randal.

“The comment of Mr Harris is, however, on the whole, most judicious and liberal. It concludes with a note in these words:

“‘If any one read this tragedy, the author of these Inquiries has a request or two to make, for which he hopes a candid reader will forgive him—One is, not to cavil at minute in-accuracies, but [to] look to the superior merit of *the whole taken together*.—Another is, totally to expunge those wretched *rhimes*, which conclude many of the scenes; and which, ’t is probable, are not from Lillo, but from some other hand, willing to conform to an absurd fashion, *then* practised, but now laid aside, the

<sup>1</sup> James Harris, author of *Hermes*, and father of the first Earl of Malmesbury. Harris was carried away by his admiration of *Fatal Curiosity*, which he compares, on an equal footing, to the *Ædipus Tyrannus* in the conception and arrangement of the fable, and which he subsequently extols for its “insistency of manners.”

fashion (I mean) of a *rhiming conclusion*.' *Philological Inquiries*, vol. I. p. 174.

"The present Editor thought it his duty to remove, as far as he was able, the blemishes here noticed by Mr Harris; and he therefore expunged *the rhiming conclusions* of acts and scenes, except in one instance, where he thought the couplet too beautiful to be displaced. Some *minute inaccuracies* of language he also hazarded an attempt to correct; and even in some measure to mitigate the horror of the catastrophe, by the omission of some expressions rather too savage, and by one or two touches of remorse and tenderness. Agnes is most happily drawn after Lady Macbeth; in whose character there is not perhaps a finer trait, than her saying, during the murder of Duncan,

'Had he not resembled  
My father as he slept, I had done't!'"

The play was reproduced by the elder Colman at the same theatre in 1782. In 1784, an alteration of the play by Henry Mackenzie, author of *The Man of Feeling*, was performed—once only—at Covent Garden, under the title of *The Shipwreck*. This version is in five acts, and introduces a boy Charles, grandson to Agnes, who unnecessarily complicates the action<sup>2</sup>. Finally, it was revived in 1813, at Bath, under the title

<sup>1</sup> The above fails to exhaust the bare-faced plagiarisms from *Macbeth* in the murder-scene in Lillo's play.

<sup>2</sup> Genest, VIII. 310, does not mention Charles, who appears in Acts II, III, and V, where there is a good deal about him. Agnes does not reveal whether he is the son of her son or of a daughter, though she says that his mother is dead. For an account by Mackenzie of the motives for his changes, see *Biographia Dramatica*, vol. III (ed. 1812), under *The Shipwreck*. They show, as might be expected, a higher degree of refinement than seems to have been thought necessary by the theatrical public; but they are, nevertheless, finely conceived.



of *The Cornish Shipwreck, or Fatal Curiosity*, when an additional scene was performed, in which Young Wilmot appears after he has been stabbed, and in a dying state. This scene, which is said to have been by Lillo's hand, although it is not printed in any extant edition, and which had been presented to the less sensitive Bristol public without giving rise to any dissatisfaction, now provoked so much disturbance that the curtain had to drop<sup>1</sup>.

In the *Postscript* already cited, Colman narrates the episode which suggested to Lillo the plot of his tragedy, and mentions his belief that the story was no longer extant, except in Frankland's *Annals of the Reigns of King James and King Charles the First*<sup>2</sup>. He adds a reference to the *Biographia Dramatica*, in which the source of the story is stated to be a black-letter pamphlet of 1618 entitled *News from Perin in Cornwall*, etc. But, before Frankland, the story had been reproduced from the pamphlet in W. Sanderson's *Compleat History of the Lives and Reigns of Mary, Queen of Scotland, and of her Son and Successor James*. (London, 1656, pp. 463-65<sup>3</sup>.)

<sup>1</sup> Genest, VIII. 388.

<sup>2</sup> [Dr Thomas Frankland's] *The Annals of King James and King Charles the First both of happy memory* (from 1612-42), London, 1681, fol. ser. p. 33, where this "calamity of wondrous note" is said to have happened at "Perinin" in Cornwall, in September, 1618, and where the story is told immediately after the account of the death of Sir Walter Raleigh.

<sup>3</sup> Noted by Reinhard Köhler, *Ueber den Stoff von Zacharias Werner's Vierundzwanzigsten Februar* (*Kleinere Schriften* etc., hrsgbn. von I. Bolte, Berlin, 1900, vol. III. pp. 185-99)—an exhaustive essay very kindly pointed out to me by Professor Erich Schmidt—who cites G. C. Boase and W. P. Courtney, *Bibliotheca*

Indeed, I find that the entire reign of James as related by Frankland is, except for insignificant changes, a mere reproduction of Sanderson's account, and that the story of the murder is virtually identical in the two histories. As in Frankland, the story in Sanderson follows immediately the account of the death of Sir Walter Raleigh. A copy of the pamphlet is preserved in the Bodleian at Oxford; and I have availed myself of the kind permission of the Bodleian authorities and the courtesy of Mr George Parker to reproduce the original *in extenso* in an Appendix for comparison with the Frankland-Sanderson version and the play itself. I have there also mentioned some of the *analoga* to the story which have been noted by earlier and more recent research. It will not escape observation, that in the pamphlet, where the story has a long and elaborate exordium, the instigator of the crime is the step-mother, not the mother, of its victim; but that Frankland, or rather his original, Sanderson—and one of these two accounts was probably that used by Lillo—deepens the horror of the deed by ascribing it to the mother.

The time, then, at which the action of *Fatal Curiosity* is laid, is the latter part of the reign of James I, after Sir Walter Raleigh's last return from Guiana in 1618; but the dramatist evidently takes into account the strong feeling against Spain which prevailed in England about the time of the production of his tragedy. Two

*Corubiensis* (1874), vol. I. p. 319. Frankland's version is also to be found in Baker's *Biographia Dramatica* (ed. 1812), vol. II. pp. 224-61. There are several later references to the story. See also W. E. A. Axon, *The Story of Fatal Curiosity in Notes and Queries*, 6 ser. 5, 21 f. (1882).

years later—in 1738—this state of feeling was to be increased to a pitch of frenzy by the story of Jenkins's ear; and in the following year Walpole was constrained to declare war against Spain. The scene of the action is Penryn (near Falmouth), in Cornwall. Lillo seems to have little or no acquaintance with the place<sup>1</sup>, but to have taken some interest in the misdeeds of the Cornish wreckers, of which, in the last scene of the first act of this play, he speaks with grave reprobation, as a scandal that ought to be ended. As a matter of fact, an act of great severity had been passed against this evil in the reign of Queen Anne, and made perpetual under George I; but, when Wesley visited Cornwall in 1776, he found that this "especial scandal" of the country, as Mr Lecky calls it, was still as common there as ever<sup>2</sup>.

It should be noted that, unlike *The London Merchant*, this play is throughout written in blank verse, a circumstance in accord with the general character of the diction, which has a tendency to be more ornate than that of the earlier work. The blank verse is, however, by no means excellent of its kind, and, curiously enough, is at times less smooth than so much of the prose of *The London Merchant* as runs into metre. Lillo has a habit of prefixing a redundant syllable to a six-foot line; but,

<sup>1</sup> In the first scene of the play Randal says:

"I saw her pass the High-Street t'wards the minster."

The noble parish-church of St Gluvias (with its interesting monuments of the Pendarves family and others) can at no time have been called "the minster." It is about a mile away from the High Street.

<sup>2</sup> Lecky's *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (2nd ed.) 489. Cf. the reference to the "inhospitable ways" of these folk in *The London Merchant*, Act IV, *ad fin.*

even allowing for this, his lines do not always run easily. Thus we have in the opening scene:

*Whose perfection ends in knowing we know nothing.*

His elisions, too, are often harsh, as:

*By unjust suspicion I know the truth.*

Colman, in his revised edition, showed his good taste by "expunging the rhyming conclusions of acts and scenes."

There can be no doubt that, as Colman pointed out, the title of *Fatal Curiosity* contains no reference, as might be supposed,—or, at all events, that it does not refer primarily—to the "curiosity" of Mrs Wilmot (Agnes) in opening the casket brought into his parents' house by their unknown son<sup>1</sup>. It refers, in the first instance, to the "curiosity"—a kind of *ὑβρις* or presumption on his good fortune—displayed by Young Wilmot, when he tempts Providence, in order to secure to himself a certain heightening or *raffinement* of enjoyment, by visiting his parents without having first discovered himself to them. As to this, the expressions of Young Wilmot and the faithful Randal before the commission of the error<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the opening speech of Act III, Agnes says:

"Why should my *curiosity* excite me  
To search and pry into th' affairs of others?"

<sup>2</sup> In the scene between Young Wilmot and Randal in Act II the former asks:

"Why may I not  
Indulge my *curiosity* and try  
If it be possible by seeing first  
My parents as a stranger, to improve  
This pleasure by surprise?"

and the reflexion of the former after he has committed it<sup>1</sup>, leave no room for doubt.

The interest attaching to *Fatal Curiosity* in connexion with the general course of dramatic literature lies in the fact of its being an early experiment in a species to which the Germans, who alone cultivated it to any considerable extent, have given the name of *Schicksalstragödie*—the tragedy of destiny. This species must be regarded, not as introducing a new element into tragic action, but as exaggerating, in various degrees of grotesqueness (I here use the word “grotesque” in its proper, which is also very close to its etymological, meaning), an element which in itself is foreign neither to ancient nor to modern tragedy. Professor Lewis Campbell, in a work from which I have already quoted, has a passage on this subject at once so pertinent and so judicious that I cannot refrain from giving it in full:

“As Mr W. L. Courtney puts it, ‘tragedy is always a clash of two powers—necessity without, freedom within; outside, a great, rigid, arbitrary law of fate; inside, the moderated individual will, which can win its spiritual triumphs even when all its material surroundings and environment have crumbled into hopeless ruin....Necessity without, liberty within—that is the great theme which, however disguised, runs through every tragedy that has been written in the world.’ But it is commonly

and Randal replies:

“You grow luxurious in mental pleasures;  
...To say true, I ever thought  
Your boundless *curiosity* a weakness.”

<sup>1</sup> Act II, *ad fin.*, Young Wilmot exclaims:

“How has my *curiosity* betray’d me  
Into superfluous pain! I faint with fondness,  
And shall, if I stay longer, rush upon ’em,” etc.

assumed that, whereas in Æschylus and Sophocles the necessity is wholly outward, in Shakespeare it is the direct outcome of personality; that while the theme of ancient drama is, as Wordsworth says,

‘Poor humanity’s afflicted will  
Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny,’

in Shakespeare the tragic hero is encountered by the consequences of his own errors, so that here, far more than in the Greek masterpieces, we see exemplified the truth of the Greek proverb ‘Character is destiny’; ‘no fate broods over the actions of men and the history of families; the only fatality is the fatality of character.’ (*Dowden.*)

“This is only partly true. All ancient art and thought is in its form more objective, while an ever-growing subjectivity is the note of the modern mind; and the ancient fables mostly turned on some predetermined fatality. But in his moulding of the fable the Attic poet was guided by his own profound conception of human nature as he saw it in its freest working. The idea of fate is thus, as it were, expanded into an outer framework for the picture of life, except in so far as it remains to symbolize those inscrutable causes beyond human control, whose working is likewise present to the mind of Shakespeare. Xerxes, Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Ajax, Creon are no less victims of their own passionate nature than Macbeth or Lear; and the fate of Hamlet almost equally with that of Ædipus is due to antecedent and surrounding circumstances with which neither he nor any man could have power to cope; although here also malign fortune is assisted by ‘the o’ergrowth of some complexion, Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason<sup>1</sup>.’”

I have cited this passage as it stands; but I cannot conceal my opinion that more lurks in the reservation “*almost equally*” in its concluding sentence than might perhaps be obvious at first sight. There is a provocation of Character in *Ædipus* as in *Hamlet*; but Hamlet is,

<sup>1</sup> L. Campbell, *Tragic Drama in Aeschylus, etc.*, pp. 29-31.

and Œdipus is not, pitted on equal terms against the power of fate; and the mighty Sophoclean trilogy must remain, as Vischer puts it, the most signal instance of the inability of Greek tragedy to solve the problem of the conflict between destiny and guilt<sup>1</sup>.

But, in any case, Lillo, whether consciously or not, in his *Fatal Curiosity* took a step which may be regarded as transnormal: not because in the narrow framework of his domestic tragedy he once more pictured *la fuerza del destino*—the force of destiny—which few tragic dramatists, great or small, have pretended to ignore, but because, in point of fact, he exhibited destiny as operating to all intents and purposes independently of character. The demoralising effects of want and “dire necessity” upon Old Wilmot and his wife are of course quite insufficient to account for the sophistry with which she “seduces his will” and “infects his soul,” so as to secure his connivance in her criminal design. On the other hand, the “curiosity” of their son in taking them unawares, which the author wishes us to accept as the really fatal starting-point in the series of events that end in the catastrophe of both son and parents, is, if a weakness, a perfectly natural and pardonable one. The effect of this tragedy is therefore as hollow as it is horrible; like Quarles’s *Emblem* of the vacuous world, *tinnit, inane est*; and it appropriately ends with the

<sup>1</sup> See the powerful passage in F. T. Vischer’s *Æsthetik oder Wissenschaft des Schönen*, Part III, section II, p. 1410 (vol. IV of 1857 ed.). I much regret to be unable to refer to a paper by the late Professor H. T. Röscher, *Zufall und Nothwendigkeit im Drama* in *Jahrbücher für dramatische Kunst und Literatur*. (It is not in *Jahrgang* 1848, as I have at last, to my great disappointment, ascertained.)

twofold commonplace, that the ways of heaven are mysterious, and that

The ripe in virtue never die too soon.

We know that Lillo's tragedy found its way to Germany, where, after, in 1781—the year before that in which he started on his wellknown journey to England,—Karl Philipp Moritz had produced a genuine imitation of *Fatal Curiosity*<sup>1</sup>, two editions were published of a not very happily named translation of it by W. H. Brömel, *Stolz und Verzweiflung (Pride and Despair)*<sup>2</sup>. In the same country, a great dramatic poet was about this time, with much searching of soul and a lofty desire to realise the truest and most enduring conceptions of tragedy and her laws, seeking to apply the idea of Fate exemplified in the Attic drama to his own practice<sup>3</sup>. Already in his great *Wallenstein* trilogy, where the association of the subject with a period and a hero of wellknown astrological propensities would in any case have led to the introduction of a fatalistic element, Schiller endeavoured to reconcile this with the higher or moral law to which the universe is subject<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Blunt oder der Gast*. Schauspiel in einem Akt. Berlin, 1781.

<sup>2</sup> Dessau and Leipzig, 1785; and Augsburg, 1791.

<sup>3</sup> For what follows cf. Professor Jakob Minor's general and special Introductions to a selection of plays by Z. Werner, Müllner and Houwald, published under the title *Das Schicksalsdrama* in the *Deutsche National-Literatur* series, edited by J. Kürschner (Berlin and Stuttgart, W. Spemann), and Dr Minor's larger work, *Die Schicksals-tragödie in ihren Hauptvertretern* (Frankfort, 1883).

<sup>4</sup> Compare Wallenstein's famous narrative, justifying his confidence in Octavio, in *The Piccolomini*, Act v, sc. iv, beginning (in Coleridge's Translation),

"There exist moments in the life of man," etc.



And *The Bride of Messina*, the beautiful play which, perhaps not altogether successfully, he sought to model on Attic examples, concludes with lines that in their native form have become proverbial:

Of man's possessions life is not the highest,  
But of all ills on earth the worst is guilt.

Far different were the conceptions and the practice on this head of a school of dramatists who, while striving more or less to imitate Schiller both in the treatment of their themes and in the outer form of their plays, found it expedient to fall back into narrower tracks of their own. Their notion of fate was an elaborately artificial system of predestination which, as it were, set out to entangle its victims, like a *mouchard* luring a *suspect* step by step to the perpetration of the cardinal deed. The working of this system depended on coincidences of time and place, on recurring dates of day and month, on the occasion offered by inanimate things, on the premonition received from inarticulate sounds, on the accidents of accidents<sup>1</sup>. Some of these poets were trained lawyers, and all seem to have had a

and the Duke's comment, in reply to Illo,

"There's no such thing as chance"—

with the magnificent passage in *The Death of Wallenstein*, Act I, sc. ix, when he discovers that Octavio has played traitor to him:

"The stars lie not; but we have here a work  
Wrought counter to the stars and destiny.  
The science still is honest; this false heart  
Forces a lie on the truth-telling heaven.  
On a divine law divination rests," etc.

<sup>1</sup> Everything, says a character in Müllner's *Schuld* (Act IV, sc. iv), in the end depends on the silver *real* which my mother refused to a beggar-woman.

taste, natural or acquired, for stories of parricide and incest, "odious involutions and perversions of passion"—to cite an admirable expression of Sir Walter Scott's<sup>1</sup>—the whole paraphernalia of the criminal novel and the police newspaper. Of course, their methods differed in degree according to their daring, and in effectiveness according to their literary and theatrical ability; for they numbered among them more than one man of genius and more than one born playwright. Their metrical form, preferentially short trochaic lines with irregular rimes, was happily chosen; for it was at once insinuating and uncomfortable; and it was at times managed with very notable skill.

The same story as that which forms the subject of *Fatal Curiosity* furnished the plot of the one-act tragedy of *Der Vierundzwanzigste Februar*, by Zacharias Werner, a gifted writer of ephemeral celebrity, but unmistakable talent. This play (1812), of which the scene is laid in a solitary inn in a rocky Alpine pass, is much more firmly constructed and much more overpowering in its effect than *Fatal Curiosity*; nor can it be denied that the piece has a certain passionate force which smacks of genius. But after one is relieved of the *incubus*, there remains little to impress the mind in connexion with this play, except the fact that Goethe allowed it to be produced on the Weimar stage<sup>2</sup>. While Werner's

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Recollections of Sir Walter Scott*. By Mrs Hughes (of Uffington). Edited by H. G. Hutchinson. London, 1904.

<sup>2</sup> According to a Weimar tradition, corroborated by Werner's account to Iffland that a "well-known" anecdote supplied the foundation of his play, an incident, read out at Goethe's house in 1809, was recommended by him to Werner as a subject for a one-act

tragedy must in one sense be called original, Adolf Müllner's one-act tragedy, which deals with a similar theme and frankly calls itself *Der Neunundzwanzigste Februar* (*February the twenty-ninth*) (also 1812), is a palpable attempt at outdoing the sensation excited by its predecessor. Here, to the accompaniment of atmospheric effects, *sortes biblicæ*, and the actual grinding of the knife destined to cut the unspeakable knot, a tale is unfolded which need not fear the competition of the most complex of nightmares. Yet, so alive were Müllner's theatrical instincts to public sentiment, that he afterwards skilfully changed the action of this play of horrors into one with a "happy ending" (*Der Wahn—The Illusion*). The same author's celebrated four-act tragedy *Die Schuld* (*Guilt*), produced in the same year 1812, marked the height of the vogue reached by the "Tragedy of Destiny"; for its popularity at Vienna and elsewhere knew no bounds. The scene of this play is laid on the North Sea coast of the Scandinavian peninsula; the chief characters in the action, however, are Spaniards—a daring but felicitous combination. The complicated story of crime and its sequel are no doubt worked out with the skill of a *virtuoso*; and, from the

tragedy. The relations between Goethe and Werner have been recently illustrated by their correspondence published with an interesting introduction by MM. O. Schüddekopf and O. Walzel in *Goethe und die Romantik*, vol. II (*Schriften der Goethe Gesellschaft*, vol. XIV. Weimar, 1899). It may be added that in 1808 Prince Pückler-Muskau heard at Geneva of a similar occurrence in the vicinity; and that, early in June, 1880, there appeared in the *Neue Freie Presse* of Vienna a story to the same intent (the mother being, however, the sole agent), which ran its course through the journals of both hemispheres (see Axon, *u.s.*).

snapping of a chord of the hysterical Elvira's harp during her opening speech onwards, a continuous sense of unconquerable gloom possesses the spectator; nor does it release him with the closing oracular announcement, that the *pourquoi* of the *pourquoi* (to borrow the Electress Sophia's phrase) will not be revealed till the day of the Resurrection.

There can be no doubt that the eminent Austrian dramatist, Franz Grillparzer, who afterward came near to greatness in more legitimate fields of tragic composition, was in some measure inspired by Müllner's *Die Schuld* in the production of his *Die Ahnfrau* (*The Ancestress*) in 1817; although he seems justified in his vehement protest that this play was not properly speaking a tragedy of destiny, but one in which wrong is visited where the responsibility has been incurred. But the species itself lingered on for something like a decade more, without being killed either by academic or by farcical ridicule<sup>1</sup>. Yet nothing of any importance was produced in the later stages of this literary mode. The last in any way conspicuous production of the kind was Baron C. E. von Houwald's *Der Leuchthurm* (*The Lighthouse*), a rather mawkish play, that makes large use of natural phenomena—the howling winds and the

<sup>1</sup> A list of these plays and of one or two parodies upon the species will be found in Goedeke's *Grundriss der deutschen Dichtung*, vol. III. pp. 381-84. It would carry me too far to discuss here Platen's memorable attack on the *Schicksalstragödie*, among other aberrations of contemporary literature from his classical ideals, in *Die Verhängnisvolle Gabel* (*The Fatal Fork*), 1826, and *Der romantische Œdipus* (*The Romantic Œdipus*), 1829. Among the flies caught in the amber of Platen's verse, these at least were not quite *ephemera*.

surging waves—which Lillo had not ignored, but introduced with less sentimental profusion, when he made a shipwreck on the unkind Cornish coast the pivot of the action of his *Fatal Curiosity*.

As a dramatist, Lillo was distinguished by no mean constructive power, by a naturalness of diction capable of becoming ardent without bombast, and of remaining plain without sinking into baldness, and by a gift, conspicuously exercised in the earlier, and to some extent also in the later, of the two plays here discussed, of reproducing genuine types of human nature alive with emotion and passion. In dramatic history, he is notable rather because of the effects of his chief works than because of those works themselves. *The London Merchant*, which alone entitles him to an enduring fame, is true to the genius of the English drama. Thus, while our own theatre, in a period of much artificiality, owed to him a strengthening of its tie with real life and its experiences, his revival of domestic tragedy both directly and indirectly quickened the general course of dramatic literature, expanded its choice of themes, and suggested a manner of treatment most itself when nearest the language of the heart.

### 31. KLOPSTOCK AND HIS FRIENDS<sup>1</sup>

(*The Saturday Review*, September 12, 1868)

AMONG the many under-valued virtues of posterity, there is one which ought to be highly appreciated by aspirants to literary fame. It has perhaps not been sufficiently pointed out, for the encouragement or consolation, as the case may be, of authors, that when posterity does agree about them, its unanimity is wonderful. While, no doubt, some literary lights of their own day are extinguished with promptitude by the termination of their personal existence, the glory of others is kept green by an imperturbable *consensus* of succeeding generations. In no modern literature is this so emphatically the case as in that of Germany. The merits of many among even its first literary celebrities are cheerfully taken for granted, not only by foreign nations, but by millions of Germans who have hardly read through one entire work of these their literary benefactors. When, some years ago, Rietschel's noble group of Schiller and Goethe was uncovered at Weimar amidst the concourse of an enthusiastic multitude, a statue was simultaneously brought to light in honour of Wieland, whose writings are at once so widely esteemed and so rarely perused. He has his statue and his reputation, ample rewards for a pleasant life of

<sup>1</sup> *Briefe von und an Klopstock. Ein Beitrag zur Litteraturgeschichte seiner Zeit.* Mit erläuternden Anmerkungen herausgegeben von J. M. Lappenberg. Brunswick, 1867.

congenial labour. Still more notable is the respectful feeling, quite distinct from any interest in his works, entertained by every true German towards the memory of Klopstock. Many an honest admirer has gazed with gentle awe upon the poet's house at Hamburg, or upon the grave where he and his wives lie buried in the neighbouring village of Ottensen, who would be considerably staggered by a request to recite half a dozen lines of the *Messias*, or to state the argument of one of the *Bardiete*. Even in his lifetime Klopstock was very much annoyed by an epigram of Lessing's, to the effect that

Klopstock is praised by young and old,  
But few have glanced his pages o'er.  
I'm willing to be less extolled,  
If I am read a little more.

And since his death little change can have taken place in the numerical proportion here indicated between his readers and his admirers.

In this instance, however, the causes of the phenomenon in question are probably not far to seek. As a writer, Klopstock was a predecessor, and not a contemporary, of the golden age of German literature. The German people, as he found them, were as unfit for really national poetry as was the language spoken by them. When he commenced his career as an author, the nation had scarcely received the impulse of the first achievements of Frederick the Great, to whom, in conjunction with Voltaire, Klopstock was, in his innocence, desirous of dedicating the French translation of the *Messias*. The poet was, in truth, as little aware as was the King himself, how the latter was destined to awaken

a productive self-consciousness in a nationality in which, as such, he made no pretence of taking interest. In his search after national heroes, Klopstock was therefore still limited to Arminius and his mythical mates; and he endeavoured to satisfy the reviving patriotism of his countrymen by dressing up these unsubstantial figures for an impossible stage. The second source of his poetic inspiration, religious feeling, was, indeed, less dependent upon time and place; and yet he was here necessarily under the influence of the only phase of development which had kept the lamp of faith burning in Protestant Germany. The Pietists, who in an age of wretched frivolity and practical atheism adhered to a higher standard of life and upheld the doctrines of Christian morality, were more or less consciously performing an inestimable service to the cause of the national civilisation; but the innocuous draughts of Bible-and-water which formed the staple of their intellectual diet were ill-suited for libations to the Muses. There remained to Klopstock, as a lyrical poet in particular, a third source of inspiration—that derived from the personal affections of humanity. Never has it flowed more copiously for any human beings than for Klopstock, his brethren of the *Wingolf*, the friends of his soul and the ladies of his heart. To these men and women the world seemed to be a gigantic lachrymatory, into which their souls went forth in a perennial gush of tears. They were always in one another's arms, actually or metaphorically, in verse or in prose. They were ever sending osculatory messages, friend to friend, friend to friend's friend, lover to mistress, friend to friend's mistress. Their jests were the suave banter of the afternoon coffee-



tray. Their troubles were the vexations of misprinted proof-sheets or carping reviews; their personal griefs and joys were summed up in the births, deaths, and marriages of their immediate circle. And yet, they were a generous and high-minded band of men and women, perseveringly intent upon the pursuit of aims neither mean nor trivial; helping to form and vivify the very language which seems so clumsy and flat in their hands; and widening the bounds of culture in a nation which for a time had no literary leaders equal to themselves. And Klopstock deservedly occupied an unchallenged eminence among his associates. It would not be difficult to show that in him were to be found the elements of the highest literary development to which Germany has attained; that he combined, though in far lesser degrees, the elevation and fervour which secured to Schiller the sympathy of a whole people, with that love of the Perfect which in him manifested itself in admiration and imitation of the antique, and which was destined to reach harmonious consummation in Goethe.

Of Klopstock's capacity for friendship his Correspondence, edited by Lappenberg, but only given to the world after the editor's lamented death by a younger *collaborateur*, Dr Weiland, offers sufficient evidence. We need not reckon among his friends the royal and ducal patrons of whom no inconsiderable number shone upon his path. His *Messias*, as is well known, was completed under the auspices of King Frederick V of Denmark; nor was Klopstock the only literary celebrity of his age and country who was indebted to the judicious munificence of the Court of Copenhagen. It is, by the way, interesting to observe that, as in the 17th century the

Cabinet of Madrid employed Rubens as the semi-official guardian of its interests at St James's, so in the 18th it suggested itself to the statecraft of the Hamburg Senate to make use of the influence which Klopstock was known to possess with the Ministers of the Danish Sovereign. He was privately sounded whether he would in future permit himself to be employed as *Solicitant* with one of them, M. de Bernstorff, in which case, should he signify his willingness, "he might possibly receive a present *pro arrha*." The poet, having made known his acquiescence, is hereupon secured by a present of twenty-five bottles of Hungarian wine from the Senate, which he receives with many thanks. Another Royal personage, whose patronage Klopstock sought to obtain for his poem, was, as readers of Pope will be amused to find, no less distinguished a person than Frederick Prince of Wales. This illustrious patron of literature, who occasionally paid visits to the grotto at Twickenham—where he made his famous declaration, apropos of the doubling of his income, that he would gladly reduce himself to live upon 300*l.* a year if he could but hope to lessen the National Debt—appears in this Correspondence as "Prinz Wallis," to whom the poet Glover had promised Klopstock an introduction. More substantial benefits than appear to have flowed from this promise accrued to Klopstock from the favour of Margrave (afterwards Grand-duke) Charles Frederick of Baden, to whom the poet in the last years of his life owed both a title and an annuity. But these were merely the patrons with whose aid a German author in those days was not able to dispense; for, though the fame of the subscription to Pope's *Iliad* had reached Klopstock;

and induced him to express a natural desire to publish his *Messias* under similar circumstances, the necessary conditions for the realisation of such a wish were wanting in Germany. While, however, he was the *protégé* of Princes and Ministers, there was nothing in his character or conduct which would justify the faintest reproach of servility; and so little was he a servant of kings, that he hailed the first news of the French Revolution as glorious and hopeful tidings.

Among the personal friends of Klopstock, to or by whom these letters are written, will be found many of the wellknown names belonging to the dawn of modern German literature. John Adolphus Schlegel, the worthy father of two famous sons, is apostrophised by Klopstock with all the enthusiasm which male friends were at that age, and not only in Germany, wont to vent into one another's bosoms. When together, they carve names in the bark of trees; and when left alone, they freshen up these vestiges of the departed:—

Why have these hours passed away so idly? And why has no spirit led you to me? Why has no Muse in nocturnal vision bid you come to me and form me, as Aurora unfolds the young roses of the morn? Why then did I know you? And why did your thoughtful eye prophesy to me the Schlegel of the future? Could I but fully express how tenderly angry I am with you!

Another frequent correspondent is Giseke, a member of the chosen circle which in his odes Klopstock addressed as the *Wingolf*, personally a worthy clergyman and meritorious verse-writer, and metrically (which we could never help thinking an extremely fortunate circumstance for his literary fame) a most convenient dactyl. In addition to these, Klopstock's earlier friends

included Cramer and Ebert, with other less familiar names, and among his admirers of the younger generation were the chivalrous brothers Stolberg (through one of whom we find the worthy poet volunteering political advice to the Emperor Alexander), Goethe, who writes with all the delightful freshness of his youthful period; and Fichte. The last-named, on the occasion of his marriage with one of Klopstock's nieces, thus addresses the venerable old man in words, notwithstanding their extravagance, full of the fire characteristic of the most eloquent among German philosophers, and at the same time significant of the reverence which, in the eyes of the younger generation, was due to the Nestor of German literature:—

Zürich, June the 22nd, 1793.

Most Reverend Man,—To thank the incomparable one, who in my earliest boyhood charmed from my eye the first tear of emotion—to thank him who first awakened in me the sense of the divine, the sole impulse of my moral worth, I would have waited for a life in which the removal of earthly dross leaves no thought to the thanker but his thanks, were I not at present introduced to this incomparable one by means perhaps not wholly without validity.

O good and great man, might you learn to know the daughter of your sister, sprung from Klopstock blood—might you know of her what her female fellow-citizens and friends know, what her father knows, what I know: and you would bless her out of the fulness of your deep all-comprising heart, as perchance you have blessed none since your *Meta*; and the fortunate mortal, who subordinates all merit which he might in the course of time attain, by a life-long struggle for the truth which refines mankind, to that of having been chosen by her—this fortunate mortal, too, would believe himself to have participated in a part of this blessing (*eines Theils dieses Segens theilhaftig geworden zu sein*).

Pardon this outbreak of long-restrained deep emotion to your most sincere admirer,

J. G. FICHTE.

The mention of Meta, the poet's first wife, may seem a trifle malapropos in view of the fact that this letter is dated a year after Klopstock's *second* marriage; but in such matters the Germans have always been famed for a frankness which holds the mean between *naïveté* and *gaucherie*. Meta had died (in childbed) nearly half a century before, leaving a name associating itself more intimately than any other with the memory of Klopstock. Her prose appellation was Margaret Moller; her poetic representative in the *Messias* is Cidli. Such of her letters as are given in this volume (a separate correspondence between Klopstock and Meta was, if we remember right, published two or three years ago) maintain her character for sweetness of disposition, and for a playfulness of expression which must have been fascinating in the days of our great-grandfathers. We have, however, only space to quote the following characteristic fragment from a letter written in English by this lady to a congenial correspondent, the author of *Pamela*. It would appear that she had originally entertained a conscientious scruple against giving her hand to Klopstock which would have reflected credit upon any one of Richardson's heroines themselves:—

...I could marry, then, without her consent [her mother's], as by the death of my father my fortune depended not on her; but this was a horrible idea for me....

Meta, though the object of Klopstock's most enduring affection, was, of course, not the first lady towards whom his heart had gushed forth in uncontrollable

sentiment. This honour belongs to his cousin, Maria Sophia Schmidt—called in his poetry, for some unknown reason, Fanny—of whom he writes to Hagedorn, that

a mighty beloved maiden, resembling the British Singer [Mrs Rowe, daughter of the Rev. W. Singer, and author of a collection of letters entitled *Friendship in Death*], has too strong a power over my heart. She knows it, and continues to let me suffer the pangs of love....How happy, how inexpressibly happy, would it be for me, might I at some time weep away in your presence the "tearlets of sweet bliss."

But 'Fanny,' whom Böttiger describes as a woman "distinguished by an imposing exterior, and by her activity in superintending a numerous household and the counting-house of a very considerable mercantile establishment," could, as Lappenberg says, never be brought to see in her adorer more than a gifted and interesting cousin, and has thus achieved only a second-rate immortality.

While this volume constitutes a pleasing memorial of one of the most celebrated among the past denizens of the ancient city of Hamburg, it will be treasured by many as the last of a series of offerings to that city by one whom, till within a short time ago, it numbered among its chief living ornaments. Lappenberg, whose English History has obtained for him a European reputation, was devoted heart and soul to the preservation and illustration of the many historical and literary monuments of his native place. Though, therefore, this Correspondence of Klopstock possesses little absolute value beyond that which it modestly claims as a "contribution to the literary history of his times," and though, like most

posthumous publications, it labours under defects of arrangement which the piety of its supplementary editor may have scrupled to remove, it is welcome as linking together the names of two eminent men whom princes and foreigners delighted to honour, but who preferred to die in the familiar surroundings of the venerated republic.

## 32. CREIZENACH'S ENGLISH DRAMA<sup>1</sup> (IV. 1)

(*The Modern Language Review*, July 1909)

ENGLISH students have naturally looked forward with special interest to the present instalment of Professor Creizenach's standard History of the Modern Drama. They will not be disappointed; for, while there are some things which they will not find in this portly volume, there is not a page in it which they will wish away. It contains little or nothing of the kind of aesthetic criticism of Shakespeare and his predecessors which, so far as German writers were concerned, began with A. W. Schlegel and his school, and went out with Ulrici and his immediate followers. Its place is taken by what, for want of a better name, we may call *Real-poetik*. The inductive method has prevailed over the deductive; the historian includes the critic, instead of the critic supplanting the historian; and a book towards the production of which have already gone great learning and infinite pains, makes plain its principal purpose—that of showing how one of the most important branches of modern literature grew, and what fruit it bore.

The present section of Professor Creizenach's work, which extends over sevenhundred closely printed pages,

<sup>1</sup> *Geschichte des Neueren Dramas*. Von Wilhelm Creizenach. IV Band. *Das englische Drama im Zeitalter Shakespeare's*, I Teil. Halle, Max Niemeyer. 1909.



is arranged in nine books, but falls naturally into three divisions. The first and shortest of these deals with the history of the English theatre during the years from 1570 to 1587—a period which cannot be called barren, but which was, so far as the popular stage was concerned, still essentially tentative. The author has, in earlier portions of his work, treated the beginnings of the English popular drama, both religious and secular, and to these he incidentally returns; for the morality had a long-lived growth, and was not dead in the last decade of the 16th century. He has also already dealt with the classicising drama, mainly but not altogether a product of universities and schools, which in Western dramatic literature at large had striven to assert its predominance, but was to prove incapable of maintaining it in two national dramatic literatures of otherwise unequalled productivity and splendour, the English and the Spanish. As for the English drama of the seventeen years, or thereabouts, which preceded the advent of Marlowe—a date nearly coinciding with that of the great political crisis of the reign—its history is not devoid of the names of some interesting plays; and this number might be larger, but for the unlucky gap in the Stationers' Register extending over the first five of the years in question. But among the dramatists, while Whetstone (though more ready for compromise than the author of the *Apology for Poetry*) held himself more or less aloof from the popular drama, and Lyly, the foremost dramatist of the period, and the *raffineur de l'anglais* in drama as well as in novel, stands apart, Peele's *Arraignment of Paris* is, as Professor Creizenach puts it, with the exception of Munday's recently discovered *Fedele and Fortunio*, the single play

demonstrably produced before 1587 by one of the playwrights who, after that date, wrote for the popular stage. The plays belonging to this period are accordingly here classified (with the exception of Lyly's) according to subjects rather than according to authors. Among the *Ritterstücke* (a genre more frequent in the early English drama than in the early English novel) Professor Creizenach mentions *Sir Clyomon and Sir Clamydes*; this, he allows, may be of later date, and he agrees in rejecting Dyce's ascription of it to Peele—a rare error of judgment in that eminent scholar. May not *Myngo* (p. 20 note) have some connexion with the Spanish *Mingo*? (Collier notes a play called *Myngo* performed at Bristol in 1578.) In this and other species there was nothing new; but such was not the case with the beginnings of the pastoral drama, which in this period was introduced into the performances at Court, and especially into those of the Chapel Children. Professor Creizenach, however, is careful to point out that it would be premature to seek in these early efforts for traces of the influence of the ideal style of Tasso, whose *Aminta*, though performed as early as 1572, was not printed till 1581, or translated into English till 1591. Although Professor Feuillerat's important monograph on Lyly could not have reached Professor Creizenach in time, his appreciation of that brilliant writer is thoroughly adequate; nor is the patriotic note in him forgotten: as a matter of fact, the allusion in *Midas* is one of the very few references in the Elizabethan drama to the fate of the Great Armada. As to the occurrence of direct allusions in *Endimion*, though I am not prepared to bind myself to M. Feuillerat's inter-

pretation of them, I think Professor Creizenach ultra-sceptical.

The second division of the present volume, of which it fills considerably more than half, deals with the characteristics of the dramatic literature of the Shakespearean age in its entirety under a remarkably full series of heads. The period under review covers, it will be seen, what may, in a word, be called the great age of the English drama, excluding the more or less tentative beginnings on the one hand, and, on the other, the years of decline, to use no stronger term, which unmistakably preceded the date of the closing of the theatres. The career of Shakespeare as a dramatist very nearly, if not altogether, spans the period under consideration, and the interest of Professor Creizenach's elaborate survey is immensely increased by its constant references to Shakespeare's own works, as throwing the most complete, as well as the most varied, light upon the conditions and progress of the later Elizabethan and earlier Jacobean drama as a whole. "We shall see," our historian says at starting, "that the 'gentle Shakespeare,' as his contemporaries called him, accommodated himself as a good comrade to the views and traditions of the fellows of his craft; that his victorious power of language, his overflowing fulness of passion, the sunshine of his humour, his penetrating knowledge of human nature, and the depth of his poetic wisdom, manifested themselves within the customary forms, while many others, especially the contentious Ben Jonson, exhibited far more recalcitrance against being treated as one of a body of colleagues. It is only when we examine his works by themselves that we shall arrive

at a complete consciousness of how infinitely Shakespeare overtops all the rest." In one art—that of borrowing purple patches from the classics and thus proving himself at least, in Nashe's phrase, no "poor latinless author"—Shakespeare, largely, it cannot be doubted, from unconscious disdain, fell far behind many of his fellows. Like others of them, he could not quite escape the Hyrcanian tiger; but Professor Creizenach is doubtless right in concluding that, "after centuries of search," the sum-total of such borrowings in Shakespeare is singularly small, and chiefly, though not altogether, confined to his early plays.

The first subsection of Professor Creizenach's review is concerned with the profession and position of the popular "playwrights," the conditions under which they prepared themselves for the production of their plays and actually produced them, and those under which the plays in question were printed and obtained a literary reputation for their authors. The relations of the playwrights to the upper classes of society, for which they reserved their regard, while they treated the classes from which most of them sprang with little sympathy or respect (and this quite apart from their inevitable quarrel with Puritanism), were of gradual growth: as our historian observes, no traces of a desire to assimilate the tone and ways of the nobility and gentry, and to figure as "gentlemen writing for gentlemen," are noticeable in Greene, Marlowe or Nashe, while Ben Jonson's ambitions were those of the scholar and man of letters only. On the other hand, Beaumont and Fletcher "though they manifestly shared in the life of Bohemia, have already quite the character of

cavalier poets"—one of them, however, was of ancient descent, and the other of distinguished clerical parentage. Shakespeare's sentiments on this head Professor Creizenach thinks deducible from his application for the grant of a coat of arms—an endeavour in which his fellow-actors Phillips and Pope were likewise successful; but I do not think the terms *Adelstand* and *Adelstitel* should be used as equivalents of the rank and title of 'gentleman.' Of more importance is the question of the relations of Shakespeare and his fellow-playwrights to the works on which their fame rests. It is well known, and quite intelligible, that Thomas Heywood, whether or not he was the author, in whole or in part, of not less than 220 plays, should have expressed complete indifference as to their publication; but that at the date of Shakespeare's death nineteen plays by him out of a canon of thirty-six should have remained unpublished; remains after all an astonishing fact in the literary history of the world. Heminge and Condell deserved well of it when they resolved that Ben Jonson's "works" should not stand alone as a collective volume of plays any longer; but, when all has been said, and every attention has been paid to every item of the last edition of the *Century of Praise*, the contemporary chorus must be allowed to be very inadequate, and it was swelled by no continental voice. In a note towards the close of this volume, Professor Creizenach observes that the earliest testimonies to Shakespeare's reputation as a poet are peculiar: consisting as they do of Greene's vituperation (1592)—this of course involves an assumption which need not be discussed here—; of the plagiarism perpetrated by the author of *The Taming of a Shrew*, which

Professor Creizenach has no hesitation in regarding as a play "run" against Shakespeare's, and based upon it (1594); and finally, of the publication of *Lochrine* with the intentionally misleading initials "W. S.," which, by the way, Malone thought meant Wentworth Smith. Thus, the historian's note, although ingenious, evidently itself stands in need of annotation.

Book III, which deals with the religious, political and social views of the playwrights, will to many readers seem the most attractive part of this enquiry; but I may pass it over rapidly, as a judicious survey of what is for the most part well-trodden ground. It is rightly pointed out that the smallness of the part assignable to religious dogma in determining the conceptions of the world and of life formed by Shakespeare and his fellows, is to be attributed not so much to pressure exercised from without—directly by the State, and indirectly by Puritanism—as to the fact that what may be called the Elizabethan point of view in these matters, which the dramatists in the main shared, was not one capable of dominating their works, in the sense in which those of the Attic and the Spanish dramatists were pervaded by religious suggestion. By way of compensation, they were allowed a freedom of comment on the movement of the world at large which no royal ordinances and no censorship could materially impair. On the other hand, they had not advanced beyond their age in natural philosophy or in the world of ideas of which its conclusions are the starting-points. Mephistophilis in *Doctor Faustus*, who has to undergo so persistent an examination in astronomy, is to all intents and purposes an orthodox upholder of the Ptolemaic system, and Giordano Bruno's influence

upon Shakespeare is a baseless fancy. The extravagances of alchemy, and even here and there of astrology, are ridiculed or scorned; but magic and witchcraft, though under Elizabeth many of their supposed operations are not spared sceptical comment, are, even in this earlier period, never rejected in principle; and, after the accession of James I, the fierce blaze of persecuting superstition reflected itself on the stage during a whole generation. Far happier was the association between the drama and the national patriotism of the great Elizabethan age, which needs no comment here; and I cannot return to the theme of the aristocratic tendencies of the playwrights, great and small, except to direct attention to the remark that, unlike Thomas Heywood and others, Shakespeare nowhere has a kindly word for the citizens of London, where the best part of his life was spent.

Though Book IV, which deals with the subjects of the plays, is perhaps from the point of view of literary history, the most valuable section of the volume before us, the mass of detail contained in it does not lend itself to excerpts. Professor Creizenach shows how the playwrights, while conscious of the infinitely wide range of themes open to them and resolved to use full liberty of choice in their selection, were guided in that selection mainly by dramatic—or theatrical—considerations. Of course, we do not know enough of their individual lives to decide how far personal affinities, if the phrase may be used, influenced them in the choice or treatment of their subjects; the wisely temperate page which is here devoted to a consideration of Shakespeare's themes from this point of view contrasts with a biographical romance

such as the brilliant volume of Brandes. Historical and local colour, and still less the "historic sense" proper—with certain exceptions, such as Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*, which prove the rule—play a very subordinate part in the great age of the English drama; what we call anachronisms hardly existed for the Elizabethan playwrights and theatre-goers, or they were obviously necessitated by the innocent simplicity of the stage appliances at hand. Plays treating subjects from the national history, of course, stand in a sense apart; of the titles of these an Appendix to this Book supplies a very useful list, by the side of which it would be interesting to schedule carefully the known chronicle and other sources—a task which, in the case of *Henry VI* and the old plays on which *Part II* and *Part III* are founded most editors perform in a very perfunctory fashion. Subjects from Scottish history are, of course, not included in this list; but the *Tragedy of Gowry*, acted in 1604, and duly stopped by authority, is mentioned elsewhere. What would one not give for a discovery of the stage manuscript and an edition of it by Mr Andrew Lang! None of the extant plays on patriotic themes contain any reference to Drake; the "playe of the weaste enges" (West Indies) repeatedly mentioned by Henslowe in 1601, Professor Creizenach thinks, may have dealt with one of Raleigh's expeditions, which are apparently also treated in other plays of the time. No space is left me for reference to other groups of plays in our historian's survey; he points out how very scant was the list of subjects taken from English works of fiction, with the single exception of the *Arcadia*; and, in a general way, he observes that he can



recall no instance in which Shakespeare, in the proper sense of the word, *invented* the plot, main or bye, of any one of his comedies, except the immortal imbroglío of the loves of Benedick and Beatrice.

The interest of Book v is dramaturgical, its subject being the classification and structure of Elizabethan and early Jacobean plays. The supremely distinctive feature of the English drama in this age, the origin of which should not be sought in any conscious innovation, lies of course in the combination of the tragic and comic elements. To this combination or mixture it was sought to give a name by supposing a distinct species, which actually figured as such on the title-page of the 1616 edition of Ben Jonson's works; but the term *tragicomedy* was not, in fact, consistently applied, and, by being in turn made to cover a good deal more, and a good deal less, than it actually implies, has given rise to not a little critical confusion. Professor Creizenach has some admirable remarks on the structure of plays, as affected both by the combination to which reference has been made and by the conditions of the stage. He is especially interesting on the subject of *polymythia*, or the combination of several actions or plots: a practice essentially unknown to Marlowe, and disused by Shakespeare in his maturest period, though carried out with consummate effect in *King Lear*. As is well known, it became a chief care of the best "plotters" of the later Stewart drama. Attention may also be directed to the observations on the Elizabethan tendency to lead up to "situations" for their own sake rather than for that of their place in the general action—not the *scène à faire*, which combines both objects and of which we

used to hear so much from the late Francisque Sarcey, but rather the gem for which much around it is merely a setting, and which, as Professor Creizenach suggests, is most in place in Lamb's *Specimens*. Equally good is the passage concerning what he calls, by an untranslatable compound, *Stimmungsruhepausen*, often marked, as is appropriate to the lyrical character of such scenes or parts of scenes, by "soft music" or a song. The illustration which will occur to every reader, though it is here passed by, is, of course, Desdemona's scene with Emilia and the willow song.

Book VI, it cannot be denied, rises to the height of the entire theme of this main division of Professor Creizenach's volume. For it treats of what was the greatest strength of the English drama in this age, and the greatest strength of its greatest writer, the drawing of character. The wealth of characters to be found in the plays of the period—I have not verified the statement that Shakespeare's contain in all twelve hundred—does not exhaust their infinite variety; for there is depth in the remark that a note of the romantic drama, unfettered by the Aristotelian rule paraphrased by Horace—

servetur ad imum

Qualis ab incessu processerit, et sibi constet—

is its ability to show the changes which events effect in man. Typical characters, so important in other national theatres, in English drama play a secondary, though of course a very considerable, part, and one enhanced by the effect, which it is difficult to overestimate, of sheer stage tradition. There follows an excellent account of the significance of the Clown in the Elizabethan drama. The influence of the *commedia dell' arte* is not overlooked;

but a native origin is vindicated for the figure of the Clown, for which Tarlton and Kemp, and the former in particular, secured a theatrical position of extraordinary dominance. He almost entirely superseded the Vice, of whom, however, traces may still be found in Shakespeare. Familiar as is this subject, together with that of the distinction between Clowns and Fools, it is treated here with much freshness; and Shakespeare's inexhaustible power of inventing and contrasting representatives of both species is illustrated with genial humour. A subspecies invented by him, and imitated perhaps more frequently than any other Shakespearean type, was the constable, the Londoner's delight at all times and, formerly, in all its phases of inefficiency.

I have left myself no space in which to do more than touch on the seventh and eighth Books of a volume which, though steadily pursuing the course marked out by the author for himself, abounds in the most varied interest. In Book VII (Prosody and Style) I may direct attention to the argument that in the dropping of rime in his dramatic poetry Shakespeare followed a general change in fashion—a contention which, if maintainable, renders superfluous a good deal of comment that has been bestowed on this phase of the development of Shakespearean form; again, to the remark that dialect is, with a few wellknown exceptions, not much used in English drama, especially as compared with Italian; and to the criticism, incontrovertible but not the less worth making, that Shakespeare's prose is invariably clear and good. The use of simile and of other rhetorical figures by the dramatists is discussed and illustrated at length; but of more significance is the striking conclusion

reached at the end of this section that "tragic gravity" is alien to the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, from Marlowe to Webster. Book VIII (The Stage and The Art of Acting) is concerned with subjects which, of late especially, have received much detailed treatment from English writers; but even in this portion of Professor Creizenach's work there is not a little that is deserving of attention. I may take as an example the discussion, fuller and more instructive than any I can remember to have seen elsewhere, of the use to which the playwrights put the curtain at the back of the stage and the space behind it, as well as the upper-stage, if it can be so called, on his moderation in bringing which into the action Mayne congratulated Ben Jonson:

Thou laid'st no sieges to the music-room.

This volume concludes with the first instalment of the continuous history of the English drama from 1587 onward, reaching the year 1593, just before the date when, by a lucky chance, the booksellers and printers flooded the market with a number of manuscripts, of which it is not wonderful that a fair percentage should remain anonymous, while of not a few the authorship is left in doubt. The productivity thus and otherwise attested is of importance, especially since there is hardly a work of this period, not even *Tamburlaine*, which can properly be said to stand alone. While in Marlowe's earlier works, *Tamburlaine*, *Doctor Faustus* and the *Jew of Malta*, Professor Creizenach rightly finds a certain parallelism of theme, he well shows the difference between these and *Edward II*, and, again, *Dido*, which belongs to the genre of the Chapel Children Plays.

Nothing could be more true than that in Marlowe—as in Keats—we recognise a capacity of development which makes the sadness of his premature death doubly sad. The comparison between Marlowe and Kyd seems to me admirable, but I have no space for explaining my doubt as to whether *The First Part of Jeronimo* was really later in date than *The Spanish Tragedy*. Other difficult questions arise in connexion with the authorship of the plays treated in this section; and I must content myself with stating that, in Professor Creizenach's opinion, *Soliman and Perseda* was not written by Kyd, and that *The Battle of Alcazar* may probably be ascribed to Peele. The treatment of the early chronicle histories (among them *Jack Straw*, possibly produced in 1591, in honour of a Fishmonger being elected Lord Mayor) is careful and judicious; and the comparison between *The Troublesome Raigne* and Shakespeare's *King John* singularly fair. At the end of a long notice I cannot enter into a discussion of Professor Creizenach's views concerning the *Henry VI* trilogy, which to many English students will seem extremely conservative<sup>1</sup>. With the early comedies he stands on firmer ground, and, as he observes, nothing could more directly suggest the poet's conscious trust in his own powers, already combined with the irony suggested by experience, than the character of Biron in *Love's Labour's Lost*, the earliest of the "humorous men," who are among the happiest creations of Shakespeare's serenest period.

<sup>1</sup> My own views are given at length in a paper reprinted in vol. III. of this Collection (No. 9).

### 33. EVERY-MAN AT THE CHARTERHOUSE

(*The Manchester Guardian*, July 17, 1901)

WITH their production on Saturday afternoon last of *Every-man*—"by figure a moral play"—Mr William Poel and the Elizabethan Stage Society, whose efforts he directs with so single-minded an energy, have, unless I mistake, achieved an unequivocal success. This success they owe, in the first instance and chiefly, to the high dramatic power and irresistible human interest of the noble Renaissance "morality" which they have had the insight and the courage to present to a modern audience. But they owe it, in part, also to the adequacy with which they have achieved a task of no ordinary difficulty, and to the remarkable combination of spirit and tact exhibited in the stage management of what, for once, comes near to deserving the name of a "revival." And, lastly, they would, I am sure, themselves readily agree that, on this memorable afternoon, they were in no slight measure indebted to the singularly congenial surroundings which, thanks to the kindness and, I take leave to add, the liberal-mindedness of Dr Haig-Brown, served as a frame to this masterpiece of medieval art. There, in the venerable court overlooked by the Master's Lodge, while the stage faced the rooms which once formed part of the Duke of Norfolk's house, it was not so very hard to forget the changes time has made in the modes of approaching the problem of human life and of stating its solution. The problem itself and, we trust,

the solution remain what they were when the poet of *Every-man* with "gracious intent" indited his "precious matter." *Homo sum* is, in any age which has not deliberately stifled its emotions or drugged its sensibilities, the only key needed to unlock the sympathies of any audience with a drama of human life; and at the beginning of the 20th century, as at the end of the 15th, we may be content to take home with us the assurance expressed in the familiar words we still repeat in one of the Psalms—"The Lord loveth every man."

I have spoken of the poet of *Every-man*; though, since the present is not a suitable opportunity for entering into a literary controversy which cannot yet be said to have been absolutely decided, I must content myself with asserting my belief that this moral-play is the work of a trained writer of genius, and that little doubt remains either as to his nationality or as to the period in which he wrote. Goedeke<sup>1</sup> has traced, with great learning and acumen, the long and complicated history of the idea on which the earlier part of the action of *Every-man* turns, and which, derived originally, as it would seem, from a Buddhist source and varied in many ways as it descended through the centuries, is to be found, in much the same shape as in the moral-play, in a celebrated religious romance probably assignable to the 11th century of our era. In the day of account which awaits us all we shall trust in vain to ordinary human friendship, to kith and kin, or to the riches of this world, and we shall have to take refuge in another kind of aid—that of the good deeds done by us

<sup>1</sup> K. Goedeke, *Every-man, Homulus u. Hekastus*. Ein Beitrag zur internationalen Literaturgeschichte. Hanover, 1865.

in the life that is now passing away. This was the idea which, in all probability about the later part of the 15th century and certainly not much after the beginning of the 16th, suggested the composition of the English morality *Every-man*, or of its Dutch counterpart *Elckerlijck*—to whichever of the two the priority belongs. To my mind, Dr H. Logeman, of Ghent, has sufficiently, though on internal evidence only, established the claim of the Dutch play to be regarded as the original of the English and, in consequence, of the many versions which followed. If so, and if Peter of Diest was the original author of this powerful religious drama—whether or not, as on last Saturday afternoon one might have been specially inclined to believe, he was the Carthusian mystic Peter Dorland—there is no difficulty in accounting for the dramatic insight and skill which differentiate *Every-man* from so many English moralities. The Chambers of Rhetoric established at Diest and in so many other towns of the Netherlands were dramatic even before they were general literary schools, and, of course, the time had not yet come for these institutions to assume an attitude of hostility against the Church.

In *Every-man*, then—as, I think, became very evident on Saturday,—we have something quite different from a naïve attempt to impart a dramatic form to a time-honoured allegory. A thinking and scholarly mind is intent upon expanding that allegory into a treatment of the entire theme of God's dealing with man at the last; while a skilled and experienced hand is making the best use in its power of the dramatic machinery at its disposal. There may be dogmatic or other narrowness



in the moral treatment of the theme, as there are certainly shortcomings in its artistic elaboration; but the result is a work which both challenges criticism and, as I seem to perceive more clearly than ever, after seeing it undergo the test without which no drama can be satisfactorily judged, triumphantly confronts it. Though the morality introduces itself with a simple announcement of its purport by way of prologue (admirably spoken at the Charterhouse), the audience is rightly attuned from the first; and with a sureness in which there is no single break the play pursues its simple and solemn course.

From heaven the High Judge looks down upon the earth, as He might have looked out of an altar-piece of van Eyck's upon a crowd of Flemish worshippers, and summons to His presence His "mighty messengere," Death, in order that he, in his turn, may call Every-man to his last journey and account. Death appears on the stage below, ghastly in his cap and feather and with his drum, as we remember him leading so many a "Dance," and signifies his assent in that *staccato* voice which befits the servant who has no thought or feeling but that of obedience. Every-man in gay attire—all the dresses are copied from Flemish tapestries, and we seem at home with them at once—saunters across the stage, when he is arrested by messenger and message. Then follow what no doubt must, at all times, have been the telling scenes of Every-man's successive attempts to induce his friends of this world to accompany him on the journey to which he has been summoned by Death, and from which there is no return. His jolly companion Fellowship, who disports himself with perfect *aplomb* on the stage and "in the street also," will none of this

change of cheer. (Excellently as this scene was acted, there was no need for the "business" with the lute at the close.) The buxom Kindred declines to accompany Every-man unless by deputy, and her Cosyn and follower (a kind of Flemish Peter) is prevented by a "cramp in his to." Every-man then addresses himself to an allegorical figure representing his Goods, seated like a Sultan in his counting-house—to me an unexpected impersonation, but a well-conceived one. Failing here, too, he sinks in despair into his chair. In the soliloquy which follows, the gifted lady who acted the part first showed the depth of emotional power which she brings to bear upon it. Of a sudden, a small, broken voice is heard—it is that of Good-deeds; and soon the girlish figure of a religious sister is discovered, and the second part of the action begins. Good-deeds—represented with an innocent simplicity beyond all praise—though on her feet she cannot go, summons to Every-man's aid her sister Knowledge (*Kennisse* in the Dutch, perhaps the German *Erkenntniss* best suggests the meaning); and thus he is directed on his way, in order that Good-deeds may be enabled to stand him in due stead. They introduce him to Confession, who on Saturday appeared in the guise of a cleric—an allowable change, though in the text Shrift is called "mother of salvation." In Every-man's confession (subtly uttered in the "church-tone") and in the penance enjoined and performed by him, the action rises to its height, for the victory has been gained, and, donning the coarse garment of contrition, the sinner has become a new man. No words of recognition could do justice to the emotional depth and truthfulness of the acting in this wonderful scene,

and I think that it justified the choice made for the part of Every-man.

I wish that I had left myself space for explaining why, as it seems to me, though from this point onwards the interest of the morality in a measure flags, the author remains true to his moral purpose at the expense of his dramatic effectiveness. Every-man is now about to start on his pilgrimage, on which he is accompanied by Strength, Beauty, Discretion, and (his) Five Wits, allegorical representatives of those possessions of humanity which, good in themselves and indispensable to human life while human life exists, must desert us at the end. It will be seen that there is no real parallelism in this to the abandonment of man by his false friends and the pomps and vanities of this world; but, dramatically, there is enough semblance of repetition to run the risk of wearying. (By the way, the elaborateness of Every-man's first adieu to Strength and her companions was surely a mistake.) In addition, it must be allowed that the dogmatic tendencies of the author assert themselves with his opportunities; thus, while Every-man goes off the scene to receive the Last Sacraments, Knowledge and Five Wits improve the occasion by an exhortation on the duty of obedience to priesthood, which must have seemed quite as intentional in the days of Edward IV or Henry VII as it would seem at the present time. At the Charterhouse, the concluding passages of the morality seemed not so vivid to part of the audience, because the grave of Every-man and the scenes round it were at a greater distance from the stage than may perhaps have been necessary. But, even so, the effect was deep and sustained; one by one, the

companions turned back from the edge of the open grave awaiting him, while Good-deeds and Knowledge alone remained by his side, till he sank into it, commending his soul into the hands of the Lord. The bell sounds; two shrouded figures close the grave, and on high, near to the Throne, an Angel welcomes the ransomed Soul. Soberly and solemnly, as when he opened the play, the black-gowned Doctor steps forward to enforce its universal moral. What he says we all know to be true; nor, indeed, is a moral often acceptable unless it is an echo.

At the Charterhouse there followed on the performance of *Every-man* that of "The Sacrifice of Isaac," a scene or episode from the *Histories of Lot and Abraham* in the "Chester Plays." This scene, with its brief introduction and charming conclusion, had, as a matter of fact, been carefully elaborated before it came into the hands of the Chester compilers; but, in this instance, it was easy enough to heighten, here and there, the natural pathos of the situation without impairing it. The scene was well acted—especially the pretty part of Isaac; and it gained much from the striking Eastern costumes lent by Mr Holman Hunt, of whose "Finding in the Temple" it was impossible not to be reminded by them. Such a Bible story as this can never have missed its effect or left room for the "human" explanation censured in the *Religio Medici*, that "the ram in the thicket came thither by accident." But the difference is a wide one between a good bit of ordinary work, such as regularly supplied a regular demand, and a masterpiece in its own branch of literature such as *Every-man*, to which a higher touch has communicated itself.

## 34. GEORG BRANDES ON SHAKESPEARE

(*The Manchester Guardian*, March 3, 1898)

THIS book<sup>1</sup> comes to us with something of the freshness of the breeze which blows from the outer seas over the waters of Elsinore. We have had "critical studies" of Shakespeare enough and to spare, in every tongue spoken between Tübingen and Tokio; and though a much wider public than that of his own native land has accustomed itself to listen to Dr Georg Brandes, it is not without misgiving that some eyes will rest upon the uncertain promise held out by the title-page of these two portly tomes. But, as becomes very speedily evident, the purpose of Dr Brandes in his present book on Shakespeare went beyond that implied by the coy superscription of the English translation. He wished, as he tells us at the close of his long and laborious endeavour to make his promise good, to prove that Shakespeare "is not thirty-six plays and a few poems jumbled together...but a man who felt and thought, rejoiced and suffered, brooded, dreamed, and created." In other words, he conceived the great but legitimate ambition of attempting, with the aid of such external data as are in our possession, to reconstruct out of Shakespeare's works the man who is discoverable there. Of course, he has not solved the problem; and

<sup>1</sup> Brandes, Georg. *William Shakespeare*. A critical study. (*Engl. Tr.*) 1898.

here and there (to put the matter plainly) the sobriety of judgment which is the first condition of an approach to success has deserted him, and the ground trembles a little under his too confident step. But, on the whole, he walks warily as well as boldly; and his progress is all the better assured, because, though thoroughly well equipped, he is unencumbered by that wealth of baggage under which some of his predecessors might have cried out, like the abstraction of Property in the old moral-play:

I cannot stir; in packèd low I lie.

In a word, the chief value of this book is that it vindicates to the combining power of the imagination something like its proper place in a true Shakespearean biography, and brings home to us the undeniable truth that, given the possession of such a body of writings as is left to us from Shakespeare's hand, "it is entirely our own fault if we know nothing whatever about him."

The Danish original of this remarkable work and its German version were, if I remember right, published nearly two years ago. But the delay in the publication of an English translation has, under the circumstances, been by no means excessive, and indeed has proved in so far fortunate that these volumes have appeared at a very opportune time, when Mr Sidney Lee's incomparable summary of what is known concerning Shakespeare and his writings has supplied the world of English letters with a continuous series of tests covering every part of their subject. It would have been grievous if a work so complete in conception as Dr Brandes' *Shakespeare* had been mutilated and marred in translation, as, I fear, has happened to earlier books of his.

Instead, we have a fluent and readable version, for which our thanks are due to Mr William Archer, and to the ladies who have taken their share in a long and laborious task. Fortunately for them, as for his readers, Dr Brandes's style is singularly free from either pedantry or roughness; nor is it except by accident that such a compound as "tendency-drama" has tumbled into their text out of a German workshop to whose regular furniture it belongs; or that at a very salient point in the argument (vol. II, p. 279) we are made to wince as we read that Shakespeare had "shouted himself hoarse." In the main, this version does justice both to the spirit and to the flow of one of the most agreeable styles in recent critical literature; and the slips of detail which I have noticed here and there in its course are too trivial for mention. Dr Brandes's own power of writing has been matured without the aid of any particular "forcing-house," as he would call it, either at home or abroad, and he instinctively avoids that kind of allusiveness which rejoices in being unintelligible outside a narrow circle of *conoscenti*. When he refers to Denmark and Danish literary art, it is only to derive a passing illustration from such typical figures in the general history of European letters as Holberg or Heiberg, or even the Anacreontic Bellman—not to weary us with the pale ghosts of a belated Romanticism, which need no laying. One might only wish that he could have reconciled himself to an attitude of similar repose in face of a certain clerical spectre which he now and then amuses himself by summoning into his presence. Shakespeare was, in his judgment, so wholly undogmatic as to have drawn the admirable figure of Friar Laurence "without

the smallest illwill towards conquered Catholicism, yet without the slightest leaning towards Catholic doctrine." But, to our consternation, a "natural inclination to bigoted piety" is brought home to the poet's elder daughter, chiefly on the ground of a religious *flosculus* in her epitaph; and poor Mr Fleay, of all men, is said to "pander to the narrow-mindedness of the clergyman" in contending that Shakespeare could not have written certain offensive scenes in *Pericles*. These are, however, the veriest trifles, and men grow very fond of their old hates.

Like a well-ordered drama (Shakespeare would not have resented the commonplace), the life which is the subject of this book rises gradually to its height and sinks solemnly to its close. Its outward circumstances, which perverseness alone can misjudge in its earlier stages, become obscure as it proceeds on its course; the climax of its inner struggle, half-hidden, half-suggested, by a veil made with the poet's own hands, is succeeded by a calm proclaiming itself with self-controlled majesty; and it ends in the silence of the gods. The time has most assuredly come for a more constructive kind of criticism to avail itself from such points of view as these of the twofold sorts of materials at its disposal, instead of merely continuing a process of accumulation, whether commentative or antiquarian, of which, from the very nature of the case, there can be no end. Of the materials actually in existence, Dr Brandes has, on the whole, made satisfactory use; they are, indeed, already to be found arranged with much lucidity in the late Karl Elze's *Life*, which in this country has hardly met with so ample a recognition as it deserves. Perhaps, Dr



Brandes might have dipped rather more deeply into the extraordinary mine of knowledge to be found in Mr Fleay's *Life of Shakspeare* and its companion works. Paradoxes, self-corrections, and a general irritability for which it is best to make a general excuse may be noticeable there, but Mr Fleay's books are much more than a mine of conjectures: they show the way which another generation will tread towards a real history of the Elizabethan theatre and its purveyors.

Among the questions which a biography of Shakespeare written on the scale and with the freedom of Dr Brandes's must ask itself, without being always able satisfactorily to formulate its answer, I can only refer to one or two. As to the hereditary influence traceable in Shakespeare's character and conduct of life, we shall never know more than that he was born an Elizabethan Englishman, a son of the people, and strong in the strength that had descended to him from an unspoilt race. His present biographer pretends to no fresh discoveries concerning the poet's education or experiences out of school bounds. In connexion with the play of *Julius Cæsar*, he has some apposite remarks on the lack of real scholarship which Shakespeare's complete acceptance of Plutarch's principles of portraiture betrays; in comparison, the late Professor Baynes's researches into the ground covered by the books in use at Stratford Grammar School are really of quite secondary importance. On the other hand, Dr Brandes has, incidentally and in a late passage of his book, shown less than his usual caution in hazarding a conjecture as to Shakespeare's mother, of whom he has, in reality, no ground whatever for saying that she "represented the

haughty patrician element of the Shakspeare family." But he is, to my mind, well justified in tracing a connexion between the death of this mother, which occurred in the later part of 1608, and the tribute to maternal influence in *Coriolanus*, which we are, practically, agreed in dating 1610, or rather earlier. There is hardly a play of this last period of Shakespeare's activity as a dramatist but helps to convince us that, by this time, he had regained that inner peace which enables men to remember and recognise what have been the most enduring forces which have influenced the conduct of their lives. Over the mistakes and misadventures which, we have every reason for believing, distracted Shakespeare's youth—for no quibbles about deer-parks and pre-contracts will prevail against tradition supported by commonsense—Dr Brandes passes more or less rapidly; the essential points in this chapter of Shakespeare's life are that he must have ripened early, that he must have sooner or later shaken off conditions intolerable to an unsatisfied energy of mind, and that he was not held back at home by any affection that weighed heavily in the balance. Was he ambitious? The question might seem to answer itself; but in truth the solution depends on the insight which it may be possible to obtain into more phases than can be here recalled of Shakespeare's career and character. Unless I mistake, however, Dr Brandes has dealt with no part of his theme in a spirit more thoroughly free from any of the varieties of cant that are too often infused into such discussions. To begin with, he seems needlessly apprehensive that Englishmen are afraid of accepting the proposition, with all its terrible consequences, that Shakespeare was

an aristocrat at heart. Whatever else he had learnt at school, it had certainly not been the principles of English constitutional history; and he cared just as little for the securities of Magna Carta (conspicuous by their absence in *King John*) as he seems to have appreciated the grievances of the First Parliament of James I. He was the child of an age whose national aspirations had incarnated themselves in the monarchical idea, and which had found its ideal of political greatness in distinguished service under and to the Crown. But such service it was only given to the chosen few to render in council or in camp, by land or by sea—just as of old, in the days of unceasing civil strife, it was their support or opposition which alone had been of moment in deciding that one supreme question of politics, the tenure of the Throne. As for the masses who followed, the dramatist either ignores them (except, in the matter of military service, in *Henry V*), or he manifests for them a contempt so physical in the form of expression which it repeatedly chooses that the fastidiousness of the artist has here manifestly come into play, forced as he is by the inevitable conditions of his profession to weigh the gross favours of the multitude against more select patronage. Yet, for all that, he not only “lived and died one of the many,” but, if he had ever chafed at his calling as an actor or felt conscious of his power as a writer—and we know that he had not been a stranger to either mood—it was not because he had ever cared to imagine for himself any different conditions of life or fame. In his own immediate profession—the actor’s—he never attained to the front rank; and if he had, he would hardly have been

intoxicated by a preeminence which Kemp shared with Burbage. As a playwright, his popularity, after an angry protest at the outset, disarmed to all appearance without effort on his own part, progressed steadily to a height where no competition approached it; even in the period between his death and the suppression of the theatres, it is, I think, an error to assume that Beaumont and Fletcher's reputation surpassed Shakespeare's. (Dr Brandes' chapter on the "twin stars" of our old drama, by the way, cannot be described as one of the best in his second volume; he places the zenith of Fletcher's fame in 1609-10; evolves in a whimsical way which is unusual with him a paradoxical theory as to the influence upon the son of the incidents that his father the Bishop might have noted at the beheading of Mary Queen of Scots; and perceives Shakespeare's touch in the monologue of the Jailor's Daughter in act III, scene 2, of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*.) But Shakespeare's popularity as a writer of plays, which brought money into his purse and that of his fellow-shareholders, and which meant house and land, and a coat-of-arms, and consideration at Stratford-upon-Avon, and an old age without sordid troubles, implied no fame in the world of letters, no reputation in some fruitful plot of scholarship, no place of honour in State or Court. As for the so-called world of letters, would Shakespeare, or, for that matter, would the "prose Shakspeare," Thomas Heywood, or any of that true Old Guard of playwright-authors, had they cared for its verdict, have left the quarto editions of their plays, except in one or two most doubtful instances, to the pirates? In his case, at least, it is clear that what later generations have called literary

success would have moved him neither to triumph nor to despondency. Compare him with Bacon, so ridiculously supposed (Dr Brandes bestows upon this man's nest a glance of most appropriately cool contempt) to have commissioned Shakespeare to father the cryptic pledges of his dramatic genius! Compare him with Milton, whom the longing for the unfading crown never deserted either in light or in darkness! Can we doubt but that, in contrast to schemer and dreamer alike, Shakespeare possessed his soul in quiet? The very fact of the attention consistently paid by him to the business of ordinary life—that sure building up of a modest fortune as to which we possess so long and curiously complete a series of documentary proofs—seems to harmonise with this serene self-control. The marvel lies in the union between this silent and, may be, unconscious resignation and a creative power which, so long as it exerted itself, showed no signs of decline or decay.

In conclusion, it must suffice to say a very few words as to what was described above as the climax of the drama of this wonderful life. If the reader will look at such a table of the sequence of Shakespeare's plays as that constructed by Professor Dowden in a series of groups, or even at the widely known list of periods drawn up with the aid of metrical evidence by Dr Furnivall, he will readily apprehend the general nature of the position to which Dr Brandes has sought to find the key. In the years corresponding roughly to the first decade of the 17th century were written the master-pieces of Shakespeare's tragic genius, together with certain comedies in which a note of bitter earnestness

is observable (such as *Measure for Measure*) or in which we feel (as in *Troilus and Cressida*) that we stand face to face with the irony of life. Is it possible to detect in the changes of the treatment of passion in these plays: of passion showing itself as the spirit of vengeance, of jealousy, of ambition, of desire, of sheer misanthropy—moods and transitions of personal feeling admitting of biographical explanation? The enquiry is attractive, especially since it admits of no doubt whatever that at the close of this period a calm supervenes, and, though Shakespeare's creative power still produces works of the highest beauty, his tragedy of passion is at an end. Dr Brandes, then, has endeavoured to show that, among the mighty works which make up this tragedy of passion, a particular group may be distinguished as characterised by a gloom, discord, and scorn reflected from the poet's own experiences. The assumption is reasonable; can the same be asserted of the method of the demonstration? Undoubtedly, as Dr Brandes shows, there was not a little in the public affairs of the years 1601-3 to agitate a follower of Southampton and of Southampton's friends. But, as he rightly sees, more personal motives could alone account for results of so much intensity; and an exposition of these the biographer finds in the *Sonnets*. Now, the first difficulty in following him in this attempt lies in the date of the poems in question. Although they were not published as a whole till 1609, the probability is that they were all in existence at least ten years sooner, and we know for certain that some of them, at least, had been written much earlier. If so, how is it possible to bring the feelings expressed in them into direct connexion with those reflected in

*Antony and Cleopatra* or in *Troilus and Cressida*? This difficulty apart, the general interpretation of the *Sonnets* advanced by Dr Brandes is, so far as I can at present see, the only intelligible one, and I confess to having for a long time inclined to the identification of Pembroke (William Herbert) with the "man right fair" of these poems. But, following Mr Tyler, Dr Brandes goes a step further, and, asking us to accept the identity of the Dark Lady with Mary Fitton, the unlucky maid of honour betrayed by Pembroke, completes the structure of his theory. Unfortunately, the second assumption on which it rests must be rejected. There is nothing to show that the amour between Pembroke and Mary Fitton had begun when one of the *Sonnets* (probably written much earlier), which complains of the intrigue between the good and bad angel, had already been published surreptitiously. Again, there is absolutely no indication (to say nothing of likelihood) that Shakespeare was ever acquainted with Mary Fitton. The letters recently printed in Lady Newdigate-Newdegate's charming volume contain no reference to him, and Kemp's mistake of Anne for Mary only displays his want of acquaintance with either. Finally, the portraits at Arbury (according to the same authority) show Mary to have had brown hair and grey eyes, a very different type from that of the Dark Lady, of the gipsy Cleopatra, and of the Rosaline of *Love's Labour's Lost*. Dr Brandes's determination to thrust a doubtful immortality upon poor Mary Fitton goes so far as to discover a "marked brunette" in her effigy in Gawsworth Church; but this I must leave to the judgment of the reader.

What I cannot but regard as the failure of Dr

Brandes to justify his adoption of a very seductive conjecture, in my opinion neither detracts from the charm of his book nor disproves the legitimacy of its general method. No more stimulating contribution to the study of Shakespeare in his works has for many a year come as a gift to his lovers in every land.



## 35. GOETHE AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

(Lecture to the English Goethe Society, June 25, 1912<sup>1</sup>)

YOU will perhaps not think it either unnatural or inappropriate that I should take advantage of this, the first occasion on which I have had the pleasure of meeting the members of the English Goethe Society as its President, to thank you most cordially for the honour you have done me in electing me to this office, and at the same time to thank your Council for its considerateness in fixing *ohne Hast* the date for what to me is a delightful meeting. Indeed, had they expected me, in my turn, to address myself to the duties of my new office *ohne Rast*—or, in other words, in a spirit more fully corresponding to that in which its affairs are carried on by those who have long watched over its progress—I should have had to urge a good many pleas and to proffer a good many excuses before appearing before you at all in my present capacity. As it is, I can but assure you, very candidly, that it was only after much hesitation that I accepted the honour proposed to me—in the first instance, because I knew very well how difficult it would be for anyone to follow with credit to himself your last President, one of the foremost literary critics, as he is one of the leading literary scholars, of our age and country. And there is one special reason why my friend Professor Dowden was preeminently in

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted in *Transactions of the English Goethe Society*, 1913.

his place in this chair. When, last summer, you were entertaining a number of distinguished members of the German Goethe Society at the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of your corporate birthday, we of the British Academy, a few streets away, were listening to the first of a series of memorial Shakespeare orations to which a highminded and generous Benefactor is enabling us to invite our friends year by year. We had hoped that some sort of blending of the two celebrations might take place for at least a few of yourselves and your guests; the lateness of the hour was, however, prohibitive of more than one or two hurried *auf Wiedersehens*. But the good omen remained in the memory of some of us; and those members of our Society who have recently represented it on a pleasant return visit to Weimar, must have stood before the Shakespeare statue much as I looked on that of Goethe and Schiller, when it was unveiled on September 3rd, 1857. The services which German research and German sympathy have rendered to the study of Shakespeare during something like a century and a half can never be equalled, but they may, in some measure, be returned by the loving devotion of generations of Englishmen and Englishwomen to the study of Goethe. In these spheres of work and thought at least—in the payment of this mutual tribute to genius, and in our common acknowledgment of an indebtedness for which there is no sinking fund—the competition and cooperation between Germans and Englishmen are, we trust, destined to endure, as it is our hearts' desire that the friendship they alike betoken may continue and increase in all the relations between the two peoples of kinsmen. No

truer representative of literary scholarship than Professor Dowden, whose name is identified with the study of Shakespeare's Mind and Art, could have presided over endeavours to enter, more and more closely, into the processes and the achievements of the genius of Goethe. On these, also, he has, by his addresses to yourselves and to other branches of the English Goethe Society, thrown much new light; and I remember with special pleasure his sympathetic discourse at Manchester on one of the most deeply interesting of all the phases of Goethe's intellectual life—his friendship with Schiller. How unforgivable in me, then, you will think it not to have discovered till within the last week or two, long after my address of to-night had been committed to type, that, not more than twenty-three years ago, Professor Dowden delivered to this Society an address on the same subject of *Goethe and the French Revolution*! Professor Dowden, to whom I just had time to communicate this disconcerting discovery, agreed that I had better proceed; and, though I have left virtually unaltered my address of to-night, written before I had read his in print, I have now had an opportunity, which you also will have, and which will be less depressing to you than it has been to me, of comparing the work of Professor Dowden with that of his successor. As for the latter, I can only say that I feel it a true joy to resume, if only during the brief intervals of leisure likely to remain to me, studies which, a quarter of a century ago, I carried on in common with some good friends—most of whom are now gone—in the Manchester Goethe Society. You will not, I am sure, expect from me, at this time of day, much that is new or in any sense

original; but if, as on the present occasion, by means of a plain reexamination of some section or passages of our inexhaustible common theme, I should chance to be able to lighten the labours or assist the efforts of any less leisured student of Goethe among us, my reward would indeed be abundant.

In times like our own, through which Epimenides himself might have found it far from easy to sleep his own sleep or dream his own dreams, one naturally turns, even as it were in the presence of a genius such as Goethe's, to the great political and social movements amidst which his life was cast, and of his own relations towards them. Above all, one is led to think of that great Revolution from whose agitations and influences—uplifting, overwhelming, or overshadowing—no contemporary mind could escape, and Goethe's interest in which could not but reflect itself, as did every interest that came home to him, in his written pages. And, since the limits imposed upon me are not only those of time, it is in his works that I desire, on the present occasion at least, to trace Goethe's relations to the great French Revolution, leaving aside *a priori* speculations as to the attitude which the nature of his genius, his character, or his experiences might have led us to expect him to be found taking up towards it, and, together with these, the ulterior question whether we are called upon to expect him, during a considerable number of years at all events, to have taken up any attitude at all. For what we call the Revolution was at the same time a growth—startling in its rapidity, and more than paradoxical in many of its episodes—but still a growth, which, so long as it continues to be such, the true

student of man and his actions is not always called upon to criticise as a complete historical movement, but must at times be content to follow observantly from stage to stage. Even when, to all reasonable seeming, the mighty movement of the French Revolution had reached its term, no judgment on it could be offered as final, and as one from which there could be no appeal, except by those whose historic insight was that of truly prophetic retrospection—or, of course, by fools.

In accordance with the modest plan which I have indicated, I pass by the impressions traceable in Goethe's writings of the early phases of the French Revolution, and of the events forming part of them, which preceded the year of what might almost be called its formal opening—whether we choose to date this from May, 1789, and the first meeting of the States-General, or from the following July and the taking of the Bastille. To be sure, Goethe's eyes had not been shut either to the significance of earlier endeavours for reforms which would, it was hoped, satisfy the popular aspirations, or to the warnings muttered by the Fates as to the ills beyond all such remedies. But it was not till 1788 that he returned from Italy, where gradually—I am, I need not say, employing his own language—he had become absorbed in the study of Art herself, a study which not only satisfies, but isolates, and in his case was combined with a still more individualistic study of Nature, in which he was without either master or companions. It was not till June, 1789, that he settled again at Weimar, which, in the words of Professor Robertson (whose admirable little monograph on Goethe I was not able to read till after I had put

together this address) had, as he found, not grown with himself. I refrain from entering into the circumstances of his private life, as to which he was no longer solitary, though in a sense very much apart; nor need I remind you that before long (from 1791) his main business came to be the direction of the artificial world of the new Court Theatre. We cannot, therefore, suppose his interest in political affairs to have at this time been abnormally keen; or wonder that not till some years later, in 1792, when during the campaign at Verdun he came across old *cahiers* of his landlord, who had been one of the *Notables* of 1787, he was impressed by the moderation of the demands made at that early date by the party of movement in France, and by the modesty with which they were advanced. In the same year, 1787, we find the first mention in Goethe's writings of a very different series of transactions, which no history of the French Revolution has been able to omit from its introductory chapter or chapters—the episode of the Diamond Necklace, which, Goethe tells us himself, terrified him like a Gorgon's head, from the time of its becoming the scandal of the world two years before. (See also his note, in 1792, as to his meeting with the Marquis de Breteuil<sup>1</sup>.) But neither then, nor at any time, was Goethe's equitable recognition of what was noble and elevating in the great Reform movement in France affected either by his fears of the lengths to which the desire for change might be carried, or by his

<sup>1</sup> The Marquis (the ancestor of our Prince of Wales's recent host) had been one of the most embittered enemies of Cardinal de Rohan, the ill-fated purchaser of the Necklace; and this fact was recalled to Goethe's mind when he came across him at Verdun.

horror at the excesses by which the Revolution itself, when it had become such, was stained. Herein, he was at one with the noblest spirits of his age, and, as lovers of English literature, readers of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, are aware, with the chief imaginative writers of nearly all other European nations as well as his own. Perhaps, it may be worth remembering that it was not only among the great poets of Germany, or the great philosophers with whom they went hand in hand, that these sympathies prevailed, but that they are to be found even where they would least be sought—in a temperament so signally pedagogic as that of Schiller's friend and correspondent, Duke Frederick Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg, and in a mind so essentially political as that of Gentz. When the time comes—if ever it comes—for Gentz's manuscript history of the French Revolution to be published, it will, no doubt, display the revised judgment which he had in the first instance derived from his master Burke; but it cannot fail to show an unsurpassed command of the material for a virtually contemporary history of the movement, due in no small measure to the avowed sympathy with which Gentz followed its earlier stages. But this by the way.

The most signal attestation of this feeling of sympathy to be found in Goethe will, of course, occur to us when, a little later, we come to one of the two great poetical works in which he, as it were, confronted the movement of the Revolution as a whole—when we have to speak of *Hermann und Dorothea*. There, he frankly expresses the feeling of pure and ennobling enthusiasm which gave rise to that sympathy—(I use the translation

of a member of this Society, Mr Charles Tomlinson, venturing on the change of a word or phrase here and there)—

For what man would deny, that his heart ran high in his bosom,  
And that his pulses throbb'd with freer and purer emotion,  
When he saw the first beams of the sun, now new in its splendour,  
When he first heard of the Rights of Man now common to all  
men,

Liberty mounting aloft and Equality welcome to brethren.

But he, also, in his own fashion, almost goes out of his way to suggest a concrete representation of this enthusiastic fellow-feeling in the figure of Dorothea's first betrothed, whose ring the worthy Pastor noticed on Dorothea's finger, when about to place Hermann's golden circlet on it—as, indeed, Hermann had already anxiously observed it at the fountain. Dorothea's high-minded first lover, of whom she spoke with affectionate regard even when she was giving her hand to his successor, the man of firm and settled purpose, had been impelled

by the passion for freedom,  
And the desire to play his part in the new life op'ning,  
Straightway to hasten to Paris—where dungeon and death were  
his portion.

Such was the vital spark that communicated itself from man to man, and from land to land, in that era of hope and aspiration; and Goethe's was not the spirit to remain unaware of its contact.

But this is, in a sense, to go back, and in another to anticipate; and I must turn to a less attractive aspect of our subject. As I have said, after his return to Weimar Goethe was soon actively engaged in matters theatrical; and it was in this connexion that we first—in the year



1791—find him occupied with a literary theme bound up, as already observed, with the history of the French Revolution. The convulsion, he wrote rather later, which had its origin in the affair of the Diamond Necklace, impaired the very foundations of the State and destroyed the respect paid to the Queen and the upper classes in general; for everything that it brought to the surface unhappily only made manifest the horrible corruption in which the Court and higher Society were involved. Yet, *Der Grosskophta*, even as we have the play in Goethe's works, calls itself a "comedy"; and, as is well known, in accordance with the actual vogue of this species, and his own well-attested liking for it, he at first had intended to treat it as a comic opera, with music by Reichardt, who actually composed some pieces and had talked over with the author the grand *finale* of the magic crystal globe, set to work in the presence of the Veiled Prophet. Whether in this form, too, the characters would have been designated by more or less suggestive titles only—Cagliostro as *der Graf*, Cardinal de Rohan as *der Domherr*, etc., etc.—is unknown. On the origin of this fashion I will touch again when we come to the *Natürliche Tochter*, where the heroine Eugenie alone is denoted by a proper name. As it is solely from the point of view of its theatrical effect that Goethe afterwards criticised the *Grosskophta*, and as he had no scruple about explaining the causes of its theatrical failure, it will (since the play can hardly be said to appeal directly to deeper interests) suffice to state these causes in his own words. "A tremendous and at the same time absurd subject"—absurd, i.e., under the light of day, or in a rational atmosphere—"treated

boldly and unsparingly”—for Goethe has no sympathy with the secret craving of many human minds to be mystified, and, if he has a certain pity left for any of the victims of their own delusions, it is for the Cardinal-Canon, whose passion survives even the opening of his eyes—“this terrified everybody; there was no response in any heart; the almost contemporaneous proximity of the original intensified the lurid effect of the impression received. Moreover,” he continues (we remember his openness at various times to Masonic notions), “since certain secret associations believed themselves to be unfavourably treated in the play, a very considerable and respectable part of the public took offence, while feminine delicacy of feeling was horrified by an audacious *coup*”—like that attempted by the precious Marquise (the Lamotte of the historic scandal), with the forced connivance of her niece (Demoiselle d’Oliva). Here is enough, and more than enough; and it would be futile to urge, *per contra*, that a very complicated story is transformed into a remarkably perspicuous plot; that the corruption of society—the moral of the comedy—is vividly exhibited in the persons of the rascal Marquis and his scoundrel valet, and that the Marquise only needed a little more elaboration to make her worthy of ranking with some of the best-remembered White Devils of the Jacobean drama. The Count (Cagliostro) is drawn *con amore*; it is known from the *Italienische Reise* what a personal (indeed, family) interest Goethe took in the worthy Giuseppe Balsamo, and he might well have thought that, in an age which never seemed to weary of pretenders to mystery and magic, this arch-

impostor would get the better of a friendly Weimar audience.

But, as I have said, it was only a footlights success or stage-run which was at issue in the case of the *Grosskophtha*. There are indications that, amidst the varied activities which were occupying Goethe in the months that followed on its production, he was projecting further excursions into what may, with more or less of exactness, be called the political drama. But before these thoughts took shape, he was brought face to face with the realities of the great struggle which was a direct consequence of the French Revolution. In June, 1792, Duke Karl August of Weimar, who now commanded a regiment in the Prussian service, quitted his capital to join the forces which had advanced to the Rhine, and, on the eve of his own birthday (August 27th), Goethe, by the Duke's express wish, joined him at Longwy, on the further side of the German frontier. The Campaign in France of the year 1792 had begun, of which, as you know, Goethe was to be the historian. His narrative of it, and of the subsequent siege of Mainz (1793), is invaluable for our immediate purpose, since Goethe was now for the first, though not for the last, time in his life (we remember Napoleon at Erfurt) brought into direct contact with the main current of European political history. I may add, in passing, that those who are unfamiliar with this prose work of Goethe's have left a gap in their knowledge of his literary power and literary charm which they will do well to lose no time in filling up. I think I have seen either a translation of this narrative, or an account of it, headed by the, no doubt, telling title of *Goethe as a War*

*Correspondent.* I find no fault with this little bit of journalese, except that there is, of course, no 'correspondence' in question, and that the telling title perhaps just a little obscures the fact that Goethe is nowhere more himself, nowhere quicker and juster in his observation, or readier and broader in his sympathy, while at the same time remaining true to his own conceptions of life and its best interests, than in this unpretentious, and nowhere perceptibly revised, Diary.

You have not come here to listen to even a fragment of a lecture in modern history; but you will not object to an imperfectly translated page, in which Goethe, with admirable conciseness, summarises the course of the Campaign of which he was at once witness and recorder:

“A French General, Lafayette, head of a powerful party, not long before the idol of his nation, and in enjoyment of the most complete confidence of the soldiery, revolts against the Supreme Authority, which since the imprisonment of the King alone represents the realm; he takes to flight; his army, not numbering more than 23,000 men, remains without General or Superior Officer, disorganised, in alarm.

“At the very same time, a powerful King [Frederick William II of Prussia], at the head of an Allied army<sup>1</sup> of

<sup>1</sup> Of course, the actual Commander-in-chief was the celebrated Duke of Brunswick, who began the campaign by signing (though unwillingly) the notorious manifesto threatening all recalcitrant places with demolition and Paris itself with exemplary chastisement, and who ended it, as he told Goethe himself when they met in the later part of the campaign, by a failure due to the weather and the mud. As for the manifesto, Goethe refers to it repeatedly with undisguised censure.

Prussians and Austrians numbering 80,000 men, enters on French soil; two fortified towns [Longwy and Verdun], after a short hesitation, capitulate.

“Then there comes on the scene a little-known General, Dumouriez; though he has never held a supreme command, he skilfully and sagaciously takes up a very strong position; it is broken through, and yet he occupies a ground in which he is duly shut in, his adversaries placing themselves between him and Paris.

“But continuous rainy weather brings about a curiously complicated condition of things; the imposing army of the Allies, encamped not more than six hours from Châlons and ten from Rheims, finds itself prevented from securing these two places, resolves on retreat, evacuates the two conquered positions, loses over a third of its men, but of these 2,000 at the most by the guns of the enemy, and returns to the Rhine. All these events, which approach the marvellous, occur within less than six weeks, and France is preserved from the greatest peril commemorated in her annals.”

Now, as Goethe says, such a series of experiences could not pass without comment, least of all among those who participated in them—and this comment largely took the form of indignant complaints and bitter execrations. His own part, throughout, had been that of the cheerful companion—I am not aware whether War Correspondents are called upon for the same service—who was hardly ever found wanting in words that diverted, cheered or consoled his comrades, and in whom even the denizens of the invaded country at times recognised a courteous and intelligent visitor. With all this, though significant of the never-failing sympathetic

charm—the humanity, in a word—of Goethe's character, we have no present concern; my wish is rather to remind you of his insight, which his narrative repeatedly illustrates, into the spirit of Revolutionary France and its significance for the political future of Europe. In the first place, he does justice, not only to France and her inhabitants in the matter of characteristic qualities which could not escape either the attention or the appreciation of so acute and so generous an observer, but to the genuine enthusiasm which had been created by the national uprising. Of this devotion, such half-heroic, half-theatrical acts as the suicide of the French commander who had been obliged to surrender Verdun, or that of the grenadier who threw himself over the parapet of the bridge across which he was being marched as a prisoner, were merely exaggerated examples; and Goethe perceived that the general feeling among the French was very different from what had been anticipated by the invading army. He could understand the aversions and the grievances of the natives, their disgust at the swarms of *émigrés* who fancied they were holding a *joyeuse rentrée* into France, but of whom Goethe after his return was to see enough, and more than enough, on the other side of the Rhine; he could appreciate the distress and anger of the French population excited by the false *assignats* issued by the Commander of the Allied Army in the name of Lewis XVI—a proceeding, says Goethe, which roused the French people against monarchy more than any other, except the issue of the notorious manifesto. But more than this. He was able to divine the enormous significance for the future, not only of France, but also of Europe, his own country

included, of the περιπέτεια, or turning-point, in the great revolutionary drama: when, on the very day (September 20th, 1792) on which at Paris the Convention constituted itself, the cannonade at Valmy proved the beginning of the end of the invasion of France. Henceforth, the Allied Army was in retreat, and here—as in Flanders, on the Rhine and in Savoy—the Revolution was saved<sup>1</sup>. Now, ladies and gentlemen, there are few better known passages in Goethe's prose than that in which he narrates how, after the cannonade of Valmy was over and the German retreat had begun, a group of officers were sitting at night round the camp-fire, and he, whose talk had often enlivened and exhilarated his companions, was asked his opinion of what had taken place on that day. "This time, I replied: 'With to-day begins a new epoch in the history of the world; and you may say, you were present at the start (*ihr könnt sagen, ihr seyt dabei gewesen*).'" No more wonderfully true prophecy was ever uttered; and it is a curious accident, as Goethe afterwards noted, that this prophecy was fulfilled in a literal as well as in a general sense, for it was on the 22nd of September that the Convention voted the beginning of a new era (the last was just a little over three years old) with *l'an premier de la République Française*.

The Revolution thus entered upon the period of foreign propaganda (soon to become foreign conquest), at the very time when in Paris the Mountain gained the victory over the Moderates, and the final and fatal step of bringing the King to judgment was resolved upon. In despairing rage, well depicted by Goethe, the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Mignet, *Histoire de la Révolution Française*, vol. 1.

diminished hosts of the invaders struggled homeward against wind and weather, and his campaigning was over, or very nearly over. While Germany was being invaded in her turn, and Mainz, which had for a time been the centre of a native revolutionary propaganda, was, together with Goethe's own Frankfort, in French hands, the Empire, though its Great Powers at issue with one another, was slowly preparing for war against the Revolution.

*Was giebt's? Was untersteht ihr Euch?  
 Wer giebt das Recht Euch? Wer?  
 In Polen und im röm'schen Reich  
 Geht's auch nicht besser her<sup>1</sup>.*

[What is the matter? Fie, for shame!  
 Who gave you warrant? Who?  
 In Poland things are much the same,  
 And the Holy Empire, too.]

Goethe, as you know, was present at the recovery of Mainz in 1793, and, though he exerted himself with heroic courage to prevent the massacre of some of the baffled Clubbists, he makes no pretence of having remained impervious to the reaction to which the Mainz episode most signally contributed.

To the years which follow belong those of Goethe's literary productions where the French Revolution is treated as a movement that has passed into a stage against which a rational German patriot, and more especially the subject of a well-ordered and beneficent Government, has nothing to do but to shut the door. As such, the revolutionary movement at this time, if I may venture on the use of such a word, *obsesses* rather

<sup>1</sup> *Jery und Bätely.*



than occupies Goethe; and he seeks to liberate his mind from the incubus, not only by absorbing himself in art and science, but by excursions into new domains of imaginative composition suggested to him in the works of ancient masters. Already before starting on the campaign of 1792, or even earlier, he had begun the *Travels of the Seven* (or were they six?) *Sons of Megaprazon*; but this satiric *tour de force*, in the manner of Rabelais, gave little satisfaction either to his friends or to himself, and what was written of it remains a fragment, in which not even the island of the *Monarchomanes* supplies anything to stimulate curiosity beyond the name; (the most characteristic reflexion is that upon the *Zeit-* or, rather, *Zeitungs-*fever of the age). Something, though not very much, more might be said of the *Conversations of German Emigrants*, which seem to date from about 1795, and which are an obvious imitation of another famous old master, the author of the *Decamerone*. An elaborate introduction acquaints us with the social circle in which a series of stories, instructive or entertaining, is to be told—the members of a noble German family, who, expelled from their estates by the great revolutionary incursion, had been enabled to return to one of them, after the wave seemed to have rolled back across the Rhine. They had shared the fate seeming to await all those who remembered with praise or reverence the fathers that begat them, and who enjoyed divers advantages, such as a right-thinking father should wish to secure for his children and descendants. In other words, they were *aristos*; but even so, they had only learnt with difficulty the wisdom of confining private conversation to topics of

purely intellectual or moral interest. Into these topics, which are treated in the author's amplest manner, we need not follow them. Under the aspect of an escape from contemporary politics, we may, also, regard yet another product of this period—but this a masterpiece—the mock epos of *Reineke Fuchs*. It would, of course, be open to anyone to interpret this delightful satire, which, to me at least, seems *merum sal*, as a covert attack upon the very *ancien régime* whose downfall the adversaries of the Revolution were lamenting. But I think we know better: this time, the spirit of burlesque had seized upon the poet, nor is any of his works more masterly in its kind than this exquisite treatment of a perennial theme—a treatment which neglects none of the proprieties of literary expression, while respecting none of the sanctities of our social system.

Leaving aside, then, these digressions or diversions from the broad current of political opinion which Goethe permitted himself during the unprogressive period of the First Coalition, we come—if I may in this Society be pardoned for applying such an expression to any work of Goethe's—we come to the *uninspired* "political" dramas to which they gave rise, though in truth only one of them is more than a fragment. I refer to the *Bürger-General* (the title should be divided into two words, being the equivalent of *Citoyen Général*, and intended to supersede the despotic *Herr General*), which, according to Goethe's own statement, cost him only three days to write, but which, again according to his own confession, brought him in return no word of praise, even his friends and favourers (like Shakespeare critics *in extremis*) taking refuge in the assertion that

his pen had only here and there touched up another man's text. Not that there is any harm in the farce; it was written to follow up two previous successes of a popular actor in the character of Schnaps, the bombastic barber, who here becomes the emissary of the Jacobin propaganda, with the red cap of liberty and the revolutionary *cocarde* in his hand-bag, himself the slave of nothing and nobody but his own healthy appetite for junket and suchlike gifts of the gods. And what exception could be taken, at all events in the little Weimar theatre (where, within my own remembrance, the Court, with the nobility, and the rest of the polite world, sat on different sides of the dress-circle) to such a moral as the following: "In a land where the sovereign prince shuts nobody out from his presence, where all classes think equitably of each other, where no man is prevented from exerting his activity in his own way, where useful knowledge and intelligence are generally spread, there we shall not find the population divided into parties; what happens in the world will attract attention, but the rebellious sentiments of whole nations will fail to exercise any effect. We shall be calmly grateful as we see a cloudless sky above us, while vast plains are devastated by terrible storms."

Just so. Of very much greater interest is what was designed as a "political drama in five acts," *Die Aufgeregten* (1793), which, though it remains uncompleted, is certainly one of the most notable of those of Goethe's plays which bear a direct relation to the period of their composition. The title is not very easy to translate; it signifies *The Excited*, which, of course, implies *the Excitable*—persons in whose minds or temperaments

“environment” (if this fashionable term may be held to include the influence of current events) produces an abnormal condition of judgment or feeling. The scene is laid in some German principality, so well governed that Weimar might be supposed to be again in question, were not the locality evidently intended to be one more readily accessible to French influence; and the action turns on the concoction of an insurrectionary plot against a kindly Countess, whose goodwill towards her tenants (or rather those of the youthful son whose paternal estate she is administering on his behalf) goes much further than they suppose. But she has hitherto given her confidence to an agent, who has concealed from both her and the tenants a document, the recovery of which would enable her to grant them the rights which they desire, and which the treasonable plotters have resolved to extort from her by force. The knot is cut by the resolution of the Countess’s daughter—a girl of high spirit (with just a touch of the hoyden), who, with a loaded gun in her hands, brings the wicked agent down on his knees and the critical document out of its secret drawer. The plot, of course, though it breaks out, also breaks down, and in the unwritten fifth act everything was to end happily, as it ought to do in a State ruled by a disciple of Frederick II and Joseph II—the two monarchs, as the head-conspirator says, “whom all true democrats should worship as their patron saints.”

Here, then, we have a sufficiently clever demonstration of the folly of the spirit of the Revolution, that seeks to compass by violence and injustice ends which may be good in themselves, but which Providence and its accredited officers should be left to accomplish in

their own way. Though the action rather drags, there is, at least, one well-drawn character in the play—the chief agitator—another barber (the drama has certainly made the most of that particular calling), who has something in him of the argumentative volubility and vigour of Vansen in *Egmont* (by the bye, Goethe was annoyed to find a representation of *Egmont* at Weimar about this time coldly received), and who plumes himself on having learnt his energetic ways from the great Frederick himself; and there is at least one good scene (or rather, the sketch of it) in which the company resolves itself into a National Assembly, including representatives of all parties and of all ranks. The idea is more in the way of Aristophanes than in that of Goethe, and it is useless to speculate on what he would have made of it, though we shall find him returning to it after a different fashion in a later dramatic project.

Yet another dramatic fragment—consisting, however, in this case, only of a scene or two and a quite rough scheme on a single sheet, discovered by Erich Schmidt—remains from this period of Goethe's life and writings. *Das Mädchen von Oberkirch* (which, according to the same critic, who, with the aid of Gustav Roethe's exhaustive researches, has fully elucidated its history, may be dated about 1795, or perhaps a little later) plays at Strassburg, in November, 1793. It was to tell the story of a simple girl of the people, who, after attracting the attention of a young Alsatian nobleman, as well as that of a clerical friend of his, was to be carried off by the *Sansculottes*, and, after being forced to enact the character of the goddess Reason in a popular festival in the Minster, was to be brought to a

cruel death. We are, again, quite unable to say how, and with what measure of success, Goethe would have carried out this very remarkable project; it may seem hardly likely that the hand which drew the popular scenes in *Egmont* could have brought before us, with the same vigour, the butcher, Peter Handfest, and his brother Alsatian *Sansculottes*; but that the flow of humour would not have been wanting, will be allowed by all who are familiar with the subtle but irresistible satire of *Reineke Fuchs*. The scenes actually completed—in which the Baron tells his mother of his resolution to marry her waitress, for both personal and political reasons—form, it must be confessed, a not very promising exposition, while we shall note (for purposes of comparison), before we close, the tirade of the young clergyman against the despotism of the mob, and against that unhappy base-spirited prince of the blood called by the name of *Equality* (*Philippe-Égalité*).

And now, if you think of the date 1795 or 1796, and of the figure of the simple maiden of the people, is there not another creation of Goethe's that recurs at once to your minds—one of the noblest, as she is one of the most exquisitely drawn, of all the women of Goethe, the heroine of *Hermann und Dorothea*? Yes; and it is in this immortal poem, most of which was written under Schiller's eyes in 1796, and which was completed in the following year, that we shall look, nor look in vain—not, indeed, for Goethe's last word on the French Revolution, but for a clear and definite, as well as a deeply conceived and adequately expressed, judgment on the true relation to it of the Germany for which he wrote and lived. I have no intention of following Hegel

in his demonstration of the thoroughly German character of this masterpiece, where (unlike the Pastor and his family in *Luise*, who drink coffee—which one might have thought German enough—out of imported china cups) the host and his friends quaff German Rhinewine out of genuine German green rummers. I do not even wish, on this occasion, to analyse Wilhelm von Humboldt's profounder remark, that the character of *Hermann und Dorothea* is truly German so far as it makes for truth and spiritual depth (*Innigkeit*), instead of aiming at the display of splendour and passion. Even had I time left, I should assume you to be familiar not only with the poem, but with the history of its theme, and also with the fashion after which, as has been lately shown, Goethe interwove with its treatment the remembrance of Lili and her Alsatian adventures. (By the way, was Lili one of those *black* ladies into whose eyes Goethe, like Shakespeare, was so fond of gazing? Dorothea was:

*Soll ich sie auch zum letzten Mal seh'n, so will ich noch einmal  
Diesem offenen Blick der schwarzen Augen begegnen.)*

My sole purpose to-night is to remind you how, in *Hermann und Dorothea*, not only did the Revolutionary movement and its effects form a background, of which we never lose sight, to the action of the poem; not only are the unrest, the wanderings and the homelessness which are among the consequences of the Revolution skilfully made to become part of that action itself; but the significance of the Revolutionary age, to which none of its children can shut its eyes, is brought home, even as it is to

Princes who flee in disguise, and Monarchs living in exile,

so to all who have been born to be its contemporaries and to undergo its vicissitudes. 1796, the year in which most of *Hermann und Dorothea* was written, was the year in which the Revolutionary armies had advanced far into the German south-west, and one of them had bombarded Frankfort, whence Goethe's own beloved mother had to take flight.

Truly our times may compare with those most worthy of notice,  
 Whether in sacred or in profane historical annals;  
 For whose lot has fallen in them to-day or yesterday, surely  
 He has lived long years, events so press in their sequence...  
 Aye, we may liken ourselves to Moses, when in the desert  
 He, in an awful hour, beheld, in the bush that was burning,  
 God the Lord; to us, too, he comes in clouds and in fire.

I have already spoken of the tribute paid in the poem to the enthusiasm of those who deemed the Revolution in its early stages full of promise to mankind of blessings hitherto unknown; and I may refer you to another passage in which, with equal generosity, the poet bears witness even to the spirit of true humanity which moved the first French armies that invaded their neighbour's land as agents of the Revolutionary propaganda. The war began; the French came, seemingly bringing nothing but friendship;

And they brought it indeed: all minds were lifted towards them.  
 Gladly they planted the trees of Liberty, gay in the sunshine;  
 Promising each man his own, and each the rule of his own hand.  
 Better than the joys of the wedding-day were those of a  
 time when

All that man can desire, appear'd within reach of possession.  
 But soon the skies became overclouded. A corrupt  
 generation contended for the advantages of sway; men



raised their hands against one another; they oppressed their new neighbours and brethren; excess and rapine prevailed; and fortune turned to the side of the Germans, the French soldiers during their retreat giving the rein to their evil passions, and perpetrating every kind of excess. It is to the heroism of Dorothea (perhaps suggested by the courageous behaviour of Lili) in the midst of this condition of things that the action of the poem goes back as it were to its origin; for it marked her out as worthy of her destiny.

Dorothea's destiny was to become the wife of a true man, whose patient and steady self-control had at times irritated persons prone, like his excitable father, to misunderstand him, but who was of the stuff of which staunch patriots as well as true lovers are made. Let us, he says at the last, hold fast to one another and to what is our own. The German's part is to refrain from carrying the Revolution—the Terror—further afield, choosing now the one side, now the other.

This is ours. So let us say and so let us hold it—  
and hold it, if the time and the necessity arrive, arms in hand.

No other spirit than this—the spirit of Marathon and Morgarten, and the spirit which defied the Grand Armada—has ever saved a people, great or small, from being overwhelmed. And the day was to dawn, though not for many a year, when the transformed Revolution was to be driven back by a transformed Germany, and Hermann's dream was to come true:

Did but all think as I think, the day would dawn of uprising:  
Might by might would be met, and peace would return with  
her blessings.

Without touching on the references to the Revolution in the *Xenien*, which were composed in 1795-6, and of which the main body appeared in 1797, I pass on, in fine, to the second great work by Goethe with which our present subject has any concern. For (leaving aside the question of joint authorship on the part of Goethe and Schiller) I regard the *Xenien* as essentially a literary Dunciad, and their not unfrequent references or allusions to the Revolutionary movement, to Sansculottism, and the tricolour cockade, as concerned with the reflexion of the movement in the German literary world rather than with the movement itself.

In a very different sense from that in which the French Revolution and its consequences had, partly as a distinct background, partly as a contributory motive, entered into the action of the beautiful epic of house and home, *Hermann und Dorothea*, the same great body of historic events was itself to be the theme of the tragedy, *Die Natürliche Tochter*. We call this play, whose history makes it so much of a literary curiosity that we are almost seduced into forgetting to think of it as a thing of beauty, a *tragedy*, because, for reasons to be immediately recalled, it is so described on the title-page; and we are obliged to give it the title which the author substituted for the more pleasing *Eugenie*, partly no doubt in remembrance of Diderot's celebrated *Le Fils Naturel*, partly because of the fashion which, in the case of *Die Natürliche Tochter*, Goethe likewise borrowed from Diderot and his followers, the device of denying to his dramatic personages their proper names, and designating them, instead, by those of their class or calling—the King, the Duke, the Abbé, the Judicial

Counsellor, etc. The object of this abstract nomenclature was, in Goethe's case, of course twofold. To begin with, he intended, like Diderot, that his characters should be accepted, not only as persons, but as types. The types presented by him were, however, to be not only professional or social, but also political, types—the consistent royalist, the moderate republican, the factious aristocrat, and, in the last instance, human, or, if you will, moral types—such as the faithless intriguer and the self-sacrificing pessimist (the *Weltgeistliche* and the Monk of our play), the man of the world whose nature is redeemed from worldliness by one absorbing affection, his love for this daughter (the Duke), and the idealist pure and simple, ardent, lofty of soul, and pure as ocean's serenest gem (Eugenie herself). Not only are the characters typical, but the whole action, though based on historical truth and maintaining a constant reference to it, becomes symbolical; and, by emancipating itself in its higher and greater moments from mere actualities, acquires, in Hettner's words, a universally human and enduring significance. Beyond a doubt, however, the effect which *Die Natürliche Tochter* thus produces upon the reader (its fitness for the stage, whence its early want of success has practically banished the play, really depends, like that of some other of the finest dramas in literature, upon the fitness of the existing stage for it) is largely due to the majestic and at the same time simple beauty of its form; and this measured grandeur necessitated the exclusion of every sort of trapping or adventitious ornament, among which an uncompromising standard might class even the choice of names, the suggestion of particular times and

localities, and all the associations which these bring with them.

Of all this, though well known to you, I only remind you, lest, as we come to speak, in conclusion, of Goethe's treatment of the French Revolution in the one great work of his which can be said to be in substance occupied with this theme, we should overlook the quite special and exceptional way in which he here dealt with it. Any criticism of the literary qualities of *Die Natürliche Tochter* would be foreign to my purpose; but I hope it may not seem presumptuous if I say that to fail in appreciating these at their full value seems to me to betray a falling short in the power of understanding the whole strength and sublimity of Goethe's genius.

It has never been a secret that the original of *Eugenie* (whose name, of course, is indeed itself symbolic, and was only an afterthought) was, as she persistently styled herself, the Princess Stephanie Louise de Bourbon-Conti, whose *Memoirs* appeared in 1798, and were soon afterwards lent by Schiller to Goethe. The book has long been known to Goethe students and others; but it was not till some fourteen years ago that M. Michel Bréal published the results of his examination of a large number of letters and other documents, which establish beyond all doubt the authenticity of the facts disclosed by the *Memoirs*. Stephanie (whose Christian name Goethe first gave to the heroine of his play, though he did not add her oddly compounded anagrammatic title of Countess de Montcairzain) was the illegitimate daughter of a great lady—the Duchess of Mazarin, a direct descendant of Hortensia Mancini—and of a Prince of the Blood Royal—Louis-François de Conti.

He had some military reputation, and in the reign of Lewis XV came forward as a Liberal in politics, who upheld the rights of the Parliaments, and was in return flattered by the title of the *Prince citoyen*. Moreover, he provided Rousseau with a refuge, when the author of *Émile* found himself in trouble. Stephanie accordingly salutes Jean-Jacques as the *immortel instituteur du genre humain*, and when she has a chance does her best to imitate his style. King Lewis XV would have gratified his kinsman by legitimatising his daughter, when she was eleven years old; but, by one of those extra-ordinary acts of violence to which the age was not wholly a stranger, she was, with the connivance of her governess, spirited away into Franche-Comté and there, after some months, married to a relation of this woman, a provincial official. Her father, the Prince, was, by means of a false certificate, induced to believe in her death; but it remains obscure whether he was ignorant of the circumstances of her removal, and what were the determining causes of the fraud—whether, as seems probable, her legitimate brother's dread of the partial loss of his expected fortune through her legitimisation, or possibly her mother's fears of the scandal to which this would give rise. After thirteen years of nominal wedlock, during which she had never relinquished her claims to identity with her certificated dead self, she was admitted into a nunnery and baptised (her divorce was not pronounced till several years later), and soon afterwards made her appearance in Paris. The Revolution was now in full progress, and, clad in man's attire, she took part, as a royalist volunteer, in more than one memorable street-fight. At the same time, she made

herself known to the royal family, of which she consistently reckoned herself a member, and finally, in 1792, was received in audience by the King, who granted her a liberal pension, of which, needless to say, only a small fraction ever reached her. Her *Memoirs* cease in 1798, by which time she was beginning to sink into indigence. Yet she survived, as some men and women live on who have suffered and struggled as she had, till 1825. A woman giving the name and title which Lewis XVI had granted to Stephanie visited Weimar in 1804, when, actually by Goethe's advice, the Duke refused to have anything to say to her. This person was certainly an impostor, probably one by whom the real Princesse de Bourbon-Conti had already been worried in Paris.

If from this rapid statement of facts you turn to the play, you will see how the experiences of the heroine-adventuress of the *Memoirs* have been metamorphosed by the poet. But you will remember that the drama, as we have it, represents only part of the poet's conception of his subject. Roughly speaking—for time would fail for a fuller exposition of an extremely interesting chapter of dramaturgic history—Goethe successively arranged the action of *Die Natürliche Tochter*, first, as that of a single five-act drama or tragedy (which latter is the description on the title-page); then (perhaps under the half-conscious influence of the success of *Wallenstein* in 1798), as that of a trilogy; finally, he designed a second drama, or continuation, which would have completed the argument of the existing play, but which, for reasons we cannot now pause to examine, he never carried out.

The play, as it stands, hardly exceeds the dimensions

of a domestic or family drama, to which the Revolution cannot strictly be said even to serve as a background, but which the approaching crisis overhangs like a storm-cloud laden with disaster. It is a private intrigue to which the happiness of Eugenie and that of her father depending upon it are sacrificed; and it is her personal fate which moves our sympathy, as, in the fulness of her youthful beauty and Amazonian strength, and at the height of her self-forgetful loyal enthusiasm, she is by a vile plot hurried away into obscurity. But a broader scene, wider interests—in a word, the inclusion of the great revolutionary movement in the sphere of the dramatic action—are, we feel, in store for us in what is to follow. The King, who is, of course, not meant as a likeness of Lewis XVI, but who has unmistakable features of his—

The strength is wanting to this latter branch—

and who expresses wishes for his people's happiness in the kindly *Henri Quatre* way, has hardly appeared on the scene to hold converse with the Duke (in whom it would be idle not to recognise reminiscences of Philippe-Égalité, as well as of Rousseau's protector), when we become aware of the storm-cloud of which I spoke. You must trace these passages through the play for yourselves, such as:

The signs are terrible that mark the times—

For what is base swells high, what high sinks down, etc.;

and Eugenie's direct warning—

To keep his heart true to his lord, our King,

Is ev'ry faithful subject's bounden duty;

Where the King stumbles, there the commonwealth's

Footing is shaken; where he falls, it falls;

and you will not fail, in the final scene where, after reciting the sonnet she has composed in her gracious sovereign's honour, she hastily locks it in a secret drawer, to divine that it will be discovered there in the later play, since her father, Prince de Conti's, palace was the Temple at Paris, and the Temple was the King's last prison, where Eugenie was to visit him before his—and her—death.

For, though in the existing play we see her only relegated into obscurity and an ignoble marriage—as if this beautiful and eloquent witness to the spirit of loyalty were to be taken away from the scene in which her appeal is ignored by the thoughtless mob, while the monk who wishes her Godspeed as she goes prophesies a precipitate overthrow of the monarchy which has as it were cast her out—in the sequel planned by Goethe she was to reappear as an integral though resistant part of the universal movement. In one great scene of the scheme (recalling in a different way a scene that was to have formed part of *Die Aufgeregten*), there was to be a discussion or debate between the contending elements in the great Revolutionary struggle—the patriotic but cautious official (Eugenie's *bourgeois* husband), the greedy advocate, the radical working-man, the imperialistic soldier. But here, as in the action of the concluding play at large, the masses, the mob, anarchy, chaos were to overwhelm everything and to become absolute. "Drive out those that hesitate. Suppress those that resist. Lay low what is high. Raise on high that which is low, in order to lay it low again." And, with the symbolic Crown and person of the King, his maiden champion and defender, who had sacrificed



everything for the cause—not even, like Clärchen, for the man *and* the cause—she loved, would have been dragged from their dungeon to the place where the inhuman engine awaited them.

We know that, at the time when Goethe was actively engaged upon the composition of *Die Natürliche Tochter*, Karl August sent him a copy of Soulavie's voluminous history of the *Reign of Lewis XVI from his Marriage to his Death*, and that, as he told Schiller, this proved a book from which he could not tear himself away. Indications have been discovered, both in the extant play and in the continuation, of the impression which Soulavie's narrative made upon him. But, had the book never come into his hands, we can hardly conceive of Goethe's having judged the French Revolution otherwise than he did. Orderly growth, development by means of a process of calm culture (*ruhige Bildung*)—towards the realisation of which mankind and the individual man should labour on through the centuries—these were to him the cardinal principles of public and of private life. These principles he applied to the study and practice of art, to the study of nature, and to the study and treatment of man gathered in communities—in other words, to the science of politics, and to its application both in administration and in the judicial treatment of history. For any contravention of these principles he had, in the period of his life and work with which we have been concerning ourselves, nothing but blame, and for violent revolt nothing but condemnation. But it was foreign both to the grandeur and to the sincerity of his genius to rail his public into approval of his views; while to appraise or censure individual men

or women, whether a Marie-Antoinette or a Robespierre, whose story was bound up with that of the Revolution, was neither his province nor his design. At a later date, the extraordinary adaptability of his genius caused him to modify these beliefs in the direction of what Mr Robertson calls a kind of State socialism, towards which the world seemed to him to be moving. Were I ever to have the honour of reading another paper to this Society, and were I, as I should like, to choose as a congenial topic the subject of *Goethe in his Old Age*, a continuation of the enquiry, to the first part of which you have so indulgently listened, would have to be one of the elements of such an address. But to-night I have had no wish to go beyond the limits of my immediate theme, though I may have exceeded those of your patience.

Since this address was delivered, its subject has been admirably treated, as part of a wider theme, by Mr G. P. Gooch in his *Germany and the French Revolution*. (Longmans, Green and Co., 1920.)

## 36. DÜNTZER'S *LIFE OF GOETHE*<sup>1</sup>

(*The Manchester Guardian*, January 5, 1884)

PROFESSOR DÜNTZER stands in no need of such half apologetic praise as Mr Lyster has thought it part of his duty as a translator to bestow upon his original. Most assuredly, the volumes before us will not commend themselves to readers for whose benefit accomplished essayists under the direction of able editors compress into pocket-book dimensions the biographies of eminent men of letters; most assuredly, too, they will fall flat with those who think that the late Mr Lewes in his brilliant, bold, and untrustworthy book has said the last word concerning Goethe's life. But, as applied judiciously to subjects really great, the method of Professor Düntzer and the school of literary biography worthily represented by him must supersede all other methods with the student who reads for the sake of knowledge; and of such students there are some to be found even in the lands of the new Renaissance. Their gratitude will not be wanting to the labours of Professor Düntzer, characterised as these labours are by perfect modesty and forgetfulness of self, and devoted as they have above all been to a mine full of the richest ores, which after his exertions the waters of oblivion will never wash away like the unkindly flood that frustrated the efforts of Goethe at Ilmenau.

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Goethe*. By Heinrich Düntzer. Translated by Thomas W. Lyster. With authentic illustrations and facsimiles. Two vols. London: Macmillan and Co., 1883.

To Mr Lyster, too, not a little gratitude is owing for the spirit in which he has executed his laborious task. He clearly belongs to the small number of those who in this country strive to keep abreast of the still increasing tide of Goethe literature, and who seem at last to have found a chance of not being overwhelmed by it, since the *Goethe-Jahrbuch* has appeared to serve, among other purposes, that of a current index. He has thus been able to supply a large number of references—in the earlier part of the work of course mainly to Bernays's celebrated publication, but also to Herbst's interesting *Goethe in Wetzlar*, to the not uncalled for monographs on Friderike Brion and Frau von Türckheim (Lili), and other recent authorities, which will be invaluable to the English reader out of reach of more special resources. Occasionally, too, he has furnished a useful elucidation or a suggestive query in connexion with Professor Düntzer's text; though such comments as those contained in the notes on I, 368 (about Corona Schröter) and II, 157 (as to the relative popularity of Goethe's masterpieces) seem superfluous on the part of a translator. The note on I, 128, is obviously incorrect; for it is Lerse, not "Franz," Weislingen's page, who in Götz von Berlichingen is named after Franz Lerse, the former not being, among the *dramatis personæ*, called by his Christian name. In the body of his translation, Mr Lyster is by no means free from inaccuracies, while his renderings of idiomatic words and phrases are frequently most infelicitous. When in 1769, Johann Adam Horn, returning to Frankfort from Leipzig, found Goethe looking ill and dull, he attributed the latter phenomenon to his friend's native air, the air of the "*Reich*"—a term

invented by Austrian conceit to signify those parts of the Empire which were not among the hereditary possessions of the House of Austria, and accordingly specially applicable to the Imperial city of Frankfort. The word "Dominion" might in some measure represent the meaning; Mr Lyster translates "the Kingdom," which to us conveys no meaning at all. The "Berlin poetess of nature, Madame Karschin" (I, 294), is, of course, the worthy Anna Louisa Karsch, patronised by Frederick the Great to the extent of two Prussian dollars, to whose surname her contemporaries no doubt appended the feminine suffix, according to the custom illustrated in this very book by the signature of Goethe's mother, "E. K. Goethein, geb. Textorin." But "Madame Karschin" almost obscures the patriotic identity of the simple Prussian poetess. What (II, 144) does Mr Lyster mean by "the stinging *rhymes* of the *Xenien*"; or is our long-cherished impression erroneous, that these epigrams were written in hexameters and pentameters? A very curious mistranslation occurs (II, 230), in one of the most interesting passages of Goethe's biography. It is known how deeply Goethe was moved by Schiller's death; according to Mr Lyster's translation of Düntzer, Karl von Stein was told by his mother that "when she tried to persuade Goethe to see Schiller lying in death, he exclaimed: "No, the agitation!" ("Nein, die Zerstörung!"). What Goethe meant, if he used the words here attributed to him, was manifestly "No, the destruction (i.e. decomposition)!" This refusal is, of course, only one among many illustrations of the rooted aversion which Goethe had inherited from his mother against impressing upon his memory

any painful or terrible sight, more especially when it was likely to interfere with a serener remembrance. Frequently, as observed, Mr Lyster's translations, without being actually incorrect, are deplorably unfortunate. Book x of the biography he entitles "The Restless Close"; presumably the adjective in the original is *rastlos*; in any case, it is difficult to understand how an appreciative student of Goethe, with the *Ohne Hast, aber ohne Rast* before his very eyes, could speak of the last eight years of the poet's life as "restless," instead of as "unresting." (By the way, how does the motto on the title-page of vol. I, referring as it does to the *setting* sun, suit the period to the narration of which it is prefixed?) But it is unnecessary to read to the end of Mr Lyster's volumes in order to perceive that the last file has been wanting to his translation. He rarely commits an actual blunder, as when (I, 401) he translates "*eine sehr sinnige Ueberredung*" (query, *Unterredung*?) "a very weighty conversation"; or when (I, 445) he does injustice to Goethe's hospitality by turning a weekly into a *fortnightly* tea-party. Nor is his English often so clumsy as where (I, 424) he says in reference to Goethe and Herder's scheme of school reform that "the means of paying the new teachers moved for was not," or where (I, 433) he describes Goethe as "the complete *reporter* and interpreter of German soul and intellect." But he is unlucky with his idioms; "the freedom vertigo" (II, 128) may be intelligible, though it is not English; but "the cannon fever" (II, 126) is hardly either the one or the other. "*Erste Liebhaberin*," as a technical term of the boards, seems oddly rendered by "first sweet-heart" (I, 71); and the designation of *Hermann und*

*Dorothea* as a "Burgher Idyll" (II, 146) suggests that the domestic drama ought henceforth to be called by the outlandish name of the "Burgher drama." Now and then, Mr Lyster, very pardonably, hesitates to seek, perhaps in vain, English equivalents for German terms, especially when he has to deal with official titles such as are numerous and subtle on the much-ruled soil of Thuringia. Nobody can put into English "*Frau Kammerherr*"; but why a plain *Rittmeister* (II, 307) should be deemed untranslatable we do not know. (In so near a neighbourhood to the place of publication of the *Almanach de Gotha*, by-the-by, it jars upon a sensitive ear to hear repeatedly of the "royal personage of Weimar.") But, leaving aside "Court and Official" speech, there could surely have been no difficulty of any kind in finding an English rendering for the *Kobold* that lurked in the irrepressible Bettina. Perhaps Mr Lyster's want of skill in reproducing the more delicate shades in the meaning of familiar German words has rendered him timid. "*Der närrische Goethe*" is "that odd or queer Goethe," not "that foolish Goethe" (I, 153); "*Es wird mir fatal*" means "it makes me feel impatient or annoyed," not "desperate" (I, 449). Even a native German would take a little time to recognise a *Bratenrock* when converted into a "roast-meat suit" (II, 460). In his downright English translations of the innocent German "*lieber Gott's*" and the like Mr Lyster is to be compassionated rather than condemned. Here and there, however, he by the roughness of his workmanship accentuates what requires no accentuation. It was far from pretty of "the refined Baroness von Arnim" (Bettina), even had the provoca-

tion been such as is offered by the portrait of Christiane given by Düntzer (II, 62), to call the poor *Geheimeräthin* what she called her; but the insult, even to read of, becomes Aristophanic when the common German *Blutwurst* reappears as the unspeakable British *blood-pudding* (II, 276). Finally, it is no doubt difficult to exaggerate the vigour of Goethe's diction in the period of his fermentation at Frankfort before his removal to Weimar. His literary criticisms, for instance, reprinted in vol. II of *Der junge Goethe*, are quite equal to anything ever achieved in that way by the most trenchant of English or Scotch reviewers; but there is something in his style which always remains his own or at least belongs to his age. When telling Sophie von La Roche of the death of the pious Fräulein von Klettenberg, he, with fine feeling, though with a *Kraftausdruck*, exclaimed: "*Mama, das picht die Kerls.*" Mr Lyster, who very infelicitously translates "that disciplines chaps," misses the meaning of the verb *pichen* (to smear or line with pitch; hence, to render impenetrable). We suggest, as at all events in better accordance with the context: "that makes a fellow strong and stout."

We have dwelt at comparative length upon the blemishes in Mr Lyster's translation because, like the original, it is a book written by a scholar primarily for the use of scholars, and because, in view of a second edition such as we hope it may reach, a close revision would not be labour thrown away. In any case, Professor Düntzer's work must prove an invaluable gift to those who can appreciate the use of a commentary on the entire personal history of Goethe, essentially complete in its design, though inevitably, here and there, still



presenting gaps or rifts in its execution. Everyone is anxious to verify the wellknown biographical connexion between Goethe's most popular works and the most striking experiences of his life—to ascertain, for instance, how much there is of Goethe in *Werther*, or how little in *Leonore* or *Frau von Stein*. But a biography composed on the perfectly unpretentious and simple, but thoroughly careful and conscientious, plan of Düntzer's work enables us to trace the activity of Goethe's mind from stage to stage, sometimes almost from day to day, and, if it may be said without irreverence, to live with him through much of the freshest and most varied intellectual life that has ever fallen to the lot of mortal man. Every experience gained, every acquaintance made, every scene visited, every work of nature or of art inspected, every book read, falls into its place in this life, and is felt influencing, enlarging, strengthening its current. To take a single instance. When Knebel introduced Goethe at Frankfort to the two Weimar Princes, the conversation happened to turn on the just published first volume of Justus Möser's *Patriotische Phantasien*. Düntzer dwells on the significance of this circumstance, and adds that the book was at that time Goethe's constant companion. The spirit in which he was thus led to address himself to the problem of government—viz., that of a desire for the elevation of the people—never deserted him, from the time when (in the following year) he arrived at Weimar to the day, half a century afterwards, when Karl August publicly thanked him for his "continually willing service." Again, it was just about this date that he wrote of his hope soon to begin a production which should have its own

original tone. Probably, as Düntzer conjectures, the plan of *Egmont* was in his mind—that noble and pathetic tragedy of self-sacrifice, of which the tone is as simple and true as was the character of Goethe's own life-service for the public good. Since we happen to have touched upon this particular side of his labours, we may add that for many readers these volumes will, probably, open, as they have opened for ourselves, a new insight into the difficulties which surrounded Goethe's career as a courtier and statesman at Weimar. Even the trusted servant and loved friend of a generous and high-minded Prince cannot escape the *miseriæ curialium*; and at Weimar, too, of which we love to think of as a green place in the desert, there was pettiness and evil enough to persecute Goethe. Now he was said to lead the Duke astray, now to usurp the functions of older and better-born men. Now it was the Duke's noble-minded consort who was unhappy, and now the Duke's spoilt mistress who was unmanageable. In his official life, Goethe was hampered by want of public funds; in his private affairs, he was pursued by the sharp tongues of gossip and scandal. They mocked him at one time as the pseudo-Platonic adorer of a lady of position, and then as the infatuated protector of a person of no position at all. We must, however, confess that, in reference to the long and not very romantic episode of Christiane Vulpius, Düntzer's matter-of-fact narrative has not succeeded any better than Lewes's more artful pleading in reconciling us to the general course of Goethe's conduct; and this, not only because of the difference between what Düntzer politely calls "a marriage of conscience" and the more generally pre-

valent kind of marriage—a side of the question we prefer to leave undiscussed. But the treatment of Frau von Stein which the episode involved was, in our opinion, cruel, and this in a very different sense from that in which the word could justly be applied to certain other “renunciations” in Goethe’s earlier life, even to that of Friderike. To use a common but sufficiently expressive phrase, in all other cases Goethe “acted for the best”; but his conduct towards Charlotte von Stein is to be palliated neither by Christiane’s attractions nor by the fact that Frau von Stein may, at the time, have been nervously irritable, albeit she refused to calm her nerves by giving up coffee.

The temptation is exceedingly great to touch upon some at least of the numberless familiar figures and scenes which this most interesting book revives by means of a simple historical truthfulness that, on occasion, may be quite as powerful as literary art. From Frau Rath (whose correspondence, published by Robert Keil, has made her so delightful a figure to many of us) and the house which Goethe’s father enlarged in vain for his truant son, down over more than two generations to Eckermann on the Ettersburg, sharing his Excellency’s luncheon and the morning view over the familiar landscape—the Frankfort and the turbid Leipzig times, the long endeavour at Weimar and the regenerating Italian journey—all appear before us in succession; never was there a life in every sense of the word so full, and yet so little in need of explanation or interpretation. No reader, for instance, who will take the trouble of arranging in plain chronological sequence the evidence furnished by Düntzer, without the slightest perceptible bias on the

biographer's part, concerning such matters as Goethe's religious or political opinions, is likely to find anything mutually irreconcilable in the successive expressions of their various phases. As to his religious belief, he said of himself in the days of his later manhood, that as a poet and artist he was a polytheist, as a searcher into nature a pantheist—"if I have a need of a God for my personality as a moral human being, that has been provided for also." Allowing for that irony of the more and the less which is precisely what a certain class of critics never will allow for, we might search long for a confession of greater frankness and, we are inclined to add, of truer humility. As to his political opinions, "Epimenides" made no pretence of seeing further into the future than it was given him by the gods to see; nor, if we may paraphrase a passage of a poetic confession written for himself at least as much as for the Berlin public, would he have been justified in complaining that he had not been endowed with keener foresight. Had he not laboured all the more devotedly and all the more productively within his many spheres of activity, without his heart having been corrupted so as to be estranged from his nation?

We must not close these volumes without a reference to the illustrations in which they abound, and which include, besides some interesting facsimiles of autographs and of drawings by Goethe, a number of portraits which will be new to most English readers. We wish that a frontispiece had been found more individual in character than Trippel's bust, as here reproduced. The striking portrait of Goethe's sister was known before; that of Merck, and the charming picture by

May of Goethe in his thirtieth year, painted while Wieland was reading *Oberon* aloud to the sitter, are, together with several silhouettes, new to us. In the second volume, the woodcut from Kraus's picture of the Duchess Amalia's evening circle, busily improving and amusing themselves round the table with books and paint-brushes, has a quaint Maclise-like humour in it; the last pictorial illustrations are Preller's magnificent head of Goethe lying in death, and the reproduction of an old engraving of the *Fürstengruft* at Weimar.

### 37. LUDWIG BÖRNE<sup>1</sup>

(*The Saturday Review*, June 22, 1867)

THE other day, either in the Prussian Lower Chamber or in the North German Parliament, one of the Liberal spokesmen having wounded the susceptibilities of an Ultramontane deputy by referring to him as the "clerical member," the latter retorted upon his antagonist by speaking of him as the "Jewish representative." The feeling which barbed the return arrow is one which has never ceased to embitter the conflict between German parties, not only in politics, but in many departments of art, science, and literature. The sprightliness of touch and pungency of wit which nature omitted to intermix with the clay out of which she formed the typical German, are the heirlooms of that irrepressible race which, perhaps, plays a more important part in the national development of Germany than in that of any country of modern Europe. It would be too much to say that the Jews are the leaven which has made the Liberal movement in Germany rise; but the fact remains that both in the young Germany of the second quarter of the present century, and in the Prussian Liberal party of the present day, the Jewish element has been unmistakably active and signally prominent. And, among the many and various weapons with which the Jews have carried on the contest, there is one which they have always used with peculiar effect, because in

<sup>1</sup> *Gesammelte Schriften von Ludwig Börne*. 12 vols. Hamburg. Hoffmann und Campe, 1862.

modern Germany the monopoly of it has belonged to them—and this is their wit. It is not often that men look for that quality in the sheets of an avowedly comic paper; but there can be no doubt that, at times, when the humorous periodicals of some other countries have been known to maunder away in feeble frivolities or carry to an extreme their anxiety to remain fit companions for the family tea-table, the Berlin wits have succeeded in pricking and stinging stolid respectability and self-conscious Philistinism into hopeless vexation. And yet these German humourists, the feuilletonists and farce-writers, and the *Gelehrten des Kladderadatsch*, are merely, like the German poets of the present day, the *epigoni* of men of real genius. It is easy to work a discovery, but hard to make it; and the merit of the discovery that German prose may be written in a style at once easy and pointed belongs to two gladiators of the past—to Heinrich Heine and to Ludwig Börne.

Heine's merits as a prose-writer have lately been pointed out to the English public by Mr Matthew Arnold. Börne's name can never rank in German literature beside that of his famous antagonist; for, while both were masters of German prose, the latter, as he took good care himself to remind the admirers of his rival, possessed that other and rarer gift, the gift of immortal song. But Börne was, in point of time, a predecessor as well as a contemporary of Heine (who lived to write upon his rival's tomb one of the most slanderous epitaphs with which one literary man has ever aspersed the memory of another), and he cannot be said to have owed anything to Heine; whereas the *Pariser Briefe* of the former at least preceded the *Französische*

*Zustände* of the latter. It may, therefore, be well to remind the readers of Mr Arnold's essay that many of the characteristics which signalise Heine's brilliant prose are to be found, with the addition of other and peculiar attractions, in the letters, reviews, and criticisms of the elder exile. Of both it may be said that, without ever ceasing to be genuine Germans, they carried on from their Parisian basis of operations a vigorous war against German Philistinism; that they joined "the wit and ardent modern spirit of France," and "the intensity, the untameableness" of the Hebrew race, to "the culture, the sentiment, the thought of Germany." But in Börne the latter element predominated over the others; he had in him more of "that cursed German asininity" for which Heine was wont to abuse himself and his fellow-countrymen; he was, in fact, not only the precursor of modern German wits, but the literary descendant of humourists of a very different class and kind, for he combined in himself with much of the pungency of Heine not a little of the pathos of Jean Paul.

It would not be difficult to write, after the fashion of the *Sentimental Journey*, a life of the man who called himself "a wandering comedy." Lewis Baruch (for this was Börne's original name) was born of well-to-do Jewish parents, on May 22, 1786, at Frankfort-on-the-Maine, in one of the houses of the famous Jews' quarter of that ancient city. He was originally destined for the profession of medicine, and for that purpose was placed as a boy of sixteen in the house of a distinguished physician at Berlin, Dr Marcus Herz. Instead of fathoming the mysteries of science, the youth fell in love with the wife of his tutor, an excellent lady at that



time verging upon the dangerous age of forty years. But the youth was a German youth; and there is, accordingly, nothing ridiculous in the letters which he addressed to the lady of his boyish love, and which have since been republished in a form of which it is hard to doubt the genuineness. Such a passage as the following entry in his journal is quite in the vein of Börne's acknowledged writings:—"I perceive by this time that I am fonder of Madame H. than of all the rest of mankind. Would she were aware of it! I have already told it to her husband, and I shall take the earliest opportunity of telling it to herself." On Dr Herz's death, his pupil was sent as a student to the University of Halle, where, much to his disgust, his new tutor insisted upon his going through a preliminary course at the gymnasium, which the young man diversified by running into a modest amount of debt. The fact is only worth mentioning as an illustration of the swiftness of legal procedure in those days in Germany; for old Baruch declined to pay the infant's score of 174 dollars, and fought a gallant struggle with the creditors, which was not terminated until six years afterwards. The son's studies were completed at Heidelberg and Giessen, whence, after taking his degree as Doctor of Philosophy, he returned to his native city, and settled down into the most Philistine post under a Philistine Government—that of actuary in the Hessian Police-office (for Frankfort only recovered her independence after the battle of Leipzig). About this time, he changed his name into Börne, and made his first important appearance in literature as editor of a journal entitled *The Balance* (*Die Wage*).

*The Wage* was a critical journal which attempted to

tell the truth ; and since this was precisely a characteristic unfamiliar to the readers of the critical journals of the day, Börne's paper created a sensation which is still unforgotten in the annals of German journalism. The theatrical criticisms especially contributed to its fame. "The standing theatre of a place," the editor had remarked to his readers in his preliminary advertisement, "is rarely better and never worse than the spectators therein, and thus the most courteous way of letting our dear fellow-citizens know our opinion of them will probably be to discuss their stage." Since Lessing's days theatrical criticism had never been conducted in such a spirit as this ; and there was a very promising stable of Augeas for the critical Hercules to purge. It was the day of the Raupachs and Grillparzers and Houwalds in tragedy, and of Kotzebue in that and every other kind of dramatic refection. Among these prophets of destiny and apostles of false sentiment, Börne disported himself with a savage glee in which it is impossible to avoid sympathising, even at a time when his victims have long been laid to rest. Speaking of this period of Börne's literary activity, Heine declares that he was reminded of a medical student at Bonn, who, whenever he came upon a dog or a cat, immediately cut off their tails, from pure love of cutting. "In those days, when the poor beasts set up so terrible a howl, we were very angry with him, but afterwards we readily pardoned him when we found that this love of cutting made him the greatest operator in Germany. So Börne, too, first fleshed his knife upon comedians, and many a youthful excess perpetrated by him upon the H., W., U., and suchlike innocent animals, who have ever since

been running about without their tails, must be condoned on account of the better services which he was afterwards, as a great political operator, able to perform with his critical instrument."

But *The Wage*, and other journals edited by Börne, had to succumb under the curse of contemporary German literature—the censorship. He had always had his fears of this national institution, of which he said, *Dat veniam corvis, vexat censura columbas*; and his conflicts with his old colleagues of the police form one of the most entertaining episodes in his career. The following "Last Testament of the *Zeitschwingen*," a political journal which he edited to extinction in the year 1819, will give a good idea, both of the difficulties with which he had to contend, and the zest with which he avenged himself upon his tormentors:—

A cautious journalist is already intent upon discovering efficient substitutes with which to sweeten his readers' morning cup of tea, in case a Continental system against ideas should bar the entrance of the customary sugar. He throws himself upon solid science. He studies astronomy, exclusively of the comets, because these bring war and troubles; geography, exclusively of the watering-places, because there congresses are held [the allusion is of course to the notorious Carlsbad Conferences of 1819]; algebra, but without *plus* and *minus*, since these belong to the department of the finances; psychology, without the doctrine of Court-souls; theology, leaving out the Holy Alliance; economy, but only domestic economy; jurisprudence, exclusively of the judicial process, which is the business of public officers; philosophy, without any limitation whatsoever; the useful subjects of cuneiform inscriptions, conic sections, and the roots of the German language; mechanics, optics, ethics, rhetoric, mathematics, macrobotics, dynamics, statics, all the *ics*, always excepting *politics*, because the latter

are the concern of Government alone. As soon as this state of things occurs, the *Zeitschwingen* (i.e. *Wings of Time*) will droop their pinions and adopt the name of *Beetroot Leaves*, which I announce at thus early a date, in order to avoid any collision for I believe this title to be an uncommonly good booksellers title, and to be sure to draw.

For man should be wise, and rather bow his head to the times than under a prison-door. The choice no doubt is a sad one. Only yesterday I was saying with tears in my eyes—Would I had died peaceably in my seventy-ninth year, on May 6th, 1786, instead of having been born on that day! Peradventure, I might have become a copying clerk in the Imperial Cameral Tribunal and thence have passed away to eternal bliss. Moreover, I should in that case have lived much longer in the memory of posterity than I can now hope for. Can it be doubted? Would it not have been reserved for my great-grandchildren to read the judgment's-execution's-fastigium of the Egyptian lawsuit-pyramid, for which I should have a hundred years before laid the foundation by copying the indictment, and would not therefore four generations of men have read my writings, instead of the case being what it is now, that rarely more than four men read them, to wit, myself, the compositor, the printer, and the proof-corrector?

Man should be modest, but 'tis a hard case. Give us the means of becoming pious, and we will seize them with both hands. It is too late, the temptation is as great as the wantonness; wherever one turns his eyes, he is surrounded by pandars and beckoning beauties. We have tasted of the Tree of Knowledge, and learnt to distinguish the good from the evil. Why did ye not sooner place the cherub with his flaming sword before your garden? Why did ye lead us into temptation? What you now do is all in vain; try if you will—if you succeed, your success will be your justification.

It was about the time of the triumph of reaction in the Carlsbad Decrees, when Börne commenced that migratory life which he never definitively exchanged for

a settled abode. On the Rhine and at Paris, home again at Frankfort, then at Stuttgart and Munich, and back again at Paris, the city which alone satisfies the restless, he read and wrote, and lounged in his flowing dressing-gown (or rather "dwelt in it," according to Heine) and smoked his long pipe, one of his few inveterate Teutonisms. And, wherever he might find himself, he wrote letters, addressed nominally to the lady of his maturer affections, but really to the public. The innocent relation between Börne and Madame Wohl, afterwards Madame Strass, gave rise, as all readers of Heine know, to a most scandalous attack by the latter upon the reputation of the lady; but, since this attack and the *esclandre* which followed occurred after Börne's death (1837), we may pass by this very unpleasant topic. Madame Wohl (who belonged, we believe, to the same gifted race as her correspondent) was, according to Dr Reinganum, the author of the very diffuse biographical notice of Börne appended to the collected edition of his works, rather the peg upon which her correspondent hung his literary efforts than, in any sense of the word, the object of his personal devotion. He never wrote a line to her which was not destined for publication; and the ardour of the passion which he pretended towards her was merely an innocent literary device which can have been no secret to her any more than to the public, which in the first instance she represented. Börne's Paris letters, which fill no less than five volumes of his works, stand unrivalled in this department of German literature. As a politician, he was at once more consistent and more enthusiastic than Heine, notwithstanding all the self-glorifying fan-

faronades of the latter. Börne possessed a surer insight than his contemporary into the nicer distinctions between the French and German nationalities. Less cosmopolitan than Heine, he had a larger and broader sympathy with the sufferings and errors of his own countrymen, which gives a half pathetic tinge even to his most vigorous satire. Had Charles Lamb written political letters, he would have written them after the fashion of Börne's. And it is probably to this tendency of his nature that was due that hatred of Goethe which is one of Börne's best-known literary characteristics. He thought that the great potentate of Weimar was the conscious foe and oppressor of the sentimental element in the German character and in German literature, and that in Goethe's view this element comprehended patriotism. To Goethe, he says in an amusing letter on the Correspondence with Schiller, the demagogic movements of his own heart were as offensive as tobacco-smoke. And his summary of the character of the entire Correspondence, unjust of course, but with enough of truth in it to give it force, may aptly close this notice; for it implies, *per contra*, the most distinctive feature of Börne's own literary genius:—

These letters only amuse me, because they bore me. If they bored me a little less, they would bore me terribly. If they were pleasing, what then? Schiller and Goethe! But that our two greatest geniuses in their home, the fatherland of genius, are thus nothing—no, less than nothing, that they are so little—this is a miracle, and every miracle is delightful, were it merely the changing of gold into lead.

Water in a liqueur-glass! A correspondence is like wedlock. Calm and solitude allow much to be said and tempt to the saying of much on which one is silent to others, which in truth

one only learns from oneself by communication. And what do these men tell one another? What nobody cares to listen for in secret, what they might have cried out to one another in the market-place.

And Börne's life was spent in crying out on the market-place the secrets of his heart. He was not a poet, but in every page of his brilliant prose is observable that under-current of sensitive pathos which is one at least of the symptoms of a poetic disposition.

### 38. HILLEBRAND ON MODERN GERMAN THOUGHT

(*The Saturday Review*, October 9, 1880)

WHATEVER may be thought of these Lectures<sup>1</sup> by a public less select than the "parterre of gentlemen" before whom they were originally delivered, and to whose polite indulgence a quite needless appeal was made in one of their opening passages, they are unlikely to be regarded by any English reader as ill-timed. Not that a new book about Germany and the Germans can claim a special value as such at the present season. Of generalities of one kind or another concerning this well-worn theme we may frankly confess to have recently had enough, and more than enough. Even statistical compilations not unfrequently disappoint the respectful attention which they appear to claim as their right; and only a languid kind of interest can continue to attach even to a comparison between the annual cost of a German and that of a British soldier—a point in favour of his more frugal native land which M. Hillebrand himself is, we observe, unable to refrain from making in a note. Mere sketches of manners, on the other hand, will no doubt continue to be produced so long as Englishmen travel up the Rhine possessed of sufficient power of observation and sense of humour to be amused

<sup>1</sup> *Six Lectures on the History of German Thought from the Seven Years' War to Goethe's Death*. Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain, May and June 1879. By Karl Hillebrand. London: Longmans and Co., 1880.



by national divergences in the use of the table-knife or the adjustment of the feather-bed. But it is not in such wares that M. Hillebrand deals; and, if there is no lack of ambitiousness in the title of his Lectures, there is likewise much opportuneness in their theme. And this precisely because those aspects of German national progress and life with which M. Hillebrand deals happen to have gone rather out of fashion in our intellectual—or, at all events, our literary—world. While our chief English sources of periodical information concerning the non-political activity of Germany—indeed, in a lesser degree, concerning the progress of her political life itself—have grown surprisingly scanty, a feeling altogether antipathetic to contemporary German opinion and sentiment has of late years become increasingly manifest in the most self-complacent spheres of English literary criticism. It would, probably, have required the time occupied by one of M. Hillebrand's lectures to establish without abruptness, and to deprecate with effect, the existence of the feeling in question; and he has accordingly preferred to assume it—or at least to seem to do so—by adopting a manner half blandly apologetic, half buoyantly defiant. To the corresponding aversion which unfortunately has come not less widely to prevail in Germany, although it has happily not yet altogether estranged the German from the English world of letters, he only refers by means of a decidedly skilful *aposiopesis*. But to one of the main-springs of anti-German feeling among ourselves he openly directs attention, though recognising in it rather a sign of the times in general than a feature of our particular insular locality. Nor can we refuse our assent

to his opinion that his own ideas as to what has been the real strength of German thought in the past, and as to what will prove its real strength in the future, contravene not a few of the principles most favoured on our chief literary and scientific *rostra*. Thus a delicate compliment to the intellectual generosity of M. Hillebrand's audience, as well as a just appreciation of fundamental differences likely to exist between him and them, is conveyed in the following sentence in his first lecture:—

In the whole tendency of my mind, in my entire way of looking at things—religious and moral, historical and scientific—I have remained a thorough Continental, nay, a thorough German, whereas the younger generation of Europe is entering more and more every day into the intellectual current which sprang up in this island towards 1860, and has since spread over the greater part of the Continent.

At the same time, even persons unacquainted with the writings of M. Hillebrand—who has known many lands and is known in many—cannot have needed to accompany him far in these Lectures, in order to become assured that in him they have to deal with no German pedant, whether of the primary, secondary, or tertiary period. Even when he drapes himself with becoming severity in the philosopher's robe, he reserves to himself a freedom of movement which proves that he has not, like Freiligrath's Hamlet, "stuck too long at Wittenberg, in the lecture-rooms and among the sects." Of Kant himself, he treats, copiously indeed, but with a comparative succinctness not commended by native precedents, and shows himself capable of summarising even that most fluid of subjects, the history of German

Romanticism, as tersely as in his delightful *History of France* he has recently summarised the history of its French counterpart. M. Hillebrand, who is as much at home at Florence as he is at Paris, has of late found various opportunities of showing that among Englishmen also, as among English books, he runs little danger of losing his way. Some of his lately published remarks about ourselves to ourselves may have jarred upon our presumably still more intimate knowledge of the subject; but his generalisations, even when least flattering, could not but be allowed to have a broader basis than, say, those of M. Taine on the same theme. But he is not less candid as to both our merits and our defects, when he discusses them for the benefit of German readers. Thus we were interested the other day to find him expounding in the *Deutsche Literaturblatt* (published at Gotha) the excellences and the shortcomings of so peculiarly English an undertaking as Mr John Morley's series of unannotated critical biographies. A certain touch of dilettantism is almost inseparable from the manner of a writer so universally well-informed; and, though M. Hillebrand is something very different from a *feuilletoniste*, yet he is so overfull of special knowledge that he might, by the unwary, be occasionally mistaken for one. We hasten to add that M. Hillebrand's English leaves nothing to be desired, and cannot fairly be said even to suggest the labour which it must surely have entailed. The only oddity we have noticed is the epithet "elect," added to those of "noble," and "sympathetic" in characterising Prince Hal, Tom Jones, and Egmont.

Even in the general conduct of his argument, M. Hillebrand, while a thorough German in the drift of his ideas and in the foundations of his conceptions,

exhibits a lucidity which is more usually found in French contemporary writers. No doubt, popular lecturers, especially when dealing with subjects comparatively difficult or presumably unfamiliar to the majority of their hearers, have good reason for aiming at this quality above all others; and, just as the discovery of the master-passion in a man used to be offered as the surest clue to the interpretation of his conduct in life, so, in order to understand the general course of a nation's intellectual progress, it may seem only necessary to ascertain and state the "mother-ideas" which determined it. M. Hillebrand has found little difficulty, without at the same time deviating from the track of most previous enquirers, in pointing out that the four

principal ideas which Germany had to develop and illustrate in her national literature and in her scientific work were almost all thrown on the intellectual market of Europe shortly after the conclusion of the Seven Years' War. Winckelmann gave new life to antiquity by applying to it a new historical method. Lessing traced the limits between the fine arts and poetry, assigning to each of them a domain not to be overstepped. Kant, correcting Rousseau's view of the history of mankind, contended that the ideal aim of mankind was not the natural state of the savage, as Rousseau held, but a state of nature combined with intellectual, moral, æsthetic, and political development, such as was revealed in Greece. Herder, finally, starting likewise from Rousseau, believed all great creations of humanity to be the work of spontaneous action, either individual or collective and national, not the intentional result of self-conscious activity. The three first of these four great men still belong to the generation of 1760, as we should call the men born in the second and third decade of the century; the last, Herder, born in 1744, already belongs to the following generation, that of Goethe. His marvellous precocity alone permitted him to fight at the side of Lessing, his elder by fifteen years.

Whether the historical analogy be accepted or not, there can certainly be no doubt that the spring-time and the summer-time of modern German intellectual life are comprehended within limits little, if at all, wider than those of the period of the literary greatness of Athens. This fact would be inexplicable without its antecedents. And, though it has long been a wellknown truth, it cannot in this connexion be too often repeated, that the Thirty Years' War placed Germany, as compared with the other nations capable of contributing to the progress of European culture, at a disadvantage from which it would be rash to assert that she has ever altogether recovered. On all this M. Hillebrand necessarily dwells; nor does he fail to show (without, of course, in the least degree laying claim to originality) what were the principal currents of national sentiment which enabled the nation, through a period of apparently hopeless decadence, to preserve its vitality. We do not quarrel with either of the twin articles of belief at the present day readily accepted by the majority of thinking Germans, that "the two springs around which the new life gathered and grew up were the Prussian State and the Protestant Religion." But, with regard to the latter, M. Hillebrand himself shows very clearly how it had, if the expression may be used, to be turned inside out before, as a national influence, it could resume the task of the national Reformation. And as to the former, we only wish that the half-conscious, half-unconscious progress of historical growths were not so constantly represented as the conscious fulfilment of "glorious missions." Before the Great Elector's policy is extolled as consistent with that of his later successors, it is surely

not too much to ask that it should be proved to have been consistent with itself.

In connexion with the central part of that period of the history of German thought which M. Hillebrand has with a pleasant, but sure, touch sketched in this volume, he gives us little that is new, but brings out with particular effectiveness some points which have been comparatively little noticed by English readers. Of Lessing we have recently been told so much both at first hand and at second hand, that it was unnecessary to expatiate at great length upon his share in the progress of German thought; we may, however, direct attention to a brief criticism of the *Laocoon* which is worth considering by readers too ready to overlook the incompleteness of that most striking essay. Herder, on the contrary, has received from English writers a much smaller measure of criticism; perhaps the increasing interest in him which is again shown in Germany, and which Julian Schmidt is doing his best to keep alive by means of the occasional nudges he is in the habit of administering to the literary public, will in due time spread further. At all events, M. Hillebrand has shown with considerable force that it is a shortsighted criticism which identifies Herder with the kind of cosmopolitanism with which many, both before and after Napoleon, have taunted the German mind. Undoubtedly he "placed humanity higher than nationality"; but, of all the leaders of German thought in the 18th century, it was he who most warmly defended, and by his literary labours gave most vitality to, the national principle. In a passage at the close of his fourth lecture, too long to be extracted here, M. Hillebrand certainly

approaches near to proving that no other German writer of note exercised the important indirect influence upon his contemporaries and successors which was exercised by Herder. And later, in the very caustic lecture on the Romanticists—about some of whom it is indeed time that the unvarnished truth should be told—he shows very convincingly that this school of writers “might be called the real executors of Herder’s bequest, were it not that Herder contented himself with emancipating the mind from rationalistic conventionalism, whereas the romanticists, after having most effectually worked in the same direction, wanted to enthral it in the fetters of a worse conventionalism, that of a dead tradition, galvanised by artificial means.” Thus, theirs was not a permanently fructifying influence like Herder’s, the fullest operation of which upon a single creative genius is no doubt recognisable in the case of Goethe. Herder himself, in his turn, eagerly acknowledged the influence of Hamann, whose reputation must always remain of that rather exasperating kind which is not peculiar to German Universities. He was (to borrow a phrase of Thackeray’s) “too great and too good” to leave anything more than fragments behind him.

We pass over what M. Hillebrand has to say about Goethe and Schiller, and more especially about Kant, the study of whom, as our readers may be aware, is at the present day being revived with remarkable vigour in Germany as well as in this country. The observations contained in these lectures on the fundamental ideas of the Kantian philosophy were not intended, and are not likely to be regarded, as a material contribution to

the study of the subject. For our own part, we are disposed to regard with distrust attempts to express in a few striking sentences the sum of Kant's moral creed as contrasted with "the German one." But, in any case, M. Hillebrand's view of this contrast is worth considering on its own account. The Lecture containing it appropriately closes with a brief discussion of the question—Will Germany come back from its present condition, in which not only has individualism made room for uniformity and humanism for patriotism, but "the accidental practical life" seems to suffice for the generation which lives it? It is a question which, however it may be formulated, occupies the thoughts of more Germans and friends of Germany than are willing to confess the fact. The lecturer has the cheerful answer ready—that, "so soon as the long-yearned-for national State is complete and insured against inner and outer enemies, Germany will come back to the creed of the real founders of her civilisation. But," he very judiciously adds, "she will only accept it with qualifications." M. Hillebrand, who in the best sense of the epithets is both a patriotic and a cosmopolitan writer, must excuse us if we say that it savours something of affectation when he describes his great nation as being unable just at present to allow itself "the luxury of such liberal ideas and feelings" as those which animated Lessing and Herder, and Goethe and Schiller. At what point in the consolidation of the great political work of this age will it be able to afford resuming them? And where are they to be locked away in the meantime? Among the representatives of political life themselves, or among the specialists in the Universities? Probably, it depends



as much upon her students as upon her statesmen whether Germany will remain true to traditions which can never be out of date or out of place like the hard-and-fast constitutionalism to which M. Hillebrand objects. Her sons may not be able to gratify the shade of Kant by elaborating schemes for a universal peace; but they need not insult the shade of Lessing by throwing stones at the Jews. We, too, have faith in the intellectual, as well as in the political, future of Germany; but most of all because we do not believe that the future leaders of German thought are likely to wait till Prince Bismarck can inform them that his work is done.

### 39. DICKENS AS A SOCIAL REFORMER

(*National Home-Reading Union. Special Courses Magazine,*  
June, 1906)

WHETHER in the days of motor-cars, or in those of stage-coaches, or in yet earlier days, the rate of speed at which social reforms are wont to progress in a community like our own, ancient in its origins, fond of its traditions, and induced (if only by considerations of climate) to cherish a constant suspicion of change, has rarely been excessive. The advocates of reforms of this sort which have proved victorious are, therefore, justly entitled to a certain latitude of self-congratulation, though this by no means implies that such self-congratulation is justified when it comes rather near to the formula: *post hoc, propter hoc*—"I urged the reform, and that accounts for its having been successfully carried out." It cannot be fairly said that Dickens, either consciously or unconsciously, was ever guilty of such a misconception. He was protected against it by a clearness of mental vision which may be said to have been innate in him; by a humility of spirit which, as with most really great men, fully reveals itself only when they are at their best and greatest; and by a supreme sense of humour which would have made it impossible for him to make a capital blunder about himself. I am convinced that, even in a passage like the following—so far as I remember, the most notable parallel ever drawn by him between his literary efforts and the social reforms advanced by them—he meant no more than he said. But it may, all the

same, be worth quoting at length (from his Preface to the 1859 reprint of *The Pickwick Papers* in the so-called "Charles Dickens Edition" of his works):—

I have found it curious and interesting, looking over the sheets of this reprint, to mark what important social improvements have taken place about us, almost imperceptibly, since they were originally written. The licence of counsel, and the degree to which juries were ingeniously bewildered, are yet susceptible of moderation; while an improvement in the mode of conducting Parliamentary elections (and even Parliaments too, perhaps) is still within the bounds of possibility. But legal reforms have pared the claws of Messrs Dodson and Fogg; a spirit of self-respect, mutual forbearance, education, and co-operation for such good ends has diffused itself among their clerks; places far apart are brought together, to the present convenience and advantage of the public, and to the certain destruction, in time, of a host of petty jealousies, blindnesses, and prejudices, by which the public alone have always been the sufferers; the laws relating to imprisonment for debt are altered; and the Fleet Prison is pulled down!

Who knows but by the time the series reaches its conclusion it may be discovered that there are even magistrates in town and country who should be taught to shake hands every day with common sense and justice; that even poor laws may have mercy on the weak, the aged, and unfortunate; that schools, on the broad principles of Christianity, are the best adornment for the length and breadth of this civilised land; that prison doors should be barred on the outside no less heavily than they are barred within; that the universal diffusion of common means of decency and health is as much the right of the poorest of the poor as it is indispensable to the safety of the rich and of the State; that a few petty boards and bodies—less than drops in the great ocean of humanity which roars around them—are not for ever to let loose fever and consumption on God's creatures at their will, or always to keep their jobbing little fiddles going for a dance of Death.

In this graphic retrospect, then, of the achievements and the aspirations of a crusade which had lasted for nearly two-and-twenty years, and which just covered that first third of the Queen's reign now coming to be known to the younger generation as the Early Victorian Age, Dickens may be taken at his word both for what he says and for what he abstains from saying. But it is not the less certain that the long and arduous labours of these best years of his literary life had most materially contributed to some of the results on which he touches and to the hopes with which a more abundant harvest was awaited by his own generation. There are, I believe, not a few young men and women addicted to novel reading who profess themselves in doubt as to whether the time has yet arrived for finally determining the place of Dickens in English literature. We may leave their doubts to be settled by the next turn of the wheel of fashion, with which such critics and their judgments go up and down. But an estimate of the services rendered by the writings of Dickens towards the social reforms accomplished by his age or handed down by it to the next during the process of accomplishment may be reached without the intervention of disputatious differences of taste or opinion. And this is well; for efforts that, like his, were at once animated by the spirit of the age of which he formed part, and themselves contributory to its formation, should be studied before the actual traces of a great personal influence have been quite obliterated.

When Dickens first came before the world of English readers as a popular writer, an ebb had already begun in the mighty popular movement which had at last

forced Parliamentary Reform upon a frankly recalcitrant *ancien régime*. The middle class was on the whole content with what it had achieved or with what had been achieved for it, pleased to sit every man under his own vine, in his own counting-house, or in view of the chimneys of his own factory, and to make the best for himself of the opportunities of the times. At the date of Queen Victoria's accession, a long season of trouble was already at hand in the populous districts of the North; but with these Dickens was only later to form an acquaintance which never became a real intimacy. In the country at large, the class which had recently acquired so considerably a share of political power was on the whole prepared to rest and be thankful; nevertheless, this class, as well as the country as a whole, was well aware that the door, once thrown open, could not be shut against further changes—in municipal government and in the administration of the Poor Law in particular; and for ardent spirits and far-sighted minds, at all events, a doubt could hardly remain but that the transformation of the social as well as of the political system of our national life, however slowly it might progress, could only be a matter of time.

Such were the conditions in which Dickens first came before the English public as one to whose voice it speedily learnt to listen. He was not a prophet like Carlyle, still less a conscious reconstructor like Mill; but, like them, he cherished at his heart a deep resentment against the order of things which seemed to have been so satisfactorily repaired. Yet it was only as he came to understand his command over the instrument of literary expression, that he likewise came to under-

stand the use to which he could put it—and, strangely enough, his literary greatness grew with this insight, and declined with it. When he began writing for the public, he was a young man not only without position, but with very little of what is commonly called education. His childhood had been spent among painful experiences of a poverty that could hardly be called “genteel,” and amidst the humiliations that beset a seemingly hopeless struggle for self-advancement. But his nature was nobly unselfish; and the troubled years of his youth had only deepened his sympathy with the poor—the poor in that wider sense of the afflicted, the oppressed, the wronged, in which the word is used with so pathetic an elasticity in our version of the Psalms.

Thus, though in his earlier writings, and indeed in the great body of them, his range of view remained for the most part singularly restricted—including, with an intimate knowledge of the middle classes and their dependants in London and the country towns of the South, only occasional excursions into a wider social, or even local, area—he never was a mere painter, or, either in his earliest efforts or in the days of his decline, a mere satirist, of manners. He was too much of an idealist not to feel that the world—or that part of it which he knew—was out of joint; and his healthy nature and love of work made him bless his opportunities of helping to set it right. His first publication, the *Sketches by Boz*, was unpretentiously intended to do no more than illustrate “everyday life and everyday people”; yet even here, though quite free from any thought of posing as a social reformer, he could not refrain from pointing out blots in our social system which it was

quite within the power of direct legislation to remedy—such as the existing law of distress or the condition of our criminal prisons. *The Pickwick Papers*, through which he leapt into fame, were even more distinctly designed with a view to entertainment pure and simple; but passages of the book did not fail in his hands to assume the deeper dye of a protest against social injustice; and in the evolution of his concise narrative he found his first opportunity for an effective attack upon the injustices of our penal laws. The more serious scheme of *Oliver Twist* seated him in the saddle as a champion of the helpless victims of a heartless Poor Law against its more heartless administration by Bumbledom; and in *Nicholas Nickleby* he essayed, with extraordinarily direct success, the part of an educational reformer, though from the point of view of the philanthropist rather than from that of the teacher.

Already in this story, the influence is perceptible of the memorable effort which for some years Lord Ashley (afterwards Earl of Shaftesbury) had been carrying on—not always judiciously, not always, perhaps, quite fairly, but with an ardent enthusiasm which pressed forward to an ultimately certain victory—on behalf of the workers in factories, and the children in particular. To Dickens the appeal was irresistible, however imperfect was his acquaintance with the manufacturing districts, and however little he knew of, or cared for, such essential factors in the existing state of trouble as the pressure of the Corn Laws. In *The Old Curiosity Shop* he introduced two chapters of Salvator Rosa-like gloom and glare, which, in their deliberate intensity, show their author straining every nerve to bring home his un-

compromising moral. We must pass by his American journey and its in some respects reactionary influence upon his political views; for his ardour as a social philanthropist suffered no abatement; and, by the time his earlier *Christmas Stories* had raised his popularity to an unprecedented and (if all things be taken into account) unequalled height, he had made up his mind that in imagining a new fiction his paramount duty was to contrive to strike "a great blow for the poor."

It is impossible, within two or three pages, to carry further a survey of the relations between his philanthropic ideas and his literary masterpieces. In his later writings, he but once went beyond the limits which his experience and his instinct of remaining within its limits imposed upon him. In *Hard Times*, the external features of the situation presented by him had not indeed been taken over at second-hand (for that would have been contrary to his whole method of workmanship), but had been rapidly observed rather than—as with the London river or the Kentish roads—closely watched and lovingly studied. And as to the problem towards the solution of which the book was manifestly designed as a contribution, there was manifestly here no deliverance on the economical relations between capital and labour, no pronouncement even on the methods of adjusting the necessities of industrial laws to the unextinguishable claims of humanity—but simply an enforcement of the moral obligation of a mutual understanding between masters and men, an exposure of the shortsightedness of the masters who left that plain duty out of their calculations, and a weekday sermon on the folly of ignoring the ideals without which the purpose of human existence becomes inconceivable.



The effort, sincere as it was, proved only in a certain degree successful. Concerning another class of our population and its sufferings—slow in coming to the surface, slower in finding adequate expression, slowest in meeting with adequate remedies—Dickens had little to say as a writer. To him, imaginative to the last and accustomed to the contrasts between town and country which the town-bred always find it difficult to shake off, the agricultural poor remained more or less the inhabitants of that portion of the United Kingdom which, according to Cowper, was “made by God.”

In his later books, Dickens, though still a social reformer in general purpose and on every occasion that thrust itself upon him, and the indefatigable advocate of the claims of the depressed, the obscure, the unfortunate, showed a perception that the working of the “two-handed” or any other engine from which root and branch reforms may be expected must be left to younger activities. In the days of the Crimean War, he presided at an administrative reform meeting held, if I remember right, on the stage of Drury Lane Theatre; but his own chief contribution to the cause of efficiency in government was not any proposal towards reconstruction, but his immortal satire on the art of “how not to do it.” It would at the same time be in the highest degree unjust not to remember that the editor of *Household Words* and of *All the Year Round* had for a long series of laborious years proved himself alive to the truth that generalities are deceptive, and that the earlier of these weekly journals had been deliberately founded, as both were consistently carried on, with the purpose of applying this very test of efficiency for the common weal to its existing institutions.

Dickens, if I have been able in these few discursive pages to convey the general idea with which they have been written, was a social reformer, and a great social reformer, in this sense: that he not only helped to break up the ground in which the great and beneficent new growths of his age were to take root, but rendered signal—and, in his generation, unequalled—service by keeping alive, refreshing, and invigorating those growths, through the action of a perennial popular sympathy which it is only given to the favourite of a nation to call forth and to sustain. The limits imposed upon his efforts by the conditions of his early life and their consequences, by the radicalism which made him impatient to fall in with attempts at gradual amendment, and, it should be added, by the romanticism which carried his radicalism itself off its feet—all these were of no account against his power of commending the suffering and the oppressed to the fellow-feeling of the whole community around them, of making at least one great nation feel that it ought to be—and that, if it came to know itself, it would be—one at heart. If Dickens was not a great social reformer, then the spirit to which social reforms are due must be left out of the reckoning, because its name cannot be printed on the back of any particular Bill.

I desire to commend as deserving of close study a book which will, I hope, before long find an English translator—M. Louis Cazamian's *Le Roman Social en Angleterre* (1830-1850), Paris, 1904. Some of the conclusions concerning Dickens contained in this work I have not hesitated to reproduce in a summary form in the above paper.

## 40. IN MEMORIAM E. C. GASKELL

(*The Cornhill Magazine*, October, 1910)

ON September the 29th of this year, the day on which the present number of *The Cornhill Magazine* will come into the hands of some of its readers, falls the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Mrs Gaskell. Hence, although already the last issue of this Magazine contained an appreciation of her character and genius by an expert and friendly hand, it has been thought fitting to offer here a further brief tribute to her memory. I shall not, I hope, be held to have thrust myself forward on this occasion, although its associations come home to me very closely. A few only survive outside Mrs Gaskell's own family who can claim to have known her personally—alas! how few; it was only the other day that one of them was laid to her rest, through whom, unless I mistake, I first came to know Mrs Gaskell's daughters, and who will herself be remembered as one of the noblest among Lancashire women of these later days<sup>1</sup>. For myself, I cannot essay to recall the Mrs Gaskell in whom Manchester took pride, and of whom, as we may well believe, no marble can reproduce the inspiring beauty and no canvas the exquisite charm. She died not many months before, as it chanced, I came to Manchester, to find her name established there as a household word—not only wherever there was a welcome for all that refines or elevates life, but in the home of many a working man who had read *Mary*

<sup>1</sup> The late Lady Roscoe (d. July 5th, 1910).

*Barton* or remembered the Cotton Famine. It was not very long before I crossed the threshold of a house which, in a measure uncommon even in the annals of literary biography, is permanently identified with her and hers, and to which the thoughts of those who have passed through its portico never return without affectionate sympathy. Of Mrs Gaskell's writings, on the other hand, and of the place which her name will long hold among those standing forth in the history of a very notable age of our national literature, there are many who could speak with an authority greater than mine. On this head, I can only profess to have long made a study of all that she has written and to have come to love her books so well that whenever I, as it were, look them in the face afresh I find new beauties in them.

It would be alien alike from the object and from the spirit of these few pages, were I to take advantage of them for going back upon biographical facts, or upon biographical fancies evolved out of these. But it is no secret that the most profound personal sorrow of Mrs Gaskell's life—a sorrow to which she again and again recurs in her writings, and which, I have long thought, inspired the conception of the most deeply pathetic among them all—was the occasion of her first deliberate resort to authorship. Yet *Mary Barton*, her earliest and, in the literal sense of the word, her most popular book, had a purpose besides the secondary and incidental one of alleviating, in the making of it, a mother's grief. To condemn a novel—or, for that matter, a play, or any other product of literary art—because it has a "purpose" seems to me a quite outworn device of self-sufficient criticism; it is not, of course,

the purpose which makes the story or the play bad art, but the way in which, at times, that purpose is worked out with the aid of exaggeration, artificiality, "stodginess"—*qu'en sçais-je?* Thackeray, no doubt, laughed at novels with a purpose—not so much, however, I take leave to suspect, because of the edification intended by certain weekday preachers (for he was himself rather fond of preaching) as because of the quality of their sermons. *Mary Barton*, which holds a recognised place of its own among the social novels of the Early Victorian period, worked out its purpose—which was that of a "protest against *laissez faire* in industrial life"—with extraordinary power; and, six years later, *North and South* completed the protest by proving how, if dealt with in a generous spirit on both sides, the problem admitted of solution. From a literary point of view, the earlier book showed Mrs Gaskell to be still unaware of the fulness of her powers; while in the later she was, not less manifestly, gradually acquiring the free use of them. But, in both stories, she surrendered herself to the creative force of her imagination; and it would be idle to pretend that, in either, the purpose of the novel overpowered, or even materially interfered with, its execution as a work of art.

Mrs Gaskell's greatness of soul led her to love the poor—"the poor" in that widest sense of the term with which the English version of the Psalms of David has familiarised us: those who are oppressed and suffer from no fault of their own, but because no compassion for them has pierced the minds of the proud. It was thus that, as a dweller in a great manufacturing city, and as one who could in no case have passed sickness

and suffering by on the other side, she had come to divine as the sovereign cure for the evils of the times the operation of sympathy between class and class. She was by no means the discoverer of this remedy, though she had not, we may be sure, waited to learn it from Disraeli<sup>1</sup>, any more than it was she who taught its secret spring to Dickens, whose *Hard Times* coincided so notably with her second industrial story in date of production. But she stood at the height of the movement to whose force her literary efforts materially added, in which some of the noblest spirits of her own generation shared, and which was ultimately to be transformed from a magnanimous literary impulse into an irresistibly advancing current of legislation.

In her second important work (for *Ruth* appeared nearly two years before the publication of *North and South* began) Mrs Gaskell was still writing for a purpose; but, this time, the purpose had broadened into the enforcement of the cardinal principle of the religion of love—the keynote of Christianity—the duty of the forgiveness of sin. To this, the profoundest of religious principles, while its practice is at the same time the most perplexing of social problems, the authoress of *Ruth* addressed herself heart and soul. As a literary artist, she already felt sure of herself in a degree which would have been impossible to her when writing *Mary Barton*, and she accordingly allowed free play to her powers of expression, including those of description, which she here for the first time fully displayed. Never-

<sup>1</sup> Still less, of course, did she take it over from less imaginative and now half-forgotten predecessors of her own sex in the field of the social novel.

theless, and although she had already learnt to temper the fervour of pathos by an adjunct of delightful humour, she never was more passionately in earnest. *Ruth*, of which the design was assuredly formed under the influence of the great sorrow of Mrs Gaskell's life as a mother, goes to the bottom of things, to be reached, according to the feeling of the writer, by the sounding-line of religion only. (The "white lie" problem in the story is of quite secondary significance, and indeed, on the whole, rather disturbing.) Mrs Gaskell may, or may not, have valued *Ruth* beyond the estimation to which its literary merits entitle it among her chief works: the bigotry of some of the assaults made upon it and, for that matter, the feebleness of some of the deliverances in its favour, would sufficiently explain such a judgment on her part. But of the strength and purity of the flame that burnt on the altar of her heart this book offers the surest proof; and there may be some who, for the sake of the writer, could sooner spare any of her books than this.

Like *Mary Barton*, *Ruth* is still composed in what, in the case of the earlier story, its authoress called the "minor key." *Cranford*, which, though the papers of the inimitable series bearing that cherished name had begun to appear from the end of 1851, was not collected into a whole till 1853, left no doubt as to the sunshine radiating in and from the genius of the writer. Of *Cranford* many critics (including Mrs Tooley) have discoursed with admirable insight; indeed, there has never been a break in the chorus of praise lavished upon this literary gem, or a limit to the spread of its fame—least of all in a Westerly direction. It is not only because

the Americans love everything which is of the Old World, Old Worldly<sup>1</sup>, but also because of their incomparable *flair* for the humorous, that their *Cranford* cult knows no bounds. They have the best reason for feeling assured that, though the manner of *Cranford* has been approached, it has never been equalled since first it delighted its readers. Only, in extolling, as it should be extolled, the delicacy of this work, which is that of the choicest Sèvres, while the fragrance which lingers about it like that of rose-leaves in the vase, injustice should not be done to other works, of different design, from the same master-hand. The spirit animating the idyll is a less potent spirit than that which informs the epic; and perfection is not the only quality which will command the admiration of ages to come. And Mrs Gaskell was still to write books which, while moulded with a graceful sureness of touch equalling

<sup>1</sup> I remember the excuse of an American guest who, on his very first evening in England, appeared too late in a dining-room not many miles from the "George" at Cranford—how he had been to look at a thatched Cheshire house in the vicinity, never having seen such a thing before. I may take this opportunity of correcting a statement made by me, though with hesitation, elsewhere, that *Cranford* alone among Mrs Gaskell's books has been subjected to dramatisation. In 1866, the year of her death, the audacious dramaturgical craft of Dion Boucicault constructed out of the materials offered by *Mary Barton* a melodrama called *The Long Strike*, which, though produced at the Lyceum, would have well suited the old Adelphi. Whether or not it suited the interest of the hour, it certainly shows with what ease an experienced playwright can accomplish the process of levelling down. I owe the opportunity of reading this play to Mr J. Albert Green, the librarian of the Public Free Library, Moss Side, Manchester, where a most interesting memorial exhibition of Gaskelliana is on the point of being opened.



that characteristic of *Cranford*, and full of the pathos and the humour with which it abounds, were to move the depths of the soul with a force such as this book never essayed to set in motion.

But before, without any effort—as if her brain had long harboured in germ certain creations of her fancy, or as if she had shown them forth in rapid outline only<sup>1</sup>, before she gave them to the world in the fulness of their vitality—she had turned aside to a different kind of literary workmanship, and had achieved in it a wholly exceptional and an enduring success.

It was, so to say, by accident that, in accordance with the urgent desire of Charlotte Brontë's father, Mrs Gaskell undertook to write the life of her deceased friend. I have no intention to recur here, either to the conscientious assiduity with which the biographer prepared herself for all the aspects and all the details of her task, or to the censures offered, on one passage in the completed book, by persons concerned in its statements, and on other passages, which she did her best to set right. No history of a life, of which, largely by

<sup>1</sup> *Cranford* itself, which afterwards became, with a wider area of observation, the *Hollingford* of *Wives and Daughters*, is the *Duncombe* of *Mr Harrison's Confessions*, first published, early in 1851, in *The Lady's Companion*, a literary repository discovered by the invaluable bibliographical learning of Mr W. E. A. Axon. It is more to the point that in *Lizzie Leigh*, which was not improbably written, at least in part, before *Mary Barton*, one of the most pathetic episodes of the latter story was, in that case, anticipated. Maggie, in *The Moorland Cottage*, is, in some respects, the Molly of *Wives and Daughters*—in some respects, for if she is taken for all in all, none but herself can be her parallel, and only another Maggie (of *The Mill on the Floss*) her rival.

reason of its intrinsic interest, all the minutiae have for years been investigated with indefatigable enthusiasm, has better stood the test of time and enquiry; and but rarely in the history of literature has the genius of one original author raised such a monument to that of another.

There was a great difference between the best literary work of the two friends, and Charlotte Brontë, who did not mistake her own powers—except when she thought of Miss Austen as a model—could not have said of her own writing as she once wrote of a letter from Mrs Gaskell, that it has “the nourishing efficiency of our daily bread...it sustains, without forcing, the strength.” But there was, also, a true harmony between them: the larger and more motherly nature had taken to her bosom the shy little stranger, making her guest happy with herself and with her children, in whom so much of her was renewed. Thus, Mrs Gaskell had learnt to understand Miss Brontë even more thoroughly than she had come to know all the surroundings of her friend’s childhood—the moorland behind Haworth Church and the “children’s study” in the still parsonage. Though she had been unable to penetrate the depths into which the family with which she had to deal had erst “shot their roots,” she had come to understand the whole of the home life of which Charlotte was part, and the crises of that life’s story—the father’s blindness, the son’s decline, his and his two younger sisters’ deaths.

And if she knew the soil from which the wild-flower, rarer than any garden exotic, of Charlotte Brontë’s literary genius had drawn its nurture, she also

understood and could make clear the innermost characteristics of that genius itself—its transparent veracity, its fervour of indignation, its passionate yearning for a love in which all else is lost. In Mrs Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, as in nearly all modern biographies, the height of the interest, no doubt, belongs to the earlier portion of the story; but the later, too, has its pathos, and the whole will live by the side of the most enduring among the imaginative works of Charlotte Brontë and of Mrs Gaskell herself.

To these latter, in conclusion, I again turn; though, among the wide variety of writings illustrating the width and diversity of her intellectual interests, the liveliness of her sympathies, and the generous flow of an irresistible humour, I must confine myself to those which seem to me to exhibit her literary powers in full play, though she exercises them with the unerring insight and serene restraint that mark the self-knowledge of maturity. In *Sylvia's Lovers*, the scene of the action lies a little away from that of Mrs Gaskell's chief earlier stories, while its time goes back to a generation whose traditions were already, fifty years ago, just beginning to die out. The book thus stands to these earlier stories something in the relation of Thackeray's *Esmond* to his previous novels. It can hardly be doubted that Crabbe's *Ruth* had helped to suggest part of the machinery of this story; for Mrs Gaskell belonged to an age which had not yet cast off the spell of a writer whose, often prosy, annals of the poor came home to all who could perceive the pity and the wrath beneath the surface. But the conception of *Sylvia's Lovers* is wholly original, and, though it is probable that the writer never took more

pains about the material or about the execution of any of her stories than in the case of this, it is all of a piece, and enforces its purely Christian teaching with the directness, as has been well said, of a Greek tragedy. It is not wonderful that, in this novel, where Mrs Gaskell has travelled beyond her usual range of subject and locality, she should, more largely than in any other of her books, have dwelt on a class of men for whom she had a warm corner in her affections—those who occupy their business in deep waters<sup>1</sup>. But neither of Sylvia's lovers—sailor or soldier—can dispute our interest or our sympathy with Sylvia herself, as we remember her in all the changes of her fortunes; but most readily, perhaps, before trouble came to her—Sylvia in her dairy, with Kester hard-by in the shippen, the male variety of those faithful servants of whom Mrs Gaskell has left us a whole gallery<sup>2</sup>.

In *Cousin Phillis*, Mrs Gaskell's art celebrated another triumph—this time in a literary species in which English writers of fiction have far less frequently excelled than in that of the full-blown novel. *Cousin Phillis*, which can be set down as an idyll only in the sense in which that term was splendidly misappropriated by Tennyson—for the sorrows of Phillis are no more than

<sup>1</sup> The examples of Will Wilson in *Mary Barton*, the long-lost Peter in *Cranford*, and Captain James in *My Lady Ludlow* will at once occur to the reader. It is curious that *Sylvia's Lovers*, which brings to mind the profession of Mrs Gaskell's grandfather (Captain Stevenson), also recalls the descriptive powers of the author of *The Seasons*, who (as a genealogical statement in her own handwriting attests) was a near kinsman of her grandmother.

<sup>2</sup> Sally in *Ruth*, Nancy in *Cranford*, Betty in *Cousin Phillis*, Nixon (with a difference) in *North and South*, etc. etc.

the loves of Lancelot and Guinevere subjects for *genre* or water-colour art—has few, if any, rivals in our literature as an example of the short story; were there a greater abundance of such examples, some literary historian might perhaps be requested to invent a better technical name for them. In the meantime, we are content to recognise the perfect execution of a novel (according to the older use of the designation), short but not slight, from which, though it has no happy ending, we do not part unsatisfied or disquieted. The divine melancholy—the unprotesting sense of the irony of life—which pervades the narrative touches us inexpressibly; and the art with which action and suffering, energy and resignation, are contrasted in the personages in the story for whom our sympathies are claimed, is beyond analysis as it is above praise.

Last of all, *Wives and Daughters*, most certainly unequalled among Mrs Gaskell's works in constructive power as well as in the depth and variety of its character-drawing, marks the consummation of her art as, unhappily for English literature, it was to mark the close of her creative activity. For neither was it, as has been thoughtlessly assumed, the product of advanced age (this, the date which we are commemorating in the year 1910 would suffice to contradict), nor did it in any sense signify a resort on the part of its writer to a more or less new manner by which, in accordance with certain wellknown precedents, the public might be stirred to a new interest. In *Wives and Daughters*, pathos rises to a height to which, as in the presence of emotions of tragic force, we almost shrink from following it; yet it is warm living pathos, though as deep as that of any of

the deathbeds that are so frequent in the writer's earlier stories. What could, in this supreme way, be more moving than the beautiful scene of Molly's last sight—happily, not actually the last sight—of Roger? And as for comedy, it must be allowed that Dr Gibson, planted as he is in the midst of that town of womenfolk, married and unmarried, is as true a picture of a man as was ever drawn by a woman; and that his own second wife, Clare, is a type of which it is easy enough for us to see the humour, though there is at once pathos and consolation in the certainty that Dr Gibson could not help seeing it.

In these few pages, I have abstained, so far as possible, from comparing Mrs Gaskell's novels with one another from the point of view of relative superiority or inferiority—a point of view I have always thought about the least satisfactory that a critic can adopt. But there is perhaps one other that is still less conclusive, and that is the school or college examiner's way of classifying eminent authors in the order of comparative merit. In Mrs Gaskell's day, the greatest of contemporary novelists had to submit to this kind of classification; and to the present there remain worthy folk who plume themselves on their discernment in exalting Thackeray above Dickens, or *vice versa*. Mrs Gaskell was not likely to escape without her allotted marks, neither more nor less.

I would rather conclude in different fashion. Like all great writers born with a receptivity of mind and soul through which the original genius that is in them makes its way—now with greater, now with less difficulty; now with fierce self-emanicipatory force; now (as in her case) reconciling its impulses with the influences

from without and the ethical dictates from within—Mrs Gaskell was both the child of her times and inspired from other and higher sources. In the first period of her authorship, when she wrote *Mary Barton* and *Ruth*, and to a large extent when she wrote *North and South*, she was one of a band of writers representing, consciously or otherwise, and each after his or her own fashion, a reaction towards lost or half-lost ideals of life—above all, the ideal of goodwill towards men. Dickens was, in a sense, their captain, and Carlyle the prophet whose mystic utterances sent them forth into the fray; but the individualities of the greater among them were not subdued, they were only occasionally touched or affected by the themes, the treatment, the manner of their comrades. That a common purpose should be discernible in *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, with *Sybil* and *Alton Locke*, and *Hard Times* and (though here the harmony is less one of purpose than of action) with *Shirley*, and that yet every one of these works should be wholly and solely the property of the mind that conceived and the hand that executed it, sufficiently proves the genius of their writers.

The period in which Mrs Gaskell's later works were, in the main, included could not properly be called one of political or social reaction, but it was in many respects one of pause, and in some of rest. A crisis in the inner life of the nation was past; another might be at hand; it was the season for applying the national self-knowledge which had been gained in the day of ferment. To such a time, the novel with a purpose is no longer so appropriate as the novel in which observation of character, introspection, and humour play leading parts. George

Eliot reflects the spirit of this age more completely than any other of our great novelists; but Mrs Gaskell's contributions to its imaginative literature are not only responsive to its demands, but respond to them with a charm, a grace, and a purity that are all her own. Standing in happy freedom in its very midst, vexed by no doubts as she betook herself hither or thither, and impelled by no prejudices, she looked on English life and on the English men and women of the noontide of Queen Victoria's reign with a sure insight into much of what was best and soundest and noblest in them; and the sunshine of her loving heart seemed to reflect itself in the "everyday stories"—for so she insisted on calling the last and the most radiant of them all—which she told to her contemporaries and to their successors.

On the nature or duration of her future fame there is no need for speculating. Whether or not, in the coming centuries, she may suddenly be in the mode or, for the moment, out of it, the legacy which she has bequeathed to English literature will be piously treasured by all to whom that literature is dear. It is gold—gold of true ring—which, though it may not be flung broadcast into the streets, will not be wrapped up in a napkin. For this reason, we feel assured that the hundredth anniversary of her birthday marks only a stage in the history of her fame and in, what she would have valued more highly, the history of her influence. And we may take leave, in thought at least, to lay our plain wreaths on the grave where she rests with those she loved so dearly, and offer our sympathy to those who are left to remember her love and to guard the spotless honour of her name.



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