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SOME  
FRENCH AND SPANISH  
MEN OF GENIUS.



SOME  
FRENCH AND SPANISH  
MEN OF GENIUS.

SKETCHES

OF

MARIVAUX, VOLTAIRE, ROUSSEAU, DIDEROT,  
BEAUMARCHAIS, MIRABEAU,  
DANTON AND ROBESPIERRE, BÉRANGER, VICTOR HUGO,  
EUGÈNE SUE AND ZOLA,  
CERVANTES AND LOPE DE VEGA, CALDERON.

BY

JOSEPH FORSTER,

*Author of 'Four Great Teachers,' &c.*

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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THE welcome accorded to the author's little book, *Four Great Teachers: Ruskin, Carlyle, Emerson, and Browning*, by the critics and the public, induces the writer to hope that the following slight sketches of men whose memories are in some danger of being carried away by the deluge of new books, which appears to him to engulf the reputation of the most brilliant writers of the past, will not be unacceptable to many readers whose professional and other occupations prevent them from doing more than keep in touch with the good, bad, and indifferent literature of the day.

Some of the essays have been delivered as lectures and were very kindly received; a few have appeared in the magazines, and these have been added to and revised.



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MARIVAUX.



MARIVAUX.





## MARIVAUX.

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PIERRE CARLET DE CHAMBLAIN DE MARIVAUX was born at Paris, in the parish of St. Gervais, on February 4th, 1688. His family came from Normandy. His parents were not rich, but in easy circumstances. He received a good education: a little Latin and no Greek—the education of a man of the world.

One of his first works was *L'Iliade travestie*, written in 1716. Marivaux was French of the French, and could not rise to the simple grandeur of Homer. After burlesquing the *Iliad*, Marivaux parodied the first four books of *Télémaque* and imitated *Don Quixote*. He then turned to the theatre, and wrote a tragedy, entitled *La Mort d'Annibal*. But tragedy was not Marivaux's strong point, and the day after its performance his first comedy, *Arlequin poli par l'Amour*, was played with great success at the Comédie Italienne. Fortunately for the brilliant author there was an actress in the company, Rosa Zanetta Benozzi, who became famous under the name of Silvia, to create the delightful, fascinating characters imagined by him. Marivaux originated a new type, full of many-

coloured light and shade ; tender, witty, gay, and delightful, but never dull.

‘ We cannot help noticing ’ (wrote Sainte-Beuve) ‘ that in Marivaux’s comedies, as a rule, there are no exterior obstacles, no positive intrigue, nor circumstances which oppose the passion of his lovers ; there are only deceptions and caprices of the heart, and internal opposition. Their hearts commence by being in harmony, and when there are no dangers from the outside world Marivaux places the difficulty in delicate scruples, in curiosity, in timidity and ignorance, or in the morbid self-love and wounded point of honour of the lovers. Frequently it is a simple misunderstanding prolonged with great art. He agitates and torments this slight thread. If it were treated with less art it would break in a moment ; but he takes care to avoid that ; and it is the consummate skill displayed in the handling of this slight thread, and the gracious events strung upon it, which please a fastidious public. “*You will be there ? You will not be there ? I wager yes ! I wager no !*” That appears to be the spirit of all the plots of Marivaux’s plays.’

Marivaux’s works have not grown old. They have been preserved by the salt of human nature and the spice of wit. Like Molière’s, his plays live again when adequately acted. Marivaux’s canvas is small ; he is a miniature-painter ; but his portrait of human nature is subtle and strong. His style was so much his own that a new word was coined to define it : *Marivaudage*. This was at first considered to be an attack, but it was not so. Let those who think lightly of the brilliant, delicate, glittering

style of our author try to imitate it, and they will soon discover that in this case, at all events, the style is the man.

Marivaux's life was in his plays. He was foolish enough, misled by the advice of practical people, to place part of his fortune in the speculation of John Law, and lost it. He married early in life, and soon became a widower. His one daughter became a nun. He had refined tastes, and was so generous as to often embarrass his affairs. The following anecdote is very characteristic:—

Marivaux started one day for the country with a lady who had given him a seat in her carriage. While she was giving some orders before starting, a young man of eighteen or twenty years of age, fat, dimpled, and rosy, came to ask alms of Marivaux. He, struck with the contrast between this humiliating action and the appearance of the beggar, said, 'Are you not ashamed, young and strong as you are, to beg for bread which you might gain by honest work?'

The beggar, astonished by this vigorous attack, sobbed out, 'Ah! sir, if you only knew; I am so lazy!'

This reply touched the sympathetic heart of Marivaux; he smiled and gave the man a crown.

'You are very munificent in your charity,' said the lady, who had seen and heard what passed.

'I could not refuse to reward the sincerity of the poor fellow.'

Marivaux often spoke of his love of idleness, and the reply of the beggar was not to be resisted.

Marivauz cultivated his talent till it reached perfection ; but it was limited, and his plays at last fell flat. This caused him deep mortification and embittered his easy, amiable character. He died on the 12th February, 1763, aged seventy-five years.

In addition to his plays, Marivauz wrote two novels, *Marianne* and the *Paysan Parvenu*. His first play, *Annibal*, was performed on the 16th October, 1720, and his last, *Les Acteurs de bonne Foi*, on 16th September, 1755. Amongst the best pieces of Marivauz are the *Double Inconstance* and *Les Sincères*.

Of these plays Sainte-Beuve wrote as follows:—

‘ *La Double Inconstance* is one of the plays he preferred, and it is indeed one in which he uses all his resources : coquetry, rivalry excited to the most extreme point, female perfidy, and cajolery. *Les Sincères* is one of Marivauz’s most delightful works. There are two persons, the Marquise and Ergaste, who, above all, pride themselves on being sincere. Deeply loved by Dorante, whose compliments she finds insipid, the Marquise flies to Ergaste to put her in a good humour. She opens with a scene of raillery and satire, in which she paints with ravishing wit the absurdities of five or six people who have just left her. This scene recalls, in some degree, that in the *Misanthrope*. All goes delightfully while the sincere friends deal with their friends and not with each other. But Ergaste risks too much in believing that he may, in reply to questions of the Marquise, avow to her that he has loved Arimante as much as he loves her, and, in

addition, that the latter appears to him more beautiful, although the Marquise is more fascinating. According to the Marquise, it is not Ergaste's sincerity that shocks her, "but when one has such bad taste, sincerity is a bad quality." Ergaste, to whom the Marquise speaks so candidly, turns to Arimante again, and the Marquise reverts to Dorante, whom she asks to tell her her faults. Dorante pretends to obey, but chooses wisely two or three trifling defects with such tact that his criticism merges into the sweetest and most insinuating flattery. All ends in a double marriage, the reverse of what was expected : so true it is that in life a little flattery is necessary, even to love with warmth and please with passion. "Ha, ha, ha!" laughs the Marquise, "we have taken a pleasant roundabout road to arrive here!" That *mot* might serve as the key to all the charming plays of Marivaux.'

The following are his best pieces :—

*La Surprise de l'Amour.* Comedy in 3 acts.

*La Double Inconstance.* In 3 acts.

*La Seconde Surprise de l'Amour.* In 3 acts.

*Le Jeu de l'Amour et du Hasard.* In 3 acts.

*L'Ecole des Mères.* In 1 act.

*Le Legs.* In 1 act.

*Les Fausses Confidences.* In 3 acts.

*Les Sincères.* In 1 act.

*L'Epreuve.* In 1 act.

I shall devote the rest of my space to a few scenes from Marivaux's comedies, which I have ventured to translate.

## THE SURPRISE OF LOVE.

[Lelio and his servant, Arlequin, have both been deceived and disappointed in love. Naturally, the servant burlesques the melancholy of his master. The following scene between them is in Marivaux's best style.]

LELIO.—The weather is gloomy to-day.

ARLEQUIN.—Yes, indeed ; it is as melancholy as we are.

LELIO.—One is not always in the same spirits. The mind, like the weather, is sometimes cloudy.

ARLEQUIN.—So far as I am concerned, when my spirits are bright, I care little for a dull sky.

LELIO.—Most persons resemble you in that.

ARLEQUIN.—But I always find the weather abominable when I am sad.

LELIO.—Does anything trouble you now ?

ARLEQUIN.—No.

LELIO.—You have no cause for sadness ?

ARLEQUIN.—Why should I be sad ? I have no reason for being dull. Perhaps I am sad because I am not gay.

LELIO.—Nonsense. You do not know what you mean.

ARLEQUIN.—In spite of that, I do not feel very well.

LELIO.—Oh, if you are not well, I can understand you.

ARLEQUIN.—I am not unwell either.

LELIO.—Are you mad ? If you are well, how can you be unwell ?

ARLEQUIN.—Listen, sir ; I drink much, I eat more, I sleep like a dormouse : that is all.

LELIO.—It is the health of a farmer ; a gentleman would be fortunate to possess it.

ARLEQUIN.—In spite of that I feel heavy and dull ; I have a weakness in my limbs ; I yawn without any cause ; I am only brave at my meals ; all displeases me. I do not live, I only exist ; when it is day, I wish for night ; when it is night, I long for day. You know now why I am unwell—why I am both ill and well.

LELIO.—I understand, you suffer from *ennui* ; that will pass away. Have you brought me the book sent me from Paris ? Answer !

ARLEQUIN.—Sir, with your permission, I will pass to the other side.

LELIO.—What do you mean ?

ARLEQUIN.—I do not wish to see two little birds on that tree make love to each other ; that irritates my nerves. I have sworn never to make love again ; but when I see it made, even by little birds, I feel an inclination to break my vow, and reconcile myself with those pests of women ; and then it is so deucedly hard to make myself properly angry with them again.

LELIO.—My dear Arlequin, do you think that I am exempt from such little inquietudes ? I sometimes remember that there are women in the world, that they are amiable, and such ideas make my heart beat ; but such emotions strengthen my resolution to see them no more.

ARLEQUIN.—Now, it does not affect me like that : when such feelings stir within me, my resolution is shaken. Teach me, sir, to profit by such feelings in your way.

LELIO.—Yes, my friend, for I love you. You have good sense, though a little coarse. The infidelity of your mistress has disenchanting you with love ; the cruel treason of mine has produced the same effect on me ; you have followed me with courage to this calm retreat, and you have become dear to me because of the con-

formity of your character to mine and the similarity of our misfortune.

ARLEQUIN.—And, sir, I assure you that I love you a hundred times more than customary, because you have the kindness to love me so much. I would see nothing more of women, no more than you ; not a ribbon, not a curl-paper : they have no conscience. I thought I should die because of Margot's infidelity. But time, your company, and good eating and drinking have preserved me. I love her no longer, although sometimes her pretty little nose trots in my head ; but when I don't think of her I gain nothing ; because I think of all other women, and then certain emotions of the heart come to trouble me. I run, I jump, I sing, I dance. I have no other secret to drive such dangerous thoughts away, and that is not infallible. I feel myself in great danger ; and as you love me so much, pray have the charity to teach me how to become strong, because I feel so feeble.

LELIO.—Poor fellow, I pity you ! Ah ! perfidious sex, torment of those who pursue you, leave in peace those who fly from you !

ARLEQUIN.—Yes, sir, that is very reasonable ; why injure those who leave them alone ?

LELIO.—When some one tells me of an amiable and beloved woman, I look upon him as a maniac who praises a viper, and informs me it is charming, and that, fortunately, he has been bitten.

ARLEQUIN.—Oh, don't, sir ; you frighten me !

LELIO.—Ah ! my dear Arlequin, a viper only kills. Woman, woman ! you rob us of reason, liberty, repose : you rob us of ourselves, and let us live on ! To what an abject condition you reduce mankind ! Poor madmen, with troubled brains, drunk with sorrow or with joy,



always in convulsions, wretched slaves of passion ! And to whom belong these slaves ? To women. And what is a woman ? To define her it is necessary to know her ; we could begin the definition to-day, but I maintain that we could not finish it until the end of the world.

ARLEQUIN.—In truth, she is after all a charming little animal, a pretty little cat ; it is a pity her claws are so long and sharp.

LELIO.—You are right, it is a pity ; because, after all, is there in the universe anything more charming ? What grace, what variety of charms she has !

ARLEQUIN.—Yes ; one could almost eat her !

LELIO.—Then look at her dress : narrow skirts, full at the back, hair nearly over her bright love-provoking eyes, hood on the head, and all the most extravagant fashions ; but let them appear on a woman, and from the time they adorn her enchanting person, one would think the Loves and the Graces had dressed her : her fingers are inspired when she dresses. Is not all that very singular ?

ARLEQUIN.—Ah ! all that is true, too true. No, there is no book so clever as a woman lightly dressed, with her pretty feet in little slippers !

LELIO.—What a delightful disorder of ideas in her pretty little head ! what vivacity ! what expression ! what apparent simplicity ! Man *may* have good sense for his portion ; but, my faith ! wit only belongs to women. Then as to the heart : if the pleasures they gave us were durable, what a delicious place this earth would be. Men, as a rule, make love fairly well ; we pay flattering compliments, we try to be delicate, we make love according to rule, as people besiege a fortress. What pitiable folly ! A woman does not try to be tender, nor delicate, nor displeased, nor unaffected :

she is all these things without knowing it, and that is her all-subduing charm. Look at a woman who loves and would not confess by words. Good Heavens! our most eloquent avowals do not even approach the eloquence of love in her silence.

ARLEQUIN.—Ah! sir, I remember too well that Margot did all that with such grace—the little demon!

LELIO.—Without the excitement of love and pleasure our hearts are paralysed: we are like stagnant water, which waits to be moved. The heart of a woman gives the shock: it comes from a word that she says or does not say. There is no need for her to say that she loves. You can always know it: here by an impatient movement; there by a little coolness; by an imprudence, by a distraction, by her lowering the eyes or raising them, by her leaving or remaining in a room; in short, it is jealousy, calm, inquietude, joy, gossip, and silence of all kinds and colours. And can you help being intoxicated by the pleasure all this infinite variety affords? How can you see yourself adored without your head turning! In my case, I was as ridiculous as all other lovers; I thought myself a little prodigy, my merit astonished me: ah! it is mortifying to fall off one's pedestal! To-day my absurdity astonishes me; the prodigy has disappeared, and only a dupe remains.

ARLEQUIN.—Ah, well! sir, that is my history, too; I was as foolish as you. Still, sir, your portrait makes one love the original.

LELIO.—You are an idiot! Have I not admitted that women are amiable, tender-hearted, and very witty?

ARLEQUIN.—Yes, quite so; but is not that an attractive portrait?

LELIO.—No; all that is frightful.

ARLEQUIN.—Good, good; perhaps you only wish to entrap me?

LELIO.—No; her attractions are the instruments of our torture. Tell me, my poor fellow, if you found on your road silver at first, a little further on gold, after that pearls, and that the same road conducted you to a monster's cavern, would you not hate the silver, gold, and pearls?

ARLEQUIN.—I do not feel so disgusted, I find that very pleasant: I only object to the brute of a tiger. But I would take quickly some thousands of pounds in my pockets and bravely run away.

LELIO.—Yes; but you would not know that there was a tiger at the other end of the road, and when you had pocketed the crowns you would covet the gold and the pearls.

ARLEQUIN.—That would be a dreadful shame! What an abominable treasure! Let it go to the devil, and the tiger too!

LELIO.—Listen to me, my good fellow. The silver that you first find on the road is the beauty and fascination of a woman, which first attract you; the gold, which you find later, the sweet hopes she gives you; and the pearls, her heart, which she abandons to you with all its transports.

ARLEQUIN.—Beware of the tiger!

LELIO.—Yes, the tiger appears after the pearls, and that animal is the perfidious character entrenched in the soul of your mistress; it shows itself, it tears out your heart: adieu all happiness! it leaves you as wretched as you believed yourself happy.

ARLEQUIN.—Yes, sir, that was exactly like the beast Margot loosed on me, for loving her silver, gold, and pearls.

LELIO.—Do you still love her ?

ARLEQUIN.—Alas ! sir, I did not think of the ugly devil at the end of the road waiting for me. When one is ignorant, one only sees as far as the end of the nose.

LELIO.—When you think of women's society again, always remember the tiger, and look upon the emotions of your heart as a fatal desire for your own destruction.

ARLEQUIN.—Oh ! sir, I am convinced ; I renounce all the women and all the treasures in the world, and I will drink a glass of wine to fortify me in my good resolution.

I need hardly say that Lelio falls desperately in love again, forgetting all about the terrible tiger, and that Arlequin imitates his master.

The following short dialogue between Arlequin and Lisette is taken from *La Double Inconstance* :—

ARLEQUIN.—You speak of Silvia. Yes, she is indeed charming. When you make love to her, you fall into admiration of her modesty. During the first days she takes refuge in flight, and then she begins to retreat more slowly ; then, little by little, she does not retreat at all. Then she glances at you occasionally ; and appeared ashamed that I noticed it ; and I felt as happy as a king to see her uneasiness : then I took her hand, and she let me keep it ; and she was covered with confusion, when I spoke to her ; she did not answer, but thought all the more. Then she gave me glances kinder than words ; and then she uttered words without thought, because her heart beat so wildly. In short, there was a spell in all she did, and I was like a fool. Yes, she is what I call a girl ; but you do not resemble Silvia.

LISETTE.—In truth, you divert me ; you make me laugh.

ARLEQUIN.—Indeed! Well, I am weary of making you laugh at your own expense. Adieu. If all people resembled me, you would sooner find a white crow than a lover.

As we have permitted Lelio to attack the fair sex so bitterly, it is only just to quote Silvia's attack on the unfair sex. Both repent and make expiation.

The scene is between Silvia and her servant, Lisette:—

SILVIA.—I dispense with beauty and fine form in a husband; those qualities are superfluous.

LISETTE.—Oh, indeed! If I ever marry, such superfluities will be to me necessaries.

SILVIA.—You do not know what you say. In marriage one has to do oftener with a reasonable than an amiable man; in a word, I only ask for a good character, and that is not so easy to find, I assure you. People praise that of my would-be lover; but have they lived with him? All clever, agreeable men are actors. Have I not seen myself those who appeared amongst their friends the most pleasing men in the world? They were mild, reasonable, pleasant, and their countenances appeared to guarantee all these good qualities. 'Mr. So-and-So has the air of a perfect gentleman of sound judgment,' people say of Ergaste. 'There is no doubt about that,' is the answer; 'his appearance only does him justice.' Oh, yes; confide in that pleasant countenance and charming manner, which disappear a quarter of an hour afterwards, to be replaced by a visage gloomy, brutal, ferocious, which is the terror of his home! Ergaste is married; his wife, his children, his servants, only know him by that face, while abroad he shows the

charming countenance we all know so well, and which is only a mask put on when he leaves home.

LISETTE.—How fanciful you are with your masks and your visages!

SILVIA.—Is not Leander popular with every one who knows him? Well, at home he never opens his mouth, except to eat and drink. He does not laugh, nor talk, nor scold: his soul is icy, solitary, inaccessible. His wife does not comprehend him, has no communion with him; she is married only to a statue who comes out of his study, seats himself at table, and makes expire of weariness, cold, and languor all those who surround him. Is not that a vastly amusing husband?

LISETTE.—I feel my blood freeze at your description of the man; but what do you think of Tersandre?

SILVIA.—Yes, Tersandre! The other day he was storming at his wife; I arrived; they announced me, and he came to meet me with open arms, his face without a cloud; you would have said that he had just had a most gay conversation; his mouth and eyes laughed. The cunning actor! Other men resemble him. Who would believe that his wife had any cause of complaint? I find her sad and downcast, the complexion leaden, eyes red with weeping: I found her as I shall be some day, perhaps. Behold my future portrait; at least, I risk being a copy. She awakened my pity. Lisette, if I should also one day be the object of pity! That is a terrible thought! What do you say? Only think to what a husband may reduce one!

LISETTE.—A husband is a husband; that reconciles me to all the rest.

The following delightful love scene is from *Les*

*Fausses Confidences.* Dorante, a poor gentleman, has become steward to a rich widow, Arimante, in order to obtain the opportunity of winning her heart. Fortunately, like most widows, Arimante knows her own mind, and returns the passion of Dorante. The lover is admirably assisted in his plot to win the widow by Dubois, an old servant of his. Arimante's mother favours the love of another suitor, the Comte, and tries to drive Dorante out of the house. I need not say that such conduct helps Dorante. Dorante plays his last card, splendidly led up to, in the following scene, that is, he resigns his post and prepares to leave Arimante's house:—

ARIMANTE.—Approach, Dorante.

DORANTE.—I hardly dare to appear before you.

ARIMANTE (*aside*).—Ah! my confidence is no greater than his. (*Aloud*) Why would you return me your accounts? I have every confidence in you. It is not on that account that I complain.

DORANTE.—Madam, . . . I have something else to say. . . . I am so bewildered, so nervous, that I can hardly articulate.

ARIMANTE (*apart, with emotion*).—Ah! I fear the end of all this!

DORANTE.—One of your tenants was here just now.

ARIMANTE.—One of my tenants? Very likely.

DORANTE.—Yes, madam, . . . he was here.

ARIMANTE.—I do not doubt it.

DORANTE.—And I have some money to hand you.

ARIMANTE.—Ah! money; . . . we will see about it.

DORANTE.—When will it please you, madam, to receive it?

ARIMANTE.—Yes . . . I will take it. (*Aside*) I do not know what I am saying.

DORANTE.—Shall I hand it to you to-morrow, madam?

ARIMANTE.—To-morrow did you say? Can you retain it till then after what has happened?

DORANTE.—During the whole course of my future life I shall only look on this day as precious.

ARIMANTE.—It cannot be, Dorante; it is necessary to part. Every one knows that you love me, and people believe that I am not indignant.

DORANTE.—Alas! madam, I am much to be pitied.

ARIMANTE.—Ah! leave me, Dorante; every one has his sorrows.

DORANTE.—I have lost all! I had a portrait and it is mine no more.

ARIMANTE.—My portrait would now be useless to you. . . . You can paint another.

DORANTE.—It will take me a long time to do so. Besides, that one has been in your hands, madam.

ARIMANTE.—You are unreasonable.

DORANTE.—Ah! madam, I shall soon be far from you. You will be amply avenged. Do not add to my grief!

ARIMANTE.—Give you my portrait! If I did so, it would be an avowal of love.

DORANTE (*passionately*).—You love me, madam! What an idea! who would dare to imagine it?

ARIMANTE.—And yet that is what has happened.

DORANTE (*on his knees*).—I die of joy!

ARIMANTE.—I know no longer where I am. Moderate your joy. Rise, Dorante.

DORANTE.—I do not merit the happiness which transports me; I do not merit it, madam. . . . When I tell you all I shall lose it; but you must know everything.



ARIMANTE (*astonished*).—What would you say?

DORANTE.—In what has passed here, all is false except my passion, which is infinite, and the portrait I painted. All the incidents that have occurred were arranged by a servant who was aware of my love, who pitied me, who, by the charm of hope, of the pleasure of seeing you, forced me to consent to his stratagems. This, madam, my respect, my love, and my character will not permit me to conceal from you. I would rather for ever lose your love than owe it to the artifice which has enabled me to gain it! I would rather bear your hatred than the remorse of having deceived you whom I adore!

ARIMANTE (*after looking at him in silence for some time*).—If I had learned this of any one but yourself, I should without doubt hate you; but the avowal you now make yourself, changes all. Your sincerity delights me, appears to me incredible, and I think you are the most honourable man in the world. . . . After all, when you loved me so passionately, that which you have done to conquer my heart is not blameable. A lover is permitted to use every means of pleasing, and should be pardoned when he succeeds.

The next and last play of Marivaux's that I can quote from is *Les Sincères*; I consider it the brilliant author's most brilliant work. There is, in addition, a fine thrill of genuine passion in *Dorante*.

La Marquise has two lovers—at least, we are only introduced to two, Dorante and Ergaste. Dorante loves in the old-fashioned, ardent manner. Ergaste prides himself on his sincerity, and tells the

Marquise her faults with all the delightful frankness of a candid friend. This pleases for a time ; but soon palls on the taste of the lady. The first scene is between the Marquise and her passionate lover, Dorante.

DORANTE.—You drive me to despair ! Was ever man more cruelly treated ? Was ever passion more despised ?

MARQUISE.—Passion ! I have seen that fine word in *Cyrus* and *Cleopatra*. Ah ! Dorante, you are not unworthy of love ; you have everything in your favour, rank, birth, fortune ; you are even agreeable. I will even admit that you have pleased me ; but I cannot trust your love—I have no faith in it ; you exaggerate too much ; you revolt the simplicity and sincerity of my character. Do you love me much ? Do you love me a little ? Do you merely pretend to love me ? I cannot make up my mind what to believe. How am I to judge wisely amidst all the polite impostures with which you envelop your discourse ? ‘I can do nothing but sigh,’ you say. Now, can anything be more flat and insipid than that ? A man who loves a sensible woman does not say, ‘I sigh ;’ that word is not sufficiently serious for him, not sufficiently true : he says, ‘I love you ; I desire profoundly that you would love me ; I am deeply mortified that you do not love me ;’—that is all, and there is nothing more than that in your heart. You do not read in your heart that you adore me, because that is to talk like a poet ; nor that you are in despair, because if you were it would be necessary to lock you up ; nor that I am cruel, because I live kindly with all the world ; nor, perhaps, that I am beautiful, though, possibly, that is so ; and I will inquire of Ergaste as to the truth of that ; I confide in what he

says, because he is sincere. It is for that quality I esteem him ; you displease me because you are not so.

DORANTE (*passionately*).—You press me too hard. My heart is more truthful than that of a misanthrope who would pass for sincere at your expense, and at the expense, perhaps, even of sincerity itself. In my opinion, I do not exaggerate ; I say that I adore you, and it is true ; what I feel for you can only be expressed by that word. I also call my love a passion, because it is one ; I say that your raillery drives me to despair, and I speak within my feeling ; I cannot describe in any other way the grief which consumes me ; and if I am not to be confined as a madman, it is only because I am deeply afflicted but not insane. It is also true that I sigh and die because you despise me : yes, I die ! yes, your cruel railleries penetrate my heart, and I can only repeat it. Farewell, madam ; Ergaste approaches, that sincere man, and I withdraw. Enjoy the cool and proud tranquillity with which he loves you.

MARQUISE (*as Dorante retires*).—I must confess it ; his last fictions were sufficiently pathetic.

*Enter* ERGASTE.

ERGASTE.—I am charmed to find you alone, Marquise ; I hardly hoped to be so fortunate. I have just written to my brother at Paris ; do you know what I have told him ? That which I have not even said to you.

MARQUISE.—What is that ?

ERGASTE.—That I love you.

MARQUISE (*laughing*).—I knew it. I had perceived it.

ERGASTE.—Even that is not all ; I have told him something else.

MARQUISE.—And that is—— ?

ERGASTE.—That I believed I did not displease you.

MARQUISE.—Was all your news true ?

ERGASTE.—I recognise you in that frank reply.

MARQUISE.—If it were the contrary, I should be equally sincere.

ERGASTE.—In my next letter, if you permit it, I will announce that we shall soon be united.

MARQUISE.—Well, apparently.

ERGASTE.—And as people can be married in the country, I might even announce that it is done.

MARQUISE (*laughing*).—Stop, stop, if you please! let me breathe. In truth, you travel so fast, that I almost believe I am married.

ERGASTE.—Such events follow rapidly when two persons love one another.

MARQUISE.—Without difficulty; but, tell me, Ergaste, you being a truthful man, what is your love for me?—because I would be truly loved.

ERGASTE.—You are right; and I love you with all my heart.

MARQUISE.—I believe you; but have you never loved any one more than me?

ERGASTE.—No, on my honour; although I loved some one equally. . . . Yes, I think it was as much; but not more, I am certain; I do not believe that is possible.

MARQUISE.—Oh, very possible, I assure you; nothing prevents your loving more; I have only to be more amiable to increase your love: but let that pass. Which was more worthy of love, I or the former object of your affection?

ERGASTE.—But your attractions are different: she had them infinitely.

MARQUISE.—That is to say, a little more than myself.

ERGASTE.—In truth, I should be a little embarrassed to decide.

MARQUISE.—I am not. I pronounce : your uncertainty decides ; you may be certain that you loved her more than me.

ERGASTE.—I believe nothing of the kind.

MARQUISE (*laughing*).—You dream. Do not we love people in proportion to their amiability ? and considering that she excelled me in that particular, and that she had more charms, it is certain that you loved her more.

ERGASTE.—She had more charms ! but that point is not decided ; and, therefore, I incline to believe that you are equal to her.

MARQUISE.—Yes ? you incline to believe ?—that is a considerable concession ; but do you know what I am inclined to believe ?

ERGASTE.—No.

MARQUISE.—To leave that very equivocal equality, it does not tempt me ; I would as soon lose it as gain it, I assure you.

ERGASTE.—I do not doubt it ; I appreciate your indifference on such a subject ; besides, if there is not perfect equality between you, the difference is so slight.

MARQUISE (*excitedly*).—Again ! But I tell you that I will not have it, that I renounce all competition or comparison. Do not give yourself the trouble of weighing us ; place your mind in repose ; I yield to her ; make her into a star, if you please.

ERGASTE (*laughing*).—Ha ! ha ! ha ! Your wit delights me, it shall be just as you prefer. The essential point is that I love you as much as I loved her.

MARQUISE (*coldly*).—You will be good enough to pardon me. You, I think, had an inclination for Arimante ?

ERGASTE.—Yes, I felt some love for her ; but the

difficulty of understanding her inclinations repulsed me. One fears always to misunderstand her, by believing that she is touched when she is only polite ; and that does not suit me.

MARQUISE.—I think a great deal of her. What is your opinion? To which of us two do you give the preference? Do not deceive me.

ERGASTE.—Oh, never, and this is what I think. Arimante has beauty ; one may say that she is a beautiful woman.

MARQUISE.—Very good. And as to me, in that respect, I have only to hide myself, I suppose?

ERGASTE.—For you, Marquise, you please more than she does.

MARQUISE (*laughing*).—I do wrong, I please beyond my rights. (*Aside*) Ah! the coxcomb! How flat and dull he is! Ha! ha! ha!

ERGASTE.—But why do you laugh

MARQUISE.—Frankly, because you are a bad judge ; neither of us is beautiful.

ERGASTE.—It appears to me that a certain regularity of features——

MARQUISE.—Visions, I tell you ; neither of us is beautiful. Regularity of features in Arimante! Regularity!! You arouse my pity! and if I were to tell you that thousands of people find something clumsy in her air?

ERGASTE.—Arimante clumsy!

MARQUISE.—Yes, sir, clumsy! but one gets used to that in time, as you have evidently done ; and when I admit that neither of us is beautiful, it is only because I am careless about my claims in that respect ; but most people find her claim to beauty less than mine, frightful as you may think me.

ERGASTE.—I think you frightful!

MARQUISE.—Yes; but I please more—and I begin to doubt even that.

ERGASTE.—I may be wrong; I often am; I can answer for the sincerity of my opinions, but not for their accuracy.

MARQUISE.—Oh, indeed! but when one's taste is so bad, sincerity becomes a fault!

ERGASTE.—The grand fault of my sincerity is that it is too sincere.

MARQUISE.—You see things in a false light. Kindly change the subject of our conversation and leave Arimante in peace. It is scarcely worth while to ask you what you think of the difference in our minds; you are not a competent judge.

ERGASTE.—Your mind appears to me to be quick, sensible, and very refined.

MARQUISE.—You lower your tone; you mean vain and frivolous.

At this point Lisette enters and informs her mistress that Frontin, Ergaste's servant, has dared to say that the Marquise was less beautiful than Arimante, in her presence and that of Dorante and Ergaste. Dorante had warmly asserted the superiority of the Marquise, while Ergaste had remained silent. This, of course, finishes what the conceit and want of elementary tact in Ergaste had begun. After the exit of Lisette, the sincere friends continue their conversation.

MARQUISE.—Sir, you have given me an account of the state of your heart; it is only fair that I should give you an account of mine.

ERGASTE.—Pray do so, madam.

MARQUISE.—My first inclination was for my late husband, who was your superior, Ergaste, be it said without diminishing the esteem you merit.

ERGASTE.—Proceed, madam.

MARQUISE.—Since his death, I felt, about two years ago, favourably for a stranger I met in Paris, whom I refused to see, and of whom I lost sight; a man rather like you, neither better nor worse, not ill-looking, though, perhaps, a little stouter than you; not so slight; a little less delicate too.

ERGASTE.—Very good. And Dorante, madam, what is your opinion of him?

MARQUISE.—He is pleasanter, more polite; he is also more distinguished-looking, and he thinks more modestly of himself than you do; but you please more.

ERGASTE.—I am very much to blame, I admit; but what surprises me is that a face so weak and poor as mine, that a man so delicate and plain, so infatuated with himself, could win your heart!

MARQUISE.—Are hearts ever reasonable? There are so many caprices in our inclinations!

ERGASTE.—Your inclination must have been very determined to induce you to love me with so many terrible faults, which are perhaps true, I must admit, although I don't know much about them.

MARQUISE.—Eh! did I know that I was ugly, vain, and disagreeable? You taught me all that, and I only return instruction for instruction.

ERGASTE.—I will try to profit by your kindness and sincerity; what I fear is that a man so common, worth so little, may displease you.



MARQUISE.—Eh ! when you pardon me my many imperfections, it is only fair that I should overlook the smallness of your merit.

ERGASTE.—You reassure me.

MARQUISE (*aside*).—Will no one come to deliver me from him ?

(*A pause.*)

ERGASTE.—Do you happen to know the hour ?

MARQUISE.—I think it is late.

ERGASTE.—Do not you think the fine weather is breaking ?

MARQUISE.—Yes, I think we shall have a storm.

(*They are silent for some time.*)

ERGASTE.—I think I had better leave you ; you appear very thoughtful.

MARQUISE.—No ; I feel bored : my sincerity does not shock you ?

ERGASTE.—I thank you, and will profit by it. I am your servant, madam.

MARQUISE.—Go, sir. . . . One moment ; when you write to your brother, do not be so eager to mention our marriage.

ERGASTE.—Madam, I will not say one word on the subject.

An attempt has been made to compare Marivaux's light, well-bred, delicate wit and polished irony, with the scathing sarcasm and lightning-like wit and fine humour of the French Heine, Alfred de Musset. The similarity is of the slightest kind. Granted both wrote comedies and proverbs : but while Marivaux lived on the surface of fashionable life, caring only for the pleasures

and facile attachments of an easy-going Epicurean existence, Alfred de Musset sounded the depths of love and life, and drank the bitter cup of disappointment to the dregs. Marivaux was part of what he painted, he floated on the many-coloured, glittering wave of fashionable life like a buoyant cork; while the intense, gloomy, and passionate Alfred de Musset analysed and criticised the life he shared and despised—pointed out with bitter irony its hollow shams and empty shibboleths; but could never be subdued and conquered by its flatteries and so-called joys: he was filled with divine discontent. Alfred de Musset's wit was keener and his pathos infinitely deeper than the brilliant and amusing society poet who forms the subject of my short sketch.

VOLTAIRE.



## VOLTAIRE.

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NEARLY every one must have noticed the ease and freedom with which a very shallow person will criticise and trenchantly decide on the ability and character of a deep and wise man. Now, on the contrary, a wise man does not think it too much trouble to study the shallow man for a long time before making up his mind as to his peculiarities of folly and shallowness. Can we wonder, then, that the shallow critic is always wrong, and that the wise man is very often right? The pains a wise man takes to form his opinions often strike me as extraordinary: nothing is too difficult; no place too far away; no examination too precise and tedious, if by their means he may arrive at something approximating to the truth. Whereas the superficial, shallow critic, whose head is very small, whose capacity to receive is of the most limited kind, picks up a few cant phrases from people who are just foolish enough for him to comprehend them—that is, whose ears are a fraction less long than his own—and retails what he learns to people whose ears are, fortunately for him, a little longer than his. And so it goes on. The old lies, the old prejudices, the over-and-over-again exploded twaddle and

cant are hashed and rehashed, until one's gorge rises against the abominable mess. Now, let us examine the kind of people who abuse Voltaire most. Are they wise? Are they witty? Are they lovers of humanity? Are they animated by a real spirit of religion, which really means love of others, even to our own loss and ruin? Are they, I ask, people of that kind? 'Oh, he was an atheist; a mere mocker of all that is good.' Well, if cant—that is, religion from the teeth and not from the heart—is good, he was. But in our opinion the witty and wise man, who with unsurpassed wit and irony exposed the Stigginses and Chadbands of his day, was a defender of real religion against the subtle foes who did not attack it in front, but sapped and undermined its very foundation, which consists in justice, mercy, and truth. Did Molière attack real religion when he unmasked the greasy, unctuous Tartuffe? If Tartuffe, Stiggins, and Chadband represent real religion, and to go to Heaven it is necessary to admire such wretches, let me go to the other place, if there be such a place. And I unhesitatingly say that to attack such vile traducers of what should be the most spiritual and elevating influence in the universe, is to do the greatest service to truth, justice, and mercy, on which all true religion is based.

Now, it is no use to evade the fact that Voltaire is looked upon by many well-meaning and not ignorant people as a sneerer and a mocker; as a man, in fact, who revelled in the revolting part of

pointing out the weak and mean points in poor, fallen, and vilely treated humanity. But did not Voltaire live in a time when France was given over to that selfish voluptuary, Louis XV., I suppose the most lubricous king who ever reigned, even in France? Of course, I must do justice to our Charles II., 'the Defender of the Faith and Nell Gwynne' and other 'unfortunate females'—although considering the millions we have paid to their right honourable descendants for their good fortune, in descending from such honourable and virtuous ladies, we might say more unfortunate people.

We all know something about the regency of Orleans, about the satyr Dubois, about the Defender of the Faith, Louis XV., his mistresses, his bawds, his orgies; and as a shadow to these very high, not to say lurid lights, the infinite misery and degraded condition of the 'common people.' If this King and his vile Court, and the vicious ecclesiastics who blessed the Comus orgies were uncommon, how honourable to be of the common people!

Voltaire was born on the 20th February, 1694, at Chatenay, and through excessive weakness was not baptised till the 22nd November, at Paris. He was about twenty-two at the death of Louis XIV. Our keen-eyed friend, sensitive and highly strung, took in all the abominable picture of Court dissipation. He saw what was called the religion of Christ pandering to the most loathsome vice: vice of an infernal turpitude and devilish ingenuity that appals

the most experienced man of the world. Is it not most natural that Voltaire, with the courage of a hero, should attack the religion that produced and fostered such atrocious things? Genius is simply a vivid power of seeing, feeling, and expressing. What only produces a slight superficial feeling in the ordinary man, sends a thrill of indignation through the super-sensitive man of genius. Voltaire lived in the midst of this sensual sty. He saw the pigs eat and wallow and roll over each other in the vile filth of infinite corruption and lubricity. He saw the lying, canting *abbés*, the bishops blessing and sharing the infernal revels. Then, like a true man of genius, filled with the very essence of common sense, what did he do? I imagine he said something to the following effect:—‘If I defy these devils openly and without any disguise, they will rend me to pieces. Now, I don’t want to be rent to pieces yet. I feel a burning sense of power filling my heart and brain. I am born to do some good in this world. But I must “eke out the lion’s skin with the fox’s.” Be bold—be bold—be bold—be not too bold. What did my great master, Rabelais, do? He lived in more dangerous times than these. He put on the fool’s cap and bells before he dared to be wise. He mixed his lessons, his profoundly wise, deep lessons, with coarse wit and allusions not too nice and clean. I need not go so far as he did; but I must go far enough to avert death.’

Every one knows he was sent to the Bastille for making a witty and caustic reply to a duke at a



dinner. On leaving the Bastille he came to London, and lived in Maiden Lane. Here he published the *Henriade*, to which Dean Swift, Bolingbroke, and Sir William Temple subscribed. This brought him in about 2000*l.* Our witty friend, who was a model of worldly common sense and prudence, took good care of the money—in fact, it formed the nucleus of his fortune.

I will now tell once more the never-too-often-repeated story of Voltaire's magnanimous generosity in the Calas and Sirvens cases. It seems incompatible that the most vile and vicious people should be the most bigoted. Never was the Court of France so base and vicious as during the time of Catherine de Medicis of infamous memory and during the reigns of Louis XIV. and XV. Then think of that vicious and abominable wretch who died of a loathsome disease engendered by his vices, Philip II., and you will agree with me in saying that the extreme of vice and cruelty is accompanied by bigotry and the cruelest persecution. We will take the story of John Calas first. He was a merchant living at Toulouse. He, his wife and five sons, had been born and educated as Protestants. But a few months before my tale commences, Lewis, his second son, embraced the Catholic faith. His parents, of course, lamented this change of religion, but did not at all alter their conduct to their son. The eldest son, Anthony, had adopted the legal profession, but found that his religion interfered with his practice. He became depressed, morose, and often talked favourably of suicide. While he was in this des-

pendent condition he received a visit from an old schoolfellow, a young lawyer, named Lavoisse. Mdme. Calas received him with great cordiality, and they sat talking together till Anthony went out to purchase some provisions. Soon after Lavoisse left the house to see about a horse for his return home on the next morning. They both returned in a short time, and at seven o'clock sat down to supper in a room on the first floor, the company consisting of M. and Mdme. Calas, Anthony, Peter, one of his brothers, and M. Lavoisse. Before the meal was over, Anthony, without any apparent cause, rose from the table, greatly excited, and left the room. As he had, since his indisposition, often done this before, it was not noticed. He went into the kitchen, on the same floor, and being asked by the servant if he was cold, replied, 'No; I am in a burning heat.' He soon after went downstairs. I may mention here that the whole of the downstairs premises was occupied by the shop and warehouse behind it. The company left by Anthony continued their conversation till half-past nine o'clock, when Lavoisse took his leave, and Peter rose to accompany him to his lodging with a lantern. It is impossible to describe their horror when they saw Anthony, with his coat and vest off, hanging from a bar between the shop and warehouse. Their cries of terror brought M. Calas downstairs, who rushed to his son, took his body in his arms, and thus displaced a bar to which the rope had been fastened. The two young men were utterly paralysed, and looked

helplessly on. The wretched father, in an agony of grief, laid his son on the floor and sent Peter for a surgeon who lived near, saying first to him, 'Let us, if we can, prevent this dishonourable accident being known. You need not say how your brother's death occurred.'

Lavaisse ran upstairs to prevent M<sup>d</sup>me. Calas learning what had happened, but she had heard the groans and outcries of her husband, and soon knew the whole truth. The surgeon was out, but M. Grosse, his pupil, came at once. He found Anthony quite dead, and on examining the body, observing the dark mark made by the cord, said he had been strangled. A crowd of people had collected round the door, and, hearing the surgeon's words, at once formed the opinion that the deceased had wished to become a Catholic, and his Protestant family to prevent that had strangled him. The great majority of the inhabitants of Toulouse hated the Protestants with a bitter and pious hatred, and this suspicion spread like wildfire. In fact, a furious mob composed of defenders of the faith assembled round the house, and to prevent Calas and his family from being torn in pieces, the Intendant of Police and his assistants were sent for. The whole family were committed to jail amidst the howls and execrations of the religious mob. Two religious societies, the Franciscans and the White Penitents, who naturally thought promoting the death of a heretic family a holy work, inflamed the popular hatred, and spread the report that

Anthony, who had never given any pretext for such a statement, was the next day to have entered one of these holy bodies; that he was strangled in consequence; and that Lavoisier was generally executioner for the Calvinists.

The funeral was conducted with all the pomp and circumstance the Catholics knew so well how to display. A monument was raised over Anthony's remains, and a real human skeleton was exhibited on it, holding in one hand a paper on which was written 'Abjuration of Heresy,' and in the other a branch of the palm-tree as an emblem of martyrdom. In fact, it was a pious orgy, a saturnalia of bigotry. A fair trial, even a slight consideration of facts and arguments, was out of the question. One David, a fierce bigot, insisted that it was impossible to hang oneself across folding-doors, and that it was the common practice with Protestant parents to hang such of their children as wished to become Catholics. The worthy magistrate utterly forgot that Lewis Calas, brother of Anthony, had actually become a Catholic, and, far from being embittered by the fact, his father had lately settled him in a good business. Le Borde, the presiding judge, inquired 'if Anthony Calas had been seen to kneel at his father's feet before he strangled him?' and, obtaining no satisfactory answer, observed, that 'the cries of the murdered martyr had been heard at distant parts of the city.' He added, that 'it was necessary to make an example of John Calas for the edification of true believers and the propagation of

sound faith, as heretics had been of late more than usually bold and incorrigible.' And this poor man, seventy years of age, with his heart broken by the death—the horrible death—of a beloved son, was doomed in the eighteenth century, contrary to all evidence and all probability, to have his old bones broken on the wheel! And foolish people, who live principally to eat and drink, and wear their clothes, and whose religion never advances much beyond going more or less regularly to church and chapel, abuse a man of genius like Voltaire, who attacked with the finest wit and irony a hideous system which produced such fruit!

Calas endured his torture with unshaken firmness, declaring the innocence of himself and his family to the last. His son Peter was banished for life, the other members of the family were set at liberty.

This hideous specimen of the hatred and devilish cruelty engendered by bigotry aroused the fiery and unresting indignation of Voltaire. He never ceased writing, petitioning, and speaking on this atrocious theme. His repeated—in fact, his incessant—applications to men in power were at last so unbearable that the judicial proceedings were sent to Paris to be revised. Calas and the whole family were declared innocent, the sentence was annulled, the Attorney-General of the province was directed to prosecute the infamous David, and every possible satisfaction was made to the widow, M. Lavoiselle, and the survivors.

Every possible satisfaction! What a hideous mockery! What could be done for the poor

mother and wife whose heart was first torn by the suicide of a dearly-loved son, and before she could recover from that terrible blow, her husband—her lifelong companion and supporter—is broken on the wheel for the murder of a son he loved as dearly as she.

The words of David addressed to Calas on the scaffold are worthy of Philip II. or Alva. ‘Wretch!’ said this infernal bigot to the poor old man, ‘Wretch! confess your crime. Behold the faggots which are to consume your body to ashes!’ This horrible crime was perpetrated in 1761.

Now we will turn for a few moments to the hardly less celebrated Sirvens affair.

About forty miles from Toulouse is a place called Carries. Near there lived, on a little farm, the family of Sirvens, composed of a farmer, his wife, and three daughters, one of whom was married and likely to become a mother, her husband working in a distant province. Although a Protestant, the younger of his unmarried daughters had been taken by force from her father’s house, put into a convent, and told that she must profess the Catholic religion, the only true one. The girl remaining obstinate, and not being fascinated by the spiritual beauties of a religion which tore her from her loved family and home, was beaten with many stripes, and placed, doubtless with a little bad water and less bread, in solitary confinement. This religious discipline did not benefit the girl as it ought to have done, considering its severity. The girl lost her senses, and instead of, as often happens, becoming a Catholic in

consequence, threw herself down a well. All the pious convent people, and the great majority of the neighbours, at once stated that the poor girl had been murdered by her family in revenge for her becoming a Catholic. The people became dangerous, and Sirvens, who had heard of the Calas murder, was terribly frightened. In fact, his house was attacked twice. After the second attack, while the holy mob were resting and refreshing themselves after their pious exertions, he took the opportunity of escaping with his wife and family. At the dead of night, in the bitter winter weather, with deep snow on the ground, they fled from their savage neighbours, ten times more to be feared than cold and cutting wind, and escaped into Switzerland. To add to their misery, his married daughter was delivered of a dead child during the terrible journey, her premature confinement brought on by the danger and privation she underwent. The poor mother, half mad with grief, would not believe the child was dead, and tried to warm it into life against her half-frozen bosom. Our pious defenders of the faith at Carries were mad with rage when they found their prey had escaped their tender mercies. They consoled themselves with burning the whole family in effigy. In addition, they confiscated all Sirvens' property and loaded his name with reproach and infamy. The fugitives, who travelled all night and concealed themselves by day, at last reached Switzerland. The indignation of the wicked Voltaire was roused by the religious

fervour of the good people of Cartries and its fruits, the persecution of this poor family. He felt for them in a practical way: he felt in his pocket for them; he sheltered them in his house, the mad humanitarian! made the civilised world ring with the story of their wrongs; and actually shot his arrows, winged with wit and barbed with truth, at the religious zealots who show their love of the beautiful and holy Christ, by murdering and torturing their fellow-creatures who differ from them in matters of opinion. If Voltaire had wished to pass a quiet life and to be respectable he should not have chivalrously supported the weak and poor against the strong and the rich. I boldly and emphatically say that Voltaire was a thousand times a better Christian than those murdering hypocrites, drunk with religious fanaticism, whose religion consisted in hate and not in love.

Now a few words on the vulgar and almost universal error, made by good people who do not examine evidence—perhaps it is just to admit they cannot—that Voltaire was an Atheist. You all know that Voltaire erected at Ferney a church dedicated to God. He was, of the two, more severe to Atheists than to bigots. In fact, he could not listen with patience to what he considered their idiotic arguments. He, the most tolerant man in the world, on this subject became intolerant. Some people, who always seem to me to make a point of talking most about what they know least, will be surprised to learn that the great feature of Voltaire's



character was his enthusiastic love of humanity. He was a practical philanthropist, and did not confine his charity to people living on another continent, as so many people do, so that while a hell of poverty and misery exist at the East-end of London, all their benefits are shipped to Africa or some more distant place. No, he made the people of his own village of Ferney happy by helping them to help themselves. He was not only the author of works of genius, but the author of the happiness of thousands.

A village of fifty peasant inhabitants was changed by him into the home of 1200 manufacturers. His greatest fault was his prodigious excitability. He was too generous, too easily moved. But in this cold-blooded, selfish world, that is so rare a fault that it becomes a virtue. If his greatest enemy, the man who had caused him to shed tears of anguish, were in want, Voltaire was the first to help him, not with cheap words of useless sympathy, but with material assistance.

Voltaire did not attack religion. He attacked the lives of Jesuits, the cant of priests. When he spoke or wrote of the Protestant faith, he did so with respect and gravity. I consider that Voltaire was the very incarnation of common sense. He was level-headed, one of the most uncommon attributes of humanity. We will return to Voltaire's alleged atheism, that being, in my humble opinion, a very important factor in the unreasoning hatred his name inspires in so many well-meaning though stupid people. Voltaire in his article on 'God and Gods,'

in the *Philosophical Dictionary*, quotes Spinoza's 'Profession of Faith :—

'If I also concluded that the idea of God, comprised in that of the infinity of the universe, excused me from obedience, love, and worship, I should make a still more pernicious use of my reason, for it is evident to me that the laws which I have received, not by the relation and intervention of other men, but immediately from Him, are those which the light of nature points out to me as the true guides of rational conduct. If I failed in obedience in this particular, I should sin not only against the principle of my being and the society of my kind, but also against myself, in depriving myself of the most solid advantage of my existence. This obedience does, it is true, bind me only to the duties of my state, and makes me look on all beside as frivolous practices, invented by superstition to serve the purposes of their inventors.

'With regard to the love of God, so far, I conceive, is this idea from tending to weaken it, that no other is more calculated to increase it, since through it I know that God is intimate with my being, that He gave me existence and all that I have ; but He gives them me liberally, without reproach, without interest, without subjecting me to anything but my own nature. It banishes fear, uneasiness, distrust, and all the effects of a vulgar or interested love. It informs me that this is a good which I cannot lose, and which I possess the more fully the more I know it and love it.'

This is what the God-intoxicated man, Spinoza, believed as natural religion. He believed with

Novalis that 'man is the temple of the living God.'

What does Voltaire say on that sublime passage? Listen:—'Are these the words of the virtuous and tender Fénelon, or those of Spinoza? How is it that two men so opposed to each other have, with such different notions of God, concurred in the idea of loving God for Himself?'

Does not this prove what Voltaire says in a preface to one of his plays, that all good men are of one religion? Religion consists in unselfish devotion to others: it is, as Goethe expresses it, 'the worship of sorrow.' It does not proceed from the tongue and the teeth, but from the heart and the soul. I myself would rather share the future fate of a Voltaire or Spinoza than that of any Facing-both-ways occupant of the bench of bishops.

Let us listen to Voltaire again:—

'The Atheist treats final causes with contempt, because the argument is hackneyed; but this much-despised argument is that of Cicero and Newton. This alone might somewhat lessen the confidence of Atheists in themselves. The number is not small of the sages who, observing the mighty course of the stars, and the prodigious art that pervades the structure of animals and plants, have acknowledged a powerful hand working these continual wonders.

'The Atheist asserts that matter, blind and without direction, produces intelligent animals—produces, without intelligence, intelligent beings! Is this even conceivable? Is this system founded on the slightest probability?

An opinion so preposterous requires proofs no less astonishing than itself. The Atheist gives us none; he proves nothing; he only boldly asserts. What chaos! what confusion! and what temerity!

‘Spinoza at least acknowledged an intelligence acting in this great whole, which constituted nature: in this there was philosophy. But in the new system, I am compelled to say there is none.

‘Matter has extent, solidity, gravity, divisibility. I have all these as well as a stone: but was a stone ever known to feel and think? If I am extended, solid, divisible, I owe it to matter. But I have sensation and thoughts—to what do I owe them? Not to water, not to mud, most likely to something more powerful than myself. Solely to the combination of the elements, some will say. Let them prove it to me. Show me plainly that my intelligence cannot have been given to me by an intelligent cause. To this they are reduced.

‘The Atheist successfully combats the God of the schoolmen—a God composed of discordant qualities, a God to whom, as to those of Homer, is attributed the passions of men—a God capricious, fickle, unreasonable, absurd; but he cannot combat the God of the wise. The wise, contemplating nature, admit an intelligent and supreme power. It is, perhaps, impossible for human reason, destitute of divine assistance, to go a step further.

‘The Atheist asks where this being resides; and because it is impossible that any one, without being infinite, should know where he resides, he concludes that he does not exist. That is not philosophical: for we are not, because we cannot tell where the cause of an effect is, to conclude that there is no cause. If you had never seen a gunner, and you saw the effects of a battery of

cannon, you would not say it acts spontaneously. Shall it, then, only be necessary for you to say there is no God, in order to be believed on your word only? Finally, the Atheist's great objection is, the woes and crimes of mankind—an objection alike ancient and philosophical; an objection common, but terrible and fatal, and to which we find no answer but in the hope of a better life. But what is this hope? We can have no certainty in it but from reason. Still, I will venture to say, that when it is proved to us that a vast edifice, constructed with the greatest art, is built by an architect, whoever he may be, we ought to believe in that architect, even though the edifice should be stained with our blood, polluted by our crimes, and should crush us in its fall. I inquire not whether the architect is a good one, whether I ought not to be satisfied with his building, whether I should quit it rather than stay in it, nor whether those who are lodged in it for a few days, like myself, are content. I only inquire if it be true that there is an architect, or if this house, containing so many fine apartments, and so many more wretched garrets, built itself.'

In the same article occurs the following characteristic passage:—

'I do not propose to you to believe extravagant things, in order to escape embarrassment. I do not say to you, Go to Mecca and instruct yourself by kissing a black stone, take hold of a cow's tail, muffle yourself in a scapulary, or be imbecile and fanatical, in order to acquire the favour of the Being of beings. I say to you : Continue to cultivate virtue, to be beneficent, to regard all superstition with horror, or with pity ; but adore, with me, the design which is manifested in all nature, and,

consequently, the author of that design—the first and final cause of all ; hope with me, that our soul, which reasons on the great Eternal Being, may be happy through Him. There is no contradiction in this. You can no more demonstrate its impossibility than I can demonstrate mathematically that it is so. In metaphysics we scarcely reason on anything but probabilities. We are all swimming in a sea of which we have never seen the shore. Woe be to those who fight while they swim ! Land who can : but he that cries out to me, “ You swim in vain, there is no land ! ” disheartens me, and robs me of all my strength.

‘ Religion, you say, has produced thousands of crimes—say, rather, Superstition, which unhappily reigns over this globe ; it is the most bitter enemy of the pure adoration due to the Supreme Being.

‘ Let us detest this monster, Superstition, which has constantly been tearing the bosom of its mother ; those who combat it are the benefactors of mankind. It is a serpent enclosing Religion in its horrible folds ; its head must be bruised, without wounding the parent whom it infects and devours.’

I did not intend to quote so fully as I have done. But it is so necessary in this age of cant and lies to prove that Voltaire was not a blatant, windy Atheist, that he did not attack real religion, that all his war was made on lying priests and their venal and ignorant supporters. No man has been so misrepresented as Voltaire. His polished sarcasm, his biting wit, and his logical strength, made him the terror and dread of all hypocrites and humbugs ; and, of course, of the poor fools who are misled by such

people. The enmity aroused by Voltaire is profound and without reason. Foolish people don't read him. If they did, perhaps they would not understand him. Then the rogues and hypocrites—there are some existing even in this enlightened age, although education is helping people to find them out—who find it worth their while to cajole and humbug the superstitious and ignorant part of the community, never cease attacking the brilliant and trenchant common sense of Voltaire, and all those who resemble him. If common sense and reason ruled the world, what would become of the windy charlatans and the canting deceivers who support the present unsatisfactory condition of things? Remember this, the late Earl of Beaconsfield, who while he blessed the earth with his wisdom and truth, said that he was on the side of the angels, in another speech, I think, I may say, a little more truthful, boldly stated that the government of this country was not conducted in accordance with the rules of logic. Now, that explains a great deal. That is why reasonable men are always making a noise, and mean to continue doing so so long as they exist; and we hope those that follow them will continue making a noise when they are at rest, until affairs in this country are conducted according to the rules of reason and logic, and not as in the past, by rule of aristocratic and clerical thumbs. When Voltaire attacks dogmatic Atheism, he does not say, 'I believe because it is impossible,' but his opinions are based on what he sees, thinks, and feels. He does not,

like so many clerical dogmatists, say, 'Believe what I say or be damned.' There is not a word in the magnificent passages to which I have just called attention, that is contrary to common sense and love of, and consideration for, his fellow-creatures. Like the noble Lessing, the author of the most eloquent plea for toleration ever written, 'Nathan the Wise,' he says, that 'any man who believes that the universal father of all men has any undue preference for any particular nation or creed, has a totally inadequate idea of the justice and love of the Universal Father.'

Voltaire, unlike priests of nearly all creeds and countries, instead of appealing to the passions and lowest instincts of humanity, by threatening them with eternal torture unless they believe this, that, and the other impossibility, appeals on the contrary to the reason and heart of mankind, and tries, with undeviating faith, to awaken and keep alive the love of man for man, irrespective of colour, race, or creed. If that is not the soul and essence of Christianity, as I believe it is, then the less we have to do with a sham religion the better.

Now, let us listen to Voltaire on that hideous subject—War :—

'Distant people hear that they are going to fight, and that they may gain five or six sous a day if they will be of the party; they divide themselves into two bands, like reapers, and offer their services to whoever will employ them. These multitudes will fall upon one another, not only without having any interest in the affair, but without knowing the reason of it.



‘The most wonderful part of this infernal enterprise is that each chief of the murderers causes his colours to be blessed, and solemnly invokes God before he goes to exterminate his neighbours. If a chief has only the good fortune to kill two or three thousand men, he does not thank God for it; but when he has exterminated about ten thousand by fire and sword, and, to complete the work, some town has been levelled with the ground, they then sing a long song in four parts, composed in a language unknown to all the soldiers, and replete with barbarisms. The same song serves for marriages and births, as well as for murders; which is unpardonable, particularly in a nation famous for new songs.

‘Natural religion has a thousand times prevented citizens from committing crimes. A well-trained mind has no inclination for them, a tender one is alarmed at them, representing to itself a just and avenging God; but artificial religion encourages all cruelties which are exercised by troops, conspiracies, seditions, pillages, ambuscades, surprises of towns, robberies, and murders. Each marches gaily to crime, under the banner of his saint.

‘A certain number of orators are everywhere paid to celebrate these murderous days; some are dressed in a long black close coat, with a short cloak; others have a shirt above a gown; some wear two variegated stuff streamers over their shirts. All of them speak for a long time, many through the nose, and quote that which was done of old in Palestine as applicable to war in the present day. The rest of the year these people declaim against vices. They prove, in three points and by antithesis, that ladies who lay a little carmine upon their cheeks will be the eternal objects of the eternal vengeance of the

Supreme ; that Racine's plays are works of the demon ; that a man who, for two hundred crowns a day, causes his table to be furnished with fresh sea fish during Lent, infallibly works his salvation ; and that a poor man who eats two-pennyworth of mutton, will go for ever to all the devils. Miserable physicians of souls ! You exclaim for five quarters of an hour on some pricks of a pin, and say nothing of the malady which tears us into a thousand pieces ! Philosophers ! moralists ! burn all your books ! While the caprice of a few men makes that part of mankind devoted to war legally murder millions of our brethren, can there be anything more horrible throughout nature !

‘What becomes of, and what signifies to me, humanity, beneficence, modesty, temperance, mildness, wisdom, and piety, whilst half a pound of lead sent from the distance of a hundred yards pierces my body, and I die at twenty years of age in inexpressible torments, in the midst of five or six thousand dying men, whilst my eyes, which are closing for ever, see the town in which I was born destroyed by fire and sword, and the last sounds which reach my ears are the shrieks of women and children expiring under the ruins, all for the pretended interests of a man whom I know not?’

The following description of Voltaire is from the pen of a brilliant modern French writer, and describes his work and his prodigious personal influence :—

‘Madam, if he takes up your case he will win ; aye, even if the king and the whole world opposed you. You do not know Voltaire ! He possesses a prodigious in-

telle, and the most passionate earnestness. If he is convinced of the innocence of your husband—and he is, I feel sure—he will convince every one else. I feel certain that he has already written a hundred letters in his favour. He has addressed the Ministers, the judges, their friends, their mistresses, their superiors, their inferiors, their creditors, and every one who can influence them. He prays, supplicates, caresses, convinces, persuades all the world. If necessary, he will threaten; but that is his very last resource. If he writes to a judge he will call him Solon, Lycurgus, Papinian, Trebonien, Column of the Temple of Justice, Protector of the Widow and Orphan; but, if he does not act as Voltaire wishes, he will call him Judge Jeffreys, assassin, &c. As his person is safe in Ferney, he does not fear the fury of his enemies; he can denounce them with impunity and protect the unhappy victims of their injustice. You know that he brought disgrace upon the Parliament of Toulouse and upon the heads of the murderers of Calas? You know that he rehabilitated the reputation of that most unhappy family; that he had their confiscated property restored to them; that he rescued the Sirvens family; that he is at this moment engaged in annulling the unjust sentence of Lally? Are you aware that in this country, where the point of honour has survived justice, there is not a magistrate who does not tremble with fear when pronouncing a sentence lest Voltaire, the representative of good sense, of law, and of public opinion, should succeed in breaking it? Be content, madam; your husband shall not be condemned; or, if so, he shall be pardoned. Voltaire is not the man to leave a work he has commenced unfinished.'

A little further on occurs the following description of Voltaire's life at Ferney :—

‘Do you see that pretty little house to the right there? Voltaire built it for a poor devil, a serf of the monks of St. Claude, who escaped from his masters and took refuge here with his wife and children. The monks demanded his surrender, and would have punished him severely, as his flight set a bad example to the other serfs. The poor fellow was about to be arrested on an order of the Parliament of Besançon; when he came to Voltaire, and protested that he would rather throw himself into the Lake of Geneva, with a stone tied round his neck, than return to his old slavery. Voltaire wrote to the Abbé of St. Claude and threatened him with a lawsuit, and he submitted to the loss of his slave rather than face Voltaire's opposition. The poor man was nearly naked and penniless. Voltaire supplied him with all he required, and built him the house before you. The man was a watch and clock maker. He is now making and exporting timepieces to England and Russia, and is making his fortune. He has paid for his house, and is now employing a great number of workpeople. Hundreds of other people have been protected and assisted by Voltaire in the same generous manner, so that Ferney, from a little village, is now a busy manufacturing town. If you should ever be unjustly persecuted by the police, don't fail to take refuge here, and live and prosper under the protection of Voltaire.’

I think I have proved by the quotations I have submitted to your judgment that Voltaire was a wise man, who loved his brothers and sisters, especially those who were poorest and weakest; that he, in

defence of Calas and Sirvens, defied the powerful and the rich; that he braved the wrath even of priests, the deadliest and the worst; that, in short, he was a thousand times more a Christian than those who assailed him as an atheist. He had, and has, many enemies. What good and bold man has not?

Of course he had his faults. Men of his excitable temperament always have. He did not measure every word. He was not always thinking what people would think of him if he said this or did that. He had a heart and a conscience, and these alone dictated to him. He did not say, 'Believe this because I say so.' No; he said, 'Examine the evidence, and if it is true, and my deductions are logical, I think you ought to be convinced.' That is the process we all ought to adopt, and, in time, when the work of education—the holy and beautiful influence that is wiping out all that is absurd, slowly, I admit, but surely—has advanced a little further, it will be the universal rule.

I should have liked to refer to Voltaire's splendid plays, *Zaire*, *Merope*, *Mahomet*, *Ædipus*, and also to his brilliant novels, where the most subtle irony is united to the finest wit and ripest wisdom; but I thought it better to limit myself to combating the absurd and almost universal error which prevails, that Voltaire was a heartless, soulless kind of French monkey, gibbering and gibing at all that is noble, pure, and spiritual. That opinion is false. He rescued real religion from the slanders of a lot

of lying priests, who debased and defamed her. He taught the world that to love one another is the root and spirit of all religion, and that if religion did not embrace the highest morality, it was a mockery and a lie. In my humble opinion, Voltaire's writings did an unspeakable amount of good. In an age of cruel superstition and flagitious vice, which, like hideous Siamese twins, were united together by mutual selfishness, he held up the standard of natural religion, and, although spat upon and reviled by those whose dirty business it was to preach the worst forms of supernatural religion and its accompanying cant and persecution, he never lost heart, but with unshrinking courage upheld the banner on which shone the holy words, justice, mercy, and truth, until the worn-out nerves relaxed and the bright eyes grew dim in death.

I invite the reader to study Voltaire for himself, and he will agree with me, I believe, that in spite of the faults of his highly strung and excitable nature, he possessed a great genius, aye, and a noble heart, which never ceased to beat with an ardent and un-deviating love for humanity.

ROUSSEAU.





## ROUSSEAU.

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IN producing that great upheaval, the French Revolution, the sentiment, the emotion, the strange, half-wild, hysterical genius of Rousseau bore a very important part. The essentially critical, because so widely sympathetic genius, of Carlyle has produced a most wonderful picture of the incredible contradictions so apparent in that bewildering writer. The same mighty master has left us the only possible portraits of Cromwell and Voltaire.

‘Hovering in the distance, with woestruck, minatory air, stern-beckoning, comes Rousseau. Poor Jean Jacques ! Alternately deified and cast to the dogs ; a deep-minded, high-minded, even noble, yet woefully misarranged mortal, with all misformations of Nature intensified to the verge of madness by unfavourable Fortune. A lonely man, his life a long soliloquy. The wandering Tiresias of the time, in whom, however, did lie prophetic meaning, such as none of the others offer. Whereby, indeed, it might partly be that the world went to such extremes about him ; that, long after his departure, we have seen one whole nation worship him, and a Burke, in the name of another, class him with the offscourings of the earth. His true character, with its lofty aspirations and poor performings ; and how the spirit of the man worked

so wildly, like celestial fire in a thick, dark element of chaos, and shot forth ethereal radiance, all-piercing lightning, yet could not illuminate—was quenched, and did not conquer: this, with what lies in it, may now be pretty accurately appreciated. Let his history teach all whom it concerns “to *harden* themselves against the ills which Mother Nature will try them with;” to seek within their own soul what the world must for ever deny them; and say composedly to the Prince of the Power of this lower Earth and Air: “Go thou thy way; I go mine.”

If a great man can only be judged by his peers, Carlyle was in a position to judge Rousseau. In the whole range of Carlyle’s great works, great and stimulating in the highest degree in spite of their superficial faults, there is nothing stronger and subtler than the characteristic passage just quoted. Carlyle, although in many respects so opposite to Rousseau, had many points of genius in common with him. Both were idealists in the fullest sense of that term; both were animated by a burning love for, and sympathy with, humanity: the apparent bitterness of both originated in their disappointment with the concrete man compared with their ideal of humanity. Where Carlyle was strongest, and where Rousseau was weakest, was in the moral part of their respective natures. Carlyle founded himself on duty. By that steady star he steered his bark. Rousseau, on the contrary, was the creature of circumstance and fortune; and, therefore, his course was broken, uneven, and most unhappy; but the great share Rousseau had in the weaknesses of

poor humanity made him charitable to others. Carlyle was strong enough to dispense with sympathy: the man who cannot do that is doomed. Rousseau shed tears if it were denied him. Carlyle's genius included common sense; Rousseau's did not; and hence, his sufferings and mournful lamentings.

One of the most gifted men of his time, Bernardin de St. Pierre, who was also Rousseau's friend, has left the world a priceless record of his intimate intercourse with him. From this interesting account I will quote a few of the most salient passages:—

‘He called on me’ (wrote St. Pierre) ‘and asked me why I had not been to see him lately. “You know the reason,” I replied. “There are days,” he said, “when I would be alone. I return so tranquil, so contented with my solitary walks! Then I require no one, and no one wants me. I should be annoyed,” added he, in a friendly tone, “to see you too often; but I should be still more hurt not to see you at all.” Then, with excitement, “I dread intimacy; but I have a project—when the moment has arrived——” “Why do you not place,” I said, “a signal in your window when you would like to receive my visit? Or, if you would like it better, when I call upon you, and you would prefer to be alone, why do you not tell me so?” “My bad temper overcame me,” he replied, “and you must have perceived it. I controlled it some time; I was soon no longer master of it; it broke forth in spite of me. I have my faults; but when one has a friendship for another, one must take the good with the bad.” He then invited me to dinner for the next day.

‘One may judge by this trait of the noble frankness of his character ; but before citing other instances I will make a few reflections on what I mean by character. It appears to me that character is the result of our qualities, physical and moral. Our philosophers attribute it to climate, but they deceive themselves ; because it would result that all men, under the same latitude, would be of the same character ; which is contrary to experience. The Turk, grave, silent, resigned ; and the Greek, erratic, talkative, restless ; the ancient Roman and the modern Italian ; in short, the monk and the opera-dancer, are enveloped in the same atmosphere and live in the same climate.

‘For finding the origin of our characters, we must mount to laws less mechanical, and distinguish in mankind two characters, the one given by nature, the other by society.

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‘People have accused Rousseau of being proud, because he refused to dine at houses where fashionable people amused themselves by making men of letters combat like gladiators ; he was proud, but it was to all men equally, finding no difference in them except from virtue. He loved lofty souls. “Well !” I said, one day to him, “you would have loved that Jesuit who said to a Spanish nobleman who would force him to yield the first place, ‘It is you who owe me respect, I who hold your God within my hands every day, and your queen at my feet.’” “Oh !” he replied, “I know a very singular instance, stranger than yours ; it is that of a negro ambassador, received by a Portuguese governor in a room where there was only one chair, occupied by himself. When the black ambassador was near him, he said without rising : ‘Is your master very powerful ?’ The negro

ordered two of his slaves to lie on the floor, seated himself on their backs ; then, reflecting gravely, said : ‘ My master has an infinity of servants like you ; fifty like the king your master ; and one like myself.’ At these words he rose, and left the room. The slaves still remained lying on the floor ; their master was asked to recall them, but he said : ‘ My custom is not to remove the chairs from the place where I have been seated.’ ” Rousseau said on this subject, that modesty was a false virtue, and that men of merit knew well how to esteem themselves at their true value. At the same time, he thought little of those who only cared for his celebrity. “ It is not me they love,” he said, “ it is public opinion, and they care nothing for my real value.” On being asked how he became so eloquent, he replied, “ I have simply said what I thought.” He looked upon truth as the grand charm of a writer. “ People persuade me,” he said, “ because they write like those persuaded. It is not ignorance which injures man so much as error ; and that nearly always comes from ambition. Modern writers,” he said, “ who have most talent, produce little effect, and inspire small interest in their works, because they would always display it. Whatever be the power of the mind, virtue is so ravishing, that even when it is seen in the midst of the inconsequences of superstition and ignorance, it makes itself loved and preferred to all. That is why Plutarch, whose judgment is not strong, interests us even in his superstitions ; because when it is a question of making men better and more patriotic, he adopts the most absurd opinions ; his virtue renders him credulous ; there pass, then, between it and his judgment delightful battles. For instance, he reports that the statue of Fortune, given by the Roman ladies, has spoken ; then he adds, as if to

persuade himself, 'She has spoken not only once, but twice.'" Kindness was the foundation of Rousseau's character; he preferred a kind action to all the epigrams of Martial. His heart, which nothing could deprave, opposed its sweetness to all the gall with which society satisfies its thirst to-day. Nevertheless, he preferred passionate to cold-blooded characters. "I once knew a man," he said to me one day, "so passionate, that when he lost at chess, he would break the pieces between his teeth." The owner of the *café*, to save his chessmen, had them made as big as one's fist. When our man saw them he was delighted, because, said he, he could now bite away! He was one of the kindest men in the world, capable of throwing himself into the fire for a friend. Rousseau also mentioned to me another man, calm, reserved, who would walk about with him for hours without uttering a word. One day he saw Rousseau pluck some seeds, pleasant to the taste; as he held them in his hand, and began to eat them, a third person passed them and exclaimed, "What you are eating is poison!" "What! poison?" said Rousseau. "Yes! and that gentleman with you knows it as well as I do." "Why, then, did he not warn me?" "Because," said the grave man, "eating them appeared to give you pleasure."

'Rousseau was gay, confiding, open, from the moment he could display his real character. One evening we were at La Muette; it was late; foolishly I proposed a short cut across the fields. Absorbed in thought, like himself, I missed the way; the road led us back to Passy. Night approached; I saw his face change; I said to him, "There is the Tuileries." "Yes, but we are not there. Oh, how anxious my wife will be!" he repeated several times. He hastened his steps; knitted his brows. I

spoke to him; he did not reply. I said, "Is it not better to be here than in the solitudes of Armenia?" He stopped, and replied, "I would rather be in the midst of Parthian arrows than be exposed to the gaze of men." I then spoke to him of Plutarch; he recovered like one from a dream.

'The suspicion he felt towards mankind extended even to natural objects. He believed in a destiny which pursued him. He once said to me, "Providence takes care of the species, but not of the individual." Nevertheless, I never met any one more convinced of the existence of a God. He again said, "It is not necessary to study nature to be convinced. There is such beautiful order in the physical and so much disorder in the moral world, that there must be another life where the soul shall be satisfied." He added, with deep feeling, "We have this sentiment at the bottom of the heart. I feel that there must be something reserved for me."

'Four or five causes united contributed to alter his character, the least of which would have been sufficient to make a man wicked: persecutions, calumnies, bad fortune, sickness, excessive literary work—work which often fatigues the mind and spoils the temper. People often reproach poets and artists with irritability and caprice. Mental exertion, in exhausting him, places a man in the condition of a tired traveller. Rousseau himself, when he composed his works, would pass entire weeks without speaking to his wife. But all these causes united never destroyed his love of justice. He carried that sentiment into all his tastes; and I have often seen him, when botanising in the country, refuse to pluck a plant that was the sole one of its species.

"The virtuous man," he remarked, "is forced to

live alone; besides, solitude is an affair of taste. If one has nothing to do in the world, one is nearly always discontented with himself and others." As he composed his happiness of a good conscience, of health, and of liberty, he feared all that which could alter those possessions, without which the rich themselves taste no felicity. At the time that Gluck's *Iphigénie* was performed, I went with Rousseau to the opera. We placed ourselves in a corner, on the same side as the Queen's box. The crowd and the noise increased; we were stifled. I felt inclined to mention his name, in the hope that those who surrounded us would protect him against the crowd. I hesitated for some time for fear of displeasing him. At last, addressing myself to the group before me, I ventured to whisper the name of Rousseau. Hardly had I uttered the word, when a deep silence ensued; they looked on him with respect; every one tried to shield us from the crowd, yet no one repeated the name that I had pronounced. I admired this reticence, rare in the national character; and that sentiment of veneration showed me the power of the presence of a great man. On leaving the theatre, he proposed to me to accompany him on Monday to the Easter *fêtes* at Mont Valerian. We were to meet in a *café* at the Champs Elysées. We met and took our chocolate. At eight o'clock we were in the Bois de Boulogne. Rousseau commenced to botanise. He made his little collection as we walked along. We had passed through a part of the wood, when we perceived in its solitudes two young girls, one of whom was dressing the hair of her companion. Struck with this charming picture, we both stopped to contemplate it. "My wife," said Rousseau, "has told me that near her birthplace the country girls



make each other's toilettes in the fields." That charming picture recalled to us the happy life of Greece and some of Virgil's beautiful verses. When we arrived on the bank of the river, we met a great many people going to Mont Valerian. We climbed a steep hill, and were hardly at the top, when, pressed by hunger, we thought of dining. Rousseau led me towards a monastery, where he knew we should receive hospitality. The person who came to open the door for us led the way to the chapel, where they were reciting the Litany, which is so very beautiful. We entered at the moment when these words were being pronounced: "That it may please Thee to defend, and provide for, the fatherless children and widows, and all that are desolate and oppressed." These words, so simple and so touching, filled us with emotion; and when we had prayed, Rousseau said to me, with deep emotion, "Now I feel that which is written in the Gospel, 'When two or three are gathered together in My name, I am in the midst of them.' There is here a sentiment of peace and happiness which penetrates the soul." I replied, "If Fénelon lived, you would be a Catholic." He replied, with the greatest excitement, and with tears in his eyes and voice, "Oh, if Fénelon lived, I would endeavour to be his lackey, in order to merit being his *valet-de-chambre!*" We were then introduced to the refectory; we seated ourselves to listen to the reading, to which Rousseau was very attentive. The subject was the injustice of the lamentations of man. God has drawn him from nothing and owes him nothing. After the reading, Rousseau said to me, in a deeply agitated voice, "Ah! how happy are those who believe." "Alas!" I answered, "that peace is deceitful and shallow; the same passions which torment worldly men ferment here;

they feel here all the torments of Dante's hell ; that which increases them more is that one does *not* leave at the gates all hope."

'We walked for some time in the cloisters and garden. One enjoyed from there an immense landscape. Paris raised in the distance its towers, covered with light, and appeared to crown that vast picture—that spectacle contrasted with the great leaden clouds in the west. In the distance we perceived the Seine, the Bois de Boulogne, and the venerable Château of Madrid, built by Francis I. As we walked silently, contemplating the landscape, Rousseau said to me, "I will return to this place to meditate again."

'Some time after that I said to him, "You have shown me landscapes which please you, I would now show you one in my taste." On the day agreed we started at dawn, and, leaving to the right the park of St. Fargeau, we pursued the paths to the east ; we soon arrived at a fountain resembling a Greek monument, and on which was engraved "Fountain of St. Pierre." "You have brought me here," said Rousseau, laughing, "because this fountain bears your name." "It is," I said, "the fountain of love," and I showed him the names of Colin and Collette. After reposing ourselves for a moment, we continued our road ; at each step the country became more agreeable. Rousseau collected a multitude of flowers, whose beauty he made me admire. In this way we reached Romainville. It was then dinner-time ; we entered an inn, where they placed us in a little box, the window of which looked on the street. They served us with an omelette. "Ah," said Rousseau, "If I had known that we were to have had an omelette, I would have made it myself, because I can make a very good one." During

the repast he was delightfully gay, but little by little the conversation became more serious, and we commenced to deal with philosophical questions after the manner of the guests described by Plutarch in his table-talk.

‘He spoke to me of *Emile*, and wished me to continue it after his plan. “I should die contented if I left that work in your hands;” on which I replied, I could never make Sophy unfaithful. “I have always figured to myself that a Sophy would one day make my happiness. Besides, do you not fear that in seeing Sophy guilty, people would ask what is the use of so many preparations, so many cares? Is that, therefore, the fruit of education and nature?” “That subject, even,” he replied, “is useful; it is not sufficient to prepare for virtue, one must shield from vice. Women have more to fear from women than from men.” “I fear,” I replied, “that the faults of Sophy are more contrary to morals than the example of her virtue is favourable: besides, her repentance may be more touching than her innocence; and such an effect would not be without danger to virtue.” As I finished these words the waiter of the inn entered, and said loudly, “Gentlemen, your coffee is ready.” “Stupid fellow!” I exclaimed; “did I not tell you to inform me in secret when the water boiled?” “What!” said Rousseau, “are we to have coffee?” The coffee was brought, and we continued our conversation on *Emile*. Rousseau pressed me again to write on that subject: he would put into my hands all that he had written; but I begged him to excuse me. “I have not your style,” I said. “The work would be of two colours. I prefer your lessons in botany.” “Ah, well!” said he, “I will give them you.”

‘ We returned to Paris by a pleasant road, talking of Plutarch. Rousseau called him the great painter of misfortune. He referred to the death of Agis, that of Antony, that of Monime, the wife of Mithridates, the triumph of Paulus Emilius, and the sorrows of the children of Perseus. Tacitus withdraws us from man ; but Plutarch teaches us to sympathise with and to understand him. In talking thus, we passed under the shadow of some superb chestnut-trees in full flower. Rousseau plucked a bunch of blossoms, and made me admire the exquisite bloom. He made me promise to go with him to Sèvres. “ There are there,” he said, “ fine pine-trees and fields of violets : we will start early.” I love whatever reminds me of the North. This induced me to tell him my adventures in Russia, including the particulars of my unhappy love affair in Poland. He pressed my hand and said, on leaving me, “ I needed to pass this day with you.” ’

How delightful is the intercourse of intellectual equals ! How they understand and almost go before each other in the rapidity of their comprehension ! A man can be judged only by his peers. What simple tastes ! a cup of coffee after their simple, frugal meal made a little treat. But what conversation ! What geniality, wit, and wisdom ! But before quitting St. Pierre, I must quote one more passage from another of his little-known works, in which he gives another estimate of Rousseau’s character and genius :—

‘ Rousseau, troubled by the hatred of nations, the

divisions of philosophers, the systems of savants, adopted no religion, to enable him to examine them all; and, rejecting the testimony of men, he decided in favour of the Christian religion, because of the sublimity of its morality, and the Divine character he saw in its author. Voltaire removed faith from the doubter. Rousseau made those doubt who did not believe. If he speaks of Providence, it is with enthusiasm, with love; it is that which gives to his works an inexpressible charm, a character of virtue, of which the impression can never be effaced.'

That is very true and very interesting. Rousseau had a truly sentimental love for religion, duty, and truth, which nothing could ever kill. That spirit shines through, beautifies, and excuses his many faults of conduct. Had he put this belief into concrete actions, it would undoubtedly have been better, especially for himself. No man of genius can do wrong with impunity: he poisons the fountain of his inspiration.

Now as to the infinite capacity for taking pains. He told St. Pierre that there was no work of his that he had not re-copied four or five times, and that the last copy contained as many erasures as the first; that he had been sometimes eight days in finding just the expression he required. His conversation was very interesting, especially with a friend; but the arrival of a stranger sufficed to silence him. 'It only requires,' he said, 'a little argument to upset me; my wit arrives half an hour after that of other people; I know exactly

what to answer when it is too late.' He had the gold but not the gilt coppers of conversation; and, besides, how can you expect the people with gilt coppers to like the man with real gold?

Now we will turn to one of the most extraordinary books in the world's literature—Rousseau's *Confessions*—a book which, whether we take it as literature or as a vivid portrait of a unique genius, ranks with *Wilhelm Meister*, and with that alone, in what it tells us, and what, infinitely more, it suggests. This extraordinary man forgot nothing worth remembering. His heart and mind received impressions with the greatest facility, and retained them with the greatest tenacity. Then it is not only what he tells, extraordinary though it be; it is the clear, simple, fascinating style of the man which enthrals one. The form is delightful, and the matter of absorbing interest. Listen to the opening of this unequalled book:—

'I form an enterprise which has no example, and which will never have an imitator. I would display to my fellow-men a man in all the truth of nature: and that man shall be myself.

'Myself alone. I understand my heart, and I know mankind. I am unlike all those whom I have met; I dare to believe that I am not made like any one else existing. If I am not better, at least I am different. Whether Nature has done well or ill in breaking the mould in which she has cast me, is a question that can only be decided after having read me.

'Let the last trumpet sound when it will, I will

appear, with this book in my hand, before the Sovereign Judge. I will then say boldly: "Behold, what I have done, what I have thought, what I have been. I have spoken of the good and the bad with the same frankness. I have hidden nothing bad, added nothing good; and if I have occasionally employed some indifferent ornament, it has only been to fill a void caused by a failure of memory. I have shown myself that which I was: despicable and vile when I have been so; good, generous, sublime, when I was so; I have unveiled my interior such as Thou Thyself hast seen it, Eternal Being! Assemble around me the innumerable crowd of my fellow-men; let them listen to my confessions, let them sigh at my indignities, let them blush at my disgraces. Then let each one open his heart at the foot of Thy throne with the same sincerity; and then let one alone say if he dare: I am better than that man."

The man who wrote the above daring and unparalleled passage was born at Geneva on the 28th June, 1712. His father was a watchmaker, and after the birth of his first child, went to Constantinople. Rousseau was born after the return of his father to Geneva. His birth cost his mother's life, whom his father loved very ardently. The boy, like many other great men, was miserably infirm and sickly. His father never consoled himself for the loss of his wife. 'He never caressed me,' says Rousseau, 'without my feeling by his sighs and his convulsive embraces, that bitter regrets were mixed with his endearments. When he said to me, "Jean-Jacques, talk of your mother," I would

say to him, "Well, father, we are going to weep then." "Ah!" said he, sighing, "restore her to me, console me for her loss, fill the void she has left in my soul. Should I love you as I do if you were only my son?"

The fragile life of Rousseau was saved by his aunt. Rousseau was the kind of man that every tender-hearted woman would feel it her duty to protect from the hard world in which he appeared to be lost. The truth of this appears again and again in his *Confessions*.

He felt before thinking, and did not remember how he learnt to read. His mother had been fond of reading, and had left a collection of novels, which he and his father read after supper. They were both so fond of reading that they would forget the hour, and read on till they were surprised by the morning song of the birds. His father would then say: 'Go to bed; I am more a child than thou.'

This excessive culture of the emotions explains the ardent sensibility of the man. This reading of romance continued till 1719, when Rousseau was seven years old. He then commenced his life-long study of Plutarch, which coloured his thinking and feeling more than any other reading. He says:—

'Plutarch especially became my favourite reading. The pleasure I took in reading him cured me a little of my love for novels, and I quickly preferred *Brutus* and *Aristides* to *Orondate* and *Artamene*. These interesting studies, and the conversations on them with my father, made my mind firm and republican, my



character indomitable and free, impatient of the chain of servitude, which feelings have tormented me all my life, in situations where it was most dangerous to act up to them.

‘Always occupied with Rome and Athens, living one may say with their great men; born myself the citizen of a republic, and son of a father whose love of his country was his greatest passion—I inflamed myself by his example; I believed myself Greek or Roman; I became the personage of whom I read: the story of traits of constancy and intrepidity which struck me made my eyes sparkle and my voice firm.’

Rousseau lived with loving friends and relations. His father was as excitable and romantic as the boy. His aunt loved him, caressed him, and taught him a multitude of songs, which she sang to the delighted boy in a thin, sweet voice. In fact, she cultivated and made into a passion his taste for music, from which he afterwards derived the greatest solace during his stormy and unhappy life. Every circumstance of the boy's early life appeared to develop the feminine, sentimental strain in his character. Had his father been different the boy would have had a chance; but with a father who was as fond of sentimental novels as the son, what hope was there for the boy overcoming the essential weakness of his nature?

Rousseau was placed with an engraver, M. Ducommun, a rude and brutal man, who succeeded in brutifying the lad's passionate and sensitive

nature. He forgot his studies, his music ; in fact, he became, under the influence of his hard master, an ordinary, stupid apprentice. His father, when he visited him, did not find his former idol in him ; he was no longer the polite and refined Jean-Jacques ; but developed into a low blackguard of vile tastes and habits. He must, he admits, have had a great bias towards degradation, because his fall brought him no pain and was made without any difficulty.

The occupation itself did not repel him ; he had a taste for design, which was destroyed by the brutal treatment of his master, who quite demoralised the boy's nature.

The lad was persuaded to steal asparagus for a companion of his master. The proceeds of the theft—very little—were spent on breakfasts, in which Rousseau shared.

After this, the boy took to stealing apples, and was discovered in the act by his master. The author, in recalling his punishment, significantly says : 'The pen falls from my hand.'

We will here quote a very interesting passage from this wonderful book :—

'I have very ardent passions, and while they agitate me nothing equals my impetuosity ; I know nothing of self-restraint, nor fear, nor appearances ; I am cynical, impudent, violent, intrepid ; no shame arrests me, no danger daunts me ; compared to the one object which absorbs, the universe is nothing to me. But that endures but a moment, and the next instant I collapse. When I am calm, I am indolence and timidity them-

selves ; all repulses, all terrifies me ; a word, a gesture alarms my laziness ; fear and shame conquer me to such a point that I would bury myself from the eyes of all mortals. If I must act, I know not what to do ; if I must speak, I know not what to say ; if people look at me, I lose countenance. When I am excited I sometimes find words ; but in ordinary intercourse I find nothing, nothing at all ; it is insupportable to me to be obliged to talk. Add to that, no bought pleasures gratify my taste. My pleasures must be pure, and money poisons all. I love, for instance, those of the table ; but, unable to endure either the restraints of good company, or the coarseness of an inn, I can only taste them with a friend ; because to enjoy them alone appears to me impossible ; my imagination occupies itself with something else, and I have no pleasure in eating.'

Rousseau was an idealist to the core : he had no real sympathy with the ordinary facts, people, and pleasures of life. He was only vulnerable through the imagination : he was, to a great extent, a prose Shelley. There are men who gather strength when they touch the earth, and these men are the greatest, and there are others who lose it. The two types are well represented by Browning and Shelley.

I must hasten on with my account of Rousseau's early life. At last he could bear the tyranny of his brutal master no longer, and one night he escaped from his slavery. The world was all before him where to choose, but his purse was limited, and, therefore, his 'choice' was limited also. He at last took refuge in a place where Protestant renegades

were received, in order to be restored to the bosom of the Catholic and Apostolic Church. There he met probably the worst villains to be found in Europe. Rousseau had fallen, indeed, but not to the awful depths of degradation to which these scoundrels had sunk.

From this abominable refuge of crime and hypocrisy, Rousseau passed to his protector and friend, Madame de Warens, one of the most abnormal specimens of human nature it is possible to conceive, and that only a Rousseau could describe. His attachment to this middle-aged and good-natured lady became of the most passionate kind. He doubtless derived great assistance from her kindness and protection. She rescued him from starvation, and gave him time to think, read, and observe. He showed hardly any indication of genius or even talent; in fact, he was looked upon, by smart, clever people, as hopelessly stupid. While they were exulting in their superficial knowledge of the mere outsides of things, which they shared with every ordinary man not quite an idiot, Rousseau was brooding over principles and causes. His thoughts ripened slowly; but when they had reached that stage of development they had a flavour and a value of their own, peculiar and priceless. His adventures and troubles, his grandeur and his meanness, are all unveiled by him in the *Confessions* with an apparently artless frankness and freedom, which makes the book—to a man who thinks that the only, or, at all events, the supremely interesting study is the marvellous heart

of humanity—the most instructive and fascinating work ever produced. I repeat, apparently artless frankness and freedom, because a more carefully composed work, better adapted to effect the purpose and produce the effect designed by the writer, was never written than the *Confessions* of Rousseau: in it appears the consummate art which hides itself.

In speaking of Madame de Warens' very peculiar ideas of religion, Rousseau said:—

‘She was systematic in all things, even in religion, and her system was composed of ideas very incongruous—some sensible, some very absurd; of sentiments in accordance with her character, and of prejudices springing from her education. As a rule, believers make God like themselves—the good make Him good, the wicked make Him wicked; the bigots, bitter and bilious, see nothing but hell, because they would damn all the world; loving and sweet souls think differently. And one thing which inspires me with an astonishment, from which I can never recover, is that the good Fénélon speaks of hell in *Télémaque* as if he believed in it; but I hope that he lied then, because, however truthful one may be, one must lie sometimes when one is a bishop. Maman never lies to me, and her soul without gall could not imagine a God vindictive and always angry; she saw only clemency and pity where bigots see justice and punishment. She often said to me that there would be no justice in God being only just to us, because not having given us the capacity to be so, that would be to demand more than we had received. A strange thing with her was, that, without believing in hell, she did not cease to believe in purgatory. That was because she

did not know what to do with the wicked ; feeling unable to damn them, or to place them with the good before they had become so. And one must admit that in this world and the other the wicked are always very embarrassing.'

This passage proves that with all his sentiment, Rousseau knew how to use the subtle vein of irony he possessed ; and when tears stop, irony begins.

There is one passage of this unique work which is of the greatest possible interest and value. In it he tells us how and what he read. At first he tried to harmonise the different teachings of contradictory philosophers. In this hopeless task even Rousseau failed ; any one with smaller brain would have gone mad. He gave that Utopian plan up, and thus found his way out of the philosophical jungle. This was his plan ; I think a wise one :—

'In reading each author I made it my rule to adopt and follow his ideas without mixing mine or those of others with them, and never to dispute with him. I said to myself, Begin by making an arsenal of ideas, true or false, but clear, until your head is sufficiently furnished to enable you to compare and choose. This method has its drawbacks, I know, but it has contented me. At the end of some years spent in thinking after others, without reflecting and nearly without reasoning, I found myself sufficiently strong in ideas gained from books to suffice for myself, and to enable me to think without the help of others. Then, when travel and business have prevented me consulting books, I have

amused myself by turning over in my mind what I have read, and weighing each thing in the balance of reason, and sometimes judging my masters. My judicial faculty was not impaired because I exercised it late; and when I published my own ideas, I was not accused of being a servile disciple and of swearing by any particular teacher.'

What a lesson of modesty that passage teaches! Before Rousseau attempted to teach, he painfully and laboriously learnt. Then, when by dint of steady, incessant, and unwearying study, he had something worth hearing to say, he said it in his own brilliant, clear, fearless, and eloquent way. Rousseau perfectly understood the infinite value of style in writing. Before long, only books that have individuality of style, that is the breath of life, will be read by any one. People who don't care for style will read newspapers only.

I must now confine myself to a few passages from the *Confessions*.

The following on mercenary writing is, I think, very striking, and might be useful to some of the disinterested scribes who write for the Pharisees of to-day:—

'I felt that to write for bread was to quickly stifle my genius and kill my talent, which was less in my pen than in my heart; and born only of a manner of thinking, elevated and proud, which could alone nourish my powers. Nothing vigorous, nothing grand could come from a venal pen. Necessity, avarice, perhaps, would have made me work quickly rather than well. If the

need of success had not plunged me in cabals, it would have made me try to say, instead of things useful and true, those which please the multitude; and, instead of being a distinguished author, I should have become a mere spoiler of good paper. No, no; I have always felt that the condition of an author was, and could be, illustrious and worthy only because it was *not* a trade. *It is difficult to think for a living.* To be able, and to dare to say grand truths, one must not depend upon their success. I threw my books to the public with the full conviction of having spoken for the common good, and without care for anything else.'

Then Rousseau clearly sets forth the great literary problem: How to do good, noble, disinterested work—and live by it. So far as I know that problem has not yet been solved:—

'If the work were repulsed, so much the worse for those who would not profit by it; for myself, I had not need of their approbation to live. My business could nourish me; and that was precisely why my books sold.'

He made his humble living by copying music. He dared to be poor, and, therefore, sympathised with and loved the poor. As he says, his heart beat in every word he wrote; and that is why his books pierced through the most corrupt city in the world—Paris. The fashionable people, artificial and false to their finger-ends, were carried away by his eloquence, tenderness, and enthusiasm. The success of *Julie* was unprecedented. Everybody of culture and education devoured it. It was, to the



corrupt and enervated minds and hearts of fashionable society, what the sea air is to their poor, worn-out bodies after the dissipation of the season—I suppose the hardest work poor mortals can be condemned to.

They had lost the capacity for true love; their hearts and minds were corrupt to their foundations. But the tenderness, the burning passion, the enthusiastic love for humanity, the rushing torrent of eloquence, logic, wit, and irony, created a new sensation. It was original, daring, striking, and held them enthralled. He did not learn to write like that by imitating others. No; he had seen, felt, thought, suffered all the agonies of poverty, all the insults that ‘patient’ or impatient ‘merit of the unworthy takes;’ but out of all that chaos of misery and contumely he created a cosmos of genius and thought, enriched by his very heart’s blood. He knew his work was great and good. Could he have supported all his sufferings and agonies had he not been sustained by the sublime and all-conquering consciousness of genius? He felt the Divinity within him. When he measured himself with the other great men of his time, he, poor, miserable, suffering, felt his innate superiority.

There was no mock-modesty in our author. He did not try to make himself a dwarf to keep dwarfs in countenance. No! he knew his powers, and would never lower his crest to his inferiors and detractors.

His body was puny, his health was weak; but his soul was that of a Spartan, unbendable by any

blow in man's or Fortune's power. This man, great in spite of great faults, was our friend, and the friend of justice, truth, and liberty, and was, therefore, worthy of our respect and love.

We can say of Rousseau that he thought nobly of the soul; and, as a rule, in his best works, obeyed its dictates.

The following passage from *Émile*, with which I will conclude my sketch, is very characteristic of the author, and displays his peculiar power of welding sentiment and reason together:—

‘Our passions are the principal instruments of our preservation: it would therefore be as ridiculous as vain to attempt to destroy them; it would be an attempt to control nature, to reform the work of God. If God commanded man to destroy the passions He gave him, God would contradict himself. He has never given so insane an order; and nothing of the kind is written in the human heart. And the commandments of God to man are not passed through the lips of another man; God himself writes them at the bottom of the heart.’

DIDEROT.



## DIDEROT.

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GREAT men may be defined as leaders and misleaders of the ordinary rank and file. In spite of the sins of the flesh, Diderot, Mirabeau, Burns, and other hot-blooded sons of women belonged to the former category. Each and all were possessed by the chivalrous spirit; and, in spite of the robustness of their manhood there was underlying it the feminine sensitiveness, the root of much of their strength and their weakness. Rousseau altogether lacked the manly fibre so manifest in the others. There was no baritone quality in his literary voice.

Denis Diderot was born at Langres in the year 1713. Rousseau was born in 1712, and Voltaire in 1694. They were very much wanted, and they came. Without them the Revolution of 1789 might have been delayed for many years.

Diderot's father was a kind-hearted but very determined man. When his boy refused to follow his father's trade, that of a cutler, he brought him to the Jesuits' College at Paris, and waited there a fortnight with nothing to do, to learn how the boy liked it. That generosity of love descended to the son.

Diderot was thrown on his own resources as a literary man from 1734 till 1744. He was gay, genial—too genial, full of life and hope, but did, I am afraid, a few shady things. He partly lived by teaching; but if the pupil was too dull he left him, and did not return. That was very independent, but not profitable. At one time he had a good post with a good salary in a good house; but rather than lead a humdrum life of quiet respectability, he returned to his Bohemian freedom and its privations. Diderot preferred death to respectability.

One day he was without food from morning till night; in fact, his landlady found him in a swoon in consequence of that and previous privation. Like Dickens, Diderot never forgot the terrible privations of his youth.

In reference to that terrible time Diderot said: 'I vowed that if ever happier times came to me, and that I should possess anything, that I would never refuse it to any living creature, nor condemn him to the terrible misery of such a day as that.'

He acted up to that vow. A poor wretch came to him one day with a scurrilous satire on himself. Diderot naturally said, 'Why do you bring this to me?'

'I thought,' the satirist replied, 'that you would give me something not to publish it.'

'No,' said Diderot, 'I can't do that. It will pay you better to dedicate it to the brother of the Duke of Orleans. He hates me, and will pay you for abusing me.'

‘But what shall I say in the dedication?’ asked the shameless scribbler.

‘Oh, I will write it for you if you like,’ replied Diderot.

He then wrote the dedication, which produced a nice little sum for the impudent rascal. It often strikes me as nothing short of marvellous how a mean, ungenerous wretch will anticipate undeserved help from others, while he himself refuses to discharge the most elementary duties of life.

People borrowed Diderot’s money, stole his books, and picked his brains. In fact, he was devoured by literary parasites. The reader must not think that Diderot was so obtuse as not to see through the scoundrels who robbed and abused him; but in spite of that knowledge, he could not say ‘no.’

Nothing shows more clearly the broad, genial good-nature of the man so much as the fact that the terrible, the almost overwhelming misery he endured, softened instead of hardened his heart. He was a sinner after the manner of Burns, Béranger, and other too genial geniuses; but, like theirs, his heart never closed itself to the claims of the poor and the unhappy. When we compare such warm-hearted sinners to some of the cold-blooded, respectable saints of the Pecksniff breed, we prefer the former with all their faults. We are not interested in a man’s love for himself, but in his love for others.

Most of my readers are aware that Goethe translated Diderot’s masterpiece, the *Neveu de Rameau*. The *Neveu de Rameau* is one of the most

profound and subtle studies of character in existence.\* As Goethe's analysis is so thorough and searching, I will only add that Carlyle's admiration of it was as great as Goethe's. The next work of Diderot's in importance is *Jacques le Fataliste*. This work Carlyle spoke of with enthusiasm.

It is indeed one of the most daring, extraordinary, many-sided works I know. I will venture to give a slight sketch of part of it.

The Marquis des Arcis has been in love with Madame de la Pommeraye for a considerable time. His visits become less frequent. The lady complains, and begs him to tell her frankly if he has ceased to love her.

'I wish to retain your friendship, at all events; do not pretend a love you do not feel. Do me the honour to be frank. Believe me, I shall admire your candour.'

In answer to this tearful request of the lady, he foolishly confesses the truth that he only feels for her a warm friendship. She, outwardly calm and well bred, is consumed with a burning hatred against the man who was mad enough to tell her that he had ceased to love her.

After the very foolish man had gone she thinks of vengeance, and of vengeance only. And when a clever woman of mature age, strong passions, and subtle brain does that, it is a little dangerous.

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\* The remarkable preface Goethe wrote to his translation of Diderot's masterpiece is quoted in my sketch of Goethe in *Great German Teachers*, now in the press.



At last she decides on a plan that is bad enough to please her. She had known in her youth a beautiful girl; this girl had gone astray, and was now, with her mother, connected with a low gambling-house. The diabolical plan of the deserted lady was to introduce this beautiful girl as innocent to her former lover, and to try and make him fall in love with and marry her. She finds the address of the mother and daughter. She writes, inviting them to visit her. They do so. She unfolds her plan. Revenge is a luxury she is willing to pay a high price for.

The mother, a harpy, is eager for the rich prey. The daughter, too, consents. The poor girl hated the life she led, and is pleased to leave it. Under the directions of the lady, they take quiet lodgings in a distant part of Paris; dress in deep mourning; go to early mass regularly; visit the poor and sick: in fact they create a reputation of the best kind.

When the girl has regained the bloom of her beauty by rest and freedom from anxiety, the lady brings about a meeting. They, in fact, meet at her house as if by chance. He is wildfire; she is cold as ice, and scarcely utters a word. The infatuated man swallows bait and hook. His love only increases the lady's jealous wrath, who perfectly understands the character of the man, and knows that obstacles only excite and stimulate his passion. He tries by every means to obtain the address of the girl, but without success. Then he prowls about Paris for weeks in the hopes of seeing her; throws

himself headlong in the wildest dissipation, all to no purpose; the poor fellow is securely hooked. At last, he thinks by chance, they meet at the arch-plotter's house at dinner. The girl's features, her figure, her manner, and modest countenance, all ravish the man. In short, he is mad enough to marry the girl.

After the marriage, the slighted woman informs him by letter of what she had done. It is at this point of the story that Diderot displays the full scope of his genius. Marvellous to relate, the new, pure life the girl had led had elevated her character, and she really loved the man she had married; and when he, with words of rage and fury, denounces her deception, she does not reply; she does not attempt even to justify herself; she appears to loathe herself and what she has been forced to do. She does not assert herself in the slightest degree, but lies almost lifeless on the floor, the incarnation of despair and utter self-abasement. This unexpected conduct bewilders the man, and, to some extent, disarms his wrath. He leaves his house, first ordering his servants to obey his wife. He disappears for two days,—those two days must have been terrible,—then returns, finds his wife in the same state of utter self-abasement, and nearly dead for want of food. Then the man feels a throb of pity in his heart for this poor, half-dead woman. She, at all events, was not to blame. She begs him to let her die, rather than live to disgrace and grieve him. She really wants to die, and had taken no food for

two days. Then he forms the resolution to take the woman with him far from Paris, and its evil tongues and more evil hearts, and live with and love her. Thus the revenge of the woman who could hate ten times more than she could love is frustrated.

I do not defend the plot of this tale ; I quote it as a salient instance of the fiery, passionate, emotional, and daring character of Diderot's genius. He dares to be himself, thinks of pleasing or displeasing no one ; and when we think of the wretched literary imitations which surround us on every hand to-day, we can't help feeling a thrill of delight in reading the fiery pages of Diderot.

'There are so many echoes, and so few voices.' And that is not the worst ; there are so many echoes of echoes.

Diderot's connexion with the stage was very close ; his interest in it profound. Neither of his plays are of great value, and do not approach in excellence his *Neveu de Rameau*. But it is only fair to admit that his deep admiration of Lessing's dramatic works, induced him to introduce pictures of family life and purely natural passion on the artificial, conventional French stage : that was something, and led to more.

Perhaps he was of opinion that if the stage neglected the culture of the domestic virtues, considering the state of the Church of his day, and the lives led by its most prominent members, they would be altogether forgotten. But although Diderot's plays are not his strong point, his dramatic criticism

is very valuable. He could feel and appreciate the beauties of a work of genius as well as point out superficial defects. His imagination and sympathy were enormous. He had just the emotional nature most affected by dramatic situation and passion. His brain was immense and his heart no smaller. He wrote in bursts of intellectual emotion. His style is full of faults, but what force, what fire, what streaming tears! That big brain of his was always fertilised by the blood of as big a heart. Diderot's works are overflowing with ideas, suggestions, and original views; daring, outrageous indeed; but compared with the smug, self-satisfied Philistine twaddle of the ordinary literary man, I almost said tradesman, how priceless and fascinating they are. Diderot when he wrote never thought of pleasing or displeasing any clique, class, or person.

The following rough translation of one of Diderot's most impassioned pleas for truth and nature on the stage is well worthy of attention to-day, when the theatre fills so large a place in our minds and hearts:—

‘In entering the theatre, people free themselves from the company of the idle and corrupted by whom they are surrounded in society: there they find themselves with those with whom they wish to be; it is there they see humanity as it is, and that they reconcile themselves with it. Good people are rare; but they exist. The man who thinks the contrary accuses himself, and proves how unhappy he is in his wife, his relations, his friends and acquaintances. Some one said to me one day, after

reading a book which had greatly fascinated him, "I felt myself alone!" The book deserved the praise; but his friends did not deserve that severe attack.

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'Our miserable conventions pervert mankind: we must not accuse human nature itself. In truth, what affects us like the description of a generous action? Where is the man so miserable as to be able to listen unmoved to a good man's tale of distress? The theatre is the only place in which the tears of a virtuous and wicked man fall together. There, the wicked man is angry with the injustices that he would have committed; he pities the sufferings that he would occasion; and is filled with indignation against a character like his own. But that impression is made—it remains in spite of us; and the bad man leaves the theatre less disposed to do evil, than if he had been preached at by a severe and dogmatic orator. The poet, the novelist, and the dramatist, go to the heart in an indirect manner, and strike the soul more strongly and surely because it offers itself to their blows.

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'Granted the pains which touch them are imaginary; but they are touched. Certain scenes and situations excite in me a movement of interest in the sufferings of virtue, and cost me many tears. What could be more baleful than that which rendered me the accomplice of, and sympathiser with, vice? But what art can be more precious, than that which attaches me imperceptibly to the fate of a good man; which draws me from the sweet and tranquil condition which I enjoy, to wander with him, to hide myself in the cavern in which he takes

refuge, and associate myself with all the sufferings by which it pleases the poet to try his constancy? Oh, what good it would do mankind, if all the arts of imitation proposed to themselves one common object, and united one day with the laws to make us love virtue and hate vice! It is the duty of the philosopher to invite them to undertake that glorious task; it is he who should appeal to the poet, to the musician, to the artist: he should say, "Men of genius, why has heaven endowed you so richly? If you realised that, the pictures of debauch would no longer cover the walls of our palaces; your voices would no longer be the organs of vice; and taste and morality would advance hand in hand. Do you think that the action of a blind and aged couple, who cling to each other, and, with tears in their eyes, press each other's aged hands, even on the verge of the tomb, does not require as much genius in the poet who paints it as a description of the violent pleasures which intoxicated them in their youth?"

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"O! dramatic poets! the applause, the genuine applause, that you should endeavour to obtain, is not the clapping of hands which occurs after a telling point in your play; no, it is the deep sigh which rises from the soul after the constraint of a long silence, and which gives it relief. It is an impression deeper still, and you will comprehend me, if you are born for your art, and if you realise all its magical possibilities: it is to place an audience in deep trouble. Then their spirits are agitated, uncertain, bewildered; they are like people during an earthquake, who see the walls of their houses shake like leaves, and feel the earth withdrawn from under their feet."

The story of the rich hunk who dies without a will, and thus places at the disposal of a horde of poor starved and half-starved relations the whole of his property, is so characteristic of Diderot's run-away-with-one style, that I will venture to translate part of it.

Diderot's father tells his family of his being appointed executor of the will of a curé of Thivet. This man lived to be one hundred and one, and died very rich. This is the father's story:—

'Well, my children, his heirs, poor homeless wretches, scattered in the roads and streets, in the fields, at the doors of churches, where they begged, entreated me to represent them, and to see after the safety of their property. How could I refuse to the poor a service I had often rendered to the rich? I went to Thivet; I called on the justice of the place, I sealed up the papers, and attended the arrival of the heirs. They soon arrived, to the number of ten or twelve. There were women without stockings, without shoes, nearly without clothes, who held against their breasts babies twisted into wretched aprons; old men covered with rags, who had dragged themselves to the place, carrying on their shoulders by a stick a handful of rags enveloped in another rag. It was a spectacle of the most hideous misery. Imagine after that picture the joy of such people at the prospect of 10,000 francs each, because the property of the deceased was worth 100,000 francs at least. The seals were removed. I proceeded to make an inventory of the effects. Night came. The unhappy people withdrew. I was alone. I was eager to place them in possession of their property, and to return to my own business.

‘There was under a bureau an old coffer without a cover, and filled with all kinds of papers; these were old letters, sketches of answers, old receipts, and other papers of the kind; but in such a case one reads all, one must neglect nothing. I was just finishing this weary work when there fell into my hands an important-looking paper, and what do you think it was? A will—a will signed by the euré! A will of which the date was so ancient that those whom he named executors had been dead twenty years! A will in which he rejected the poor wretches lying around me, and left all his property to the Frémyns, rich Paris publishers. I leave you to judge of my surprise and grief. What should I do with the will? Burn it? Why not? Was it not worthy of reprobation? Did not the place where I found it, and the papers with which it was mixed, testify against it, without speaking of its revolting injustice? This is what I said to myself; and, representing to my imagination at the same time the desolation of the unhappy heirs, despoiled, robbed of hope, I approached the fire quietly with the will in my hand; then other ideas combated the first. I know not what fear of deceiving myself in the decision of so important a case, suspicion of my own wisdom, the fear of listening rather to the voice of pity, which cried at the bottom of my heart, than to that of justice, arrested me suddenly, and I passed the rest of the night deliberating on that iniquitous will that I held several times above the flame, hesitating whether to burn it or not. In my perplexity I thought it would be wise to take counsel of some enlightened person. I mounted my horse at dawn of day, I rode at great speed to the town, passed my own house; I dismounted at the seminary, which was then occupied by the Oratoriens, one of whom was



distinguished for his wisdom and holy life ; it was Father Bouin, who has left behind him a great reputation as a casuist. I told him all.

“ Nothing is more laudable, sir,” said Father Bouin, “ than the sentiment of pity with which you have been touched by these unhappy heirs. Destroy the will, help them, I consent ; but it is on condition that you restore to the legal inheritor the precise sum of which you deprive him ; no more and no less.” And Father Bouin added : “ And who has authorised you to remove or give sanction to wills ? Who has authorised you to interpret the intentions of the dead ? ”

“ But, Father Bouin, the coffer ? ”

“ Who is to authorise you to decide whether the testament has been repulsed by reflection or mislaid by mistake ? Have you never done anything of the same kind ; have you never found at the bottom of a box a precious paper you had thrown there inadvertently ? ”

“ But, Father Bouin, the date and the iniquity of the paper ? ”

“ Who authorised you to pronounce on the justice or injustice of this act, and to regard it as an illicit gift rather than as a restitution, or any other legitimate act that it may please you to imagine ? ”

“ But, Father Bouin, these poor people are near relations, and the rich man is a distant one.”

“ Who has authorised you to weigh what the deceased owed to his neighbours ? ”

“ But, Father Bouin, think of all those letters from the rich heir which the deceased had not even opened ? ” (‘ One circumstance I had forgotten to mention,’ added my father, ‘ was that in the mass of old papers with which I found the fatal will, there were twenty, thirty,

I know not how many letters from Frémyn, all unopened.’)

“There is,” said Father Bouin, “neither coffer, nor date, nor letters, nor Father Bouin, nor if, nor but, that holds; it is not permitted to any person to break the law, to enter into the thoughts of the dead, or to dispose of the property of another person. If Providence has resolved to chastise either the heirs, or the heir, or the defunct, no one knows which, by the chance preservation of this testament, it must stand.”

‘After a decision so clear, so precise, of a man so enlightened and revered, I stood stupefied and trembling before him, thinking to myself what would have become of you all if I had burnt the will, as I had been tempted ten times to do; and that after I had been tormented by scruples and had consulted Father Bouin. I would have restored all; yes, all, and you would have been ruined.

‘Well, I knew not what to do. In the first place, I thought of handing over my powers to a lawyer; but he would have acted with all the sternness of the law, taken the poor people by the shoulders and turned them out. I hoped to soften their misfortune. I returned to Thivet. My sudden absence, and the precautions I had taken in departing, had troubled the poor people, and my sad face troubled them more. Nevertheless I forced myself to deceive them.

‘I began by placing in safety all the most valuable property. I assembled in the house a certain number of neighbours to protect me if necessary. I opened the cellar and the storerooms, which I abandoned to the unhappy people, inviting them to eat, drink, and divide between them all the wine, corn, and other provisions.

‘Soon after, pale as death, shaking like a leaf,

opening my mouth, but unable to articulate, sitting and rising alternately, beginning a phrase which I was unable to finish, weeping, with all the terrified wretches around me crying, "Well, my dear sir, what is the matter?"

"What is the matter?" I replied. "There is a will, a testament which disinherits you."

'Those few words cost me so much to say that I nearly lost consciousness. What a scene followed! I tremble when I recall it. I still seem to hear the cries of sorrow, the yells of fury and rage, the awful imprecations.' ('Here my father,' writes Diderot, 'stopped his ears and closed his eyes.') 'And the women,' he added, 'I see them: some rolled on the floor, tore out their hair, lacerated their cheeks and bosoms; others, foaming at the mouth, held their babes by the feet, ready to dash their heads against the walls if they were not restrained. The men smashed all they could lay their hands on; they threatened to set the house on fire; others scratched up the ground with their nails as if they would disinter the curé in order to revenge themselves on his body; and, in addition to all this, there was the shrill crying of the children, who shared, without knowing why, the despair of their parents, and attached themselves to their dress, and were brutally repulsed.

'I told the unhappy people that I had written to M. Frémyn, the sole inheritor. I calmed them a little by the hope with which I flattered myself of obtaining a complete renunciation of his rights, or, at all events, to induce him to make some favourable arrangement.

'Frémyn arrived. I looked at him fixedly, and I found a hard, mean face, which promised nothing good. He had travelled sixty leagues in thirty hours. I began by showing him the miserable beings for whom I pleaded.

They all stood before him in silence ; the women weeping, the men, leaning on their sticks with uncovered heads, held their caps in their hands.

‘Frémyn was seated, his eyes shut, his head down, the chin supported on his chest, and did not look at them. I pleaded for them with all my force ; I know not from where one draws what one says at such a time. I pointed out to him that it was uncertain that the property was meant for him ; I conjured him by his riches, by their misery ; I believe that I even threw myself at his feet : I could not draw a halfpenny. He answered that he could not enter into such considerations, that there was a will, that the history of the will did not concern him, and that he approved my conduct more than my eloquence. Full of indignation, I threw the keys at him ; he coolly picked them up, and took possession of everything, and I returned home so troubled, looking so ill, so changed, that your mother, who was then living, thought some great misfortune had occurred.’

Diderot boldly states that his father’s first impulse to burn the will was the right one ; that the first impulse of his heart was true and just. The just and wise man is his own guide. ‘I do not preach these doctrines,’ added Diderot ; ‘there are truths which are not made for fools, but I keep them for myself.’

The old man replies, ‘Still, you must admit that my religion absolved me.’

Diderot replied, ‘I believe it ; but so much the worse for your religion.’ If God meant Good, Diderot worshipped him ; and if Devil meant Evil,

Diderot hated him. Not a bad form of Religion in days when big drums, clashing cymbals, and horrible brazen abominations preach the Gospel of Peace.

To leave out Diderot's connexion with the *Encyclopædia* would be like leaving the sea out in a description of Brighton.

The three great men, Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, who made that grand work, which is the foundation of modern scientific thought and teaching, accomplished their great task in the face of the greatest dangers; but the man who did most, braved most, and endured most, was the giant Diderot. A great part of that great work was written by him. When D'Alembert, a man of fine, subtle genius, but of delicate health, succumbed in the struggle, Diderot took the whole responsibility upon himself. He corrected proofs, he visited the workshops of Paris, he described the processes of manufacture, he saw that the illustrations of machinery and tools were sharp, clear, and accurate; he worked, in short, like a hundred clever men rolled into one, and what was the magnificent salary of this intellectual giant for this Herculean task?—130*l.* a year. Think of that, ye recipients of a thousand a year for writing broken-backed leading articles! Fortune does indeed take care of the fools, but pays the Diderots, when she does pay them, 130*l.* a year. People are paid 1000*l.* a year to write what fools like to read, not what fools ought to read, which is a very different thing. Let us thank God for a Diderot now and then to teach us how long our ears are!

But the most tragic event in Diderot's life was the treachery of the printer, who, after Diderot had corrected the proofs for the remaining volumes of the *Encyclopædia*, which were to be launched simultaneously, cut out all the best parts of the articles on his own ignorant estimate of the danger there would be in their publication; and, to the infinite grief and mad despair of Diderot, the grand work of his life was truncated and nearly spoiled by an ignorant, rascally printer. Still, even in its present form, the *Encyclopædia* exists, a monument to the industry, the genius, and the courage of the great and brave men who conceived the idea, and worked with unflagging ardour and dauntless courage to give that idea form and substance.

I will here introduce Carlyle's opinion of Diderot and his works. It is certainly not too favourable. Carlyle is very hard on the lovers of cakes and ale; and we must freely admit that our author liked as much as he could obtain of both. Cakes and ale did not agree with Carlyle: his digestion was bad.

‘Nay, let us grant, with pleasure, that for Diderot himself the realms of art were not wholly unvisited; that he, too, so heavily imprisoned, stole Promethean fire. Among these multitudinous, most miscellaneous writings of his, in great part a manufactured farrago of Philosophism no longer saleable, and now looking melancholy enough, are two that we can almost call Poems; that have something perennially poetic in them: *Jacques le Fataliste*; in a still higher degree, the *Neveu de Rameau*.

‘The occasional blueness of both; even that darkest indigo in some parts of the former, shall not altogether affright us. As it were, a loose struggling sunbeam flies here over man’s existence in France, now nigh a century behind us: “from the height of luxurious elegance to the depths of shamelessness,” all is here. Slack, careless seems the combination of the picture; wriggling, disjointed, like a bundle of flails; yet strangely united in the painter’s inward unconscious feeling. Wearisomely crackling wit gets silent; a grim, taciturn, dare-devil, almost Hogarthian humour rises in the background. Like this there is nothing that we know of in the whole range of French literature: La Fontaine is shallow in comparison; the La Bruyère wit species not to be named. It resembles *Don Quixote* rather; of somewhat similar stature; yet of complexion altogether different; through the one looks a sunny Elysium, through the other a sulphurous Erebus: both hold of the Infinite. This *Jacques*, perhaps, was not quite so hastily put together; yet there too haste is manifest: the author finishes it off, not by working out the figures and movements, but by dashing his brush against the canvas; a manœuvre which in this case has not succeeded. The *Rameau’s Nephew*, which is the shorter, is also the better; may pass for decidedly the best of all Diderot’s compositions. It looks like a Sibylline utterance from a heart all in fusion: no ephemeral thing (for it was written as a satire on Palissot) was ever more perennially treated. Strangely enough too, it lay some fifty years in German and Russian libraries;—came out first in the masterly version of Goethe, in 1805; and only (after a deceptive retranslation by a M. Saur, a courageous mystifier otherwise) reached the Paris public in 1821,—when perhaps all for

whom and against whom it was written were no more ! It is a farce-tragedy ; and its fate has corresponded to its purport.

‘ One day it must also be translated into English ; but will require to be done by *head* : the common steam-machinery will not properly suffice for it.’

Thus Carlyle. *Rameau's Nephew* has been done into English in John Morley's excellent life of Diderot.

On the whole, Carlyle is just to Diderot ; a man *may* be judged by his peers. But the masterly analysis of Diderot by Goethe, who, as I said before, translated *Rameau's Nephew*, and prefaced it by a notice, which, in my opinion, is the most magnificent piece of literary and philosophical criticism ever written, is worthy of deep study.

The best men are shadowed by the darkness and evil of the times in which they live. Diderot was an intellectual sun, and, like that luminary, he had many and dark spots.

In this age of supposed art worship, although the horrible artistic abortions which made ‘ the line ’ of the Royal Academy of 1890 hideous, make one despairingly think that the talk is simply cant and gush, a few words on Diderot as an art critic, a great word-painter, may be interesting. Goethe referred to Diderot's *Essay on Painting* in a letter to Schiller in the following terms : ‘ Diderot's essay,’ he wrote, ‘ is a magnificent work, and it speaks more usefully to the poet than the painter,



though for the painter, too, it is a torch of powerful illumination.' The same may be said of Mr. Ruskin's exquisite interpretations of Art and Nature. The above proves once more the generous catholicity of Goethe's criticism, because the foundation of Diderot's position as an art critic was totally different from Goethe's. The former with his accustomed emphasis extols Nature as the true and only fountain of artistic inspiration. This Goethe considered entirely wrong. 'Nature,' said Goethe, 'organizes a living, an indifferent being; the Artist something lifeless, but full of significance: Nature something real, the Artist something that only appears real. In the works of Nature the spectator must import significance, thought, effect, reality; in a work of Art he will and must find this already there. A perfect imitation of Nature is in no sense possible; the Artist is not only called to the representation of the surface of an appearance, the outside of the vessel. The living whole that speaks to all our faculties of mind and sense, that stirs our desire, elevates our intelligence—that whose possession makes us happy; the vivid, potent, finished Beautiful—for all this the Artist is appointed.'

I will quote one of Diderot's word-pictures which doubtless is far more vivid and charming than the picture which evoked it:—

*'Psyche approaching with her lamp to surprise Love in his sleep.* By Vien.—The two figures are of flesh and blood, but they have neither the elegance, nor the grace,

nor the delicacy that the subject required. Love seems to me to be making a grimace. Psyche is not like a woman who enters trembling, on tiptoe. I do not see on her face that mixture of surprise, fear, love, desire, and admiration, which ought to be all there. It is not enough to show Psyche's desire to see Love; I desire also to see her fear of awakening him. Her mouth ought to be partly open; and she should appear to be afraid to breathe. She sees her lover for the first time, and by doing so risks losing him for ever. What joy to gaze upon him, and find him so beautiful! Oh, what little intelligence in our painters; how little they understand nature! The head of Psyche ought to be bent towards Love; the rest of her body drawn back, as it is when you advance towards a place you fear to enter, and from which you are prepared to fly: one foot lightly placed on the ground and the other barely touching it. And the lamp she carries in her hand. Ought Psyche to let its full light fall on the eyes of Love? Ought not she to hold it apart, and to shield its dazzling rays with her hand? Moreover, that would have lighted the picture in a striking way. These good people do not know that the eyelids have a kind of transparency; they have never seen a mother, with a lamp in her hand, coming in the night to look at her child asleep in the cradle, and fearful of awakening it.'

Diderot is a little hard on 'these good people,' the equivalents of our British workmen artists; they doubtless have seen what Diderot describes; but they only see with the eyes of the flesh; the eyes of the spirit are not open.

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When we think of the hot-blooded faults of Diderot, we must remember that 'charity covereth a multitude of sins;' and that no man or woman ever possessed more of that divine attribute.



BEAUMARCHAIS.



## BEAUMARCHAIS.

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BEAUMARCHAIS was born at Paris, in 1732, and was the son of a clockmaker. He became a great favourite with the daughters of Louis XVI., who admired his musical talents.

I will introduce my subject by a few words on Beaumarchais' famous lawsuit.

Fifteen thousand pounds were left to him. The heir of the rest of the property, the Comte de la Blache, disputed the will. Beaumarchais won the first action. Then, improvident and daring as usual, he ran away with the mistress of a duke.

To prevent a duel, the duke and Beaumarchais were confined in prison—not the same, of course. While Beaumarchais was off the scene, the Comte de la Blache moved heaven and earth, and a worse place, against our unheroic hero. He seized his furniture, ruined him with law expenses, which was not difficult then, and is not difficult now. So that Beaumarchais, from the height of prosperity

and fortune, was flung down into poverty and despair. His condition was so pitiable that, as he said, 'he felt shame and pity for himself.' Beaumarchais was then forty years of age, his reputation was a little doubtful, and his genius was unknown. He was at bay, conquered, and apparently crushed; he was accused by his enemy of every possible enormity, inclusive of having poisoned his two wives; it was necessary that he should display energy, wit, genius; and he displayed them.

Beaumarchais was allowed to leave prison for a few days. His judge was a M. Gusman, who was deeply engaged for the other side. Beaumarchais tried to get at him, but could not succeed. He was told that his wife was get-at-able, and if bribed might influence her husband. He sent her one hundred louis in gold, and fifteen louis in silver, and a gold watch set with diamonds. This present was given to obtain an audience of the judge, with the understanding that all should be returned if the case was lost. It was lost, and all was returned except the fifteen louis in silver.

Then our clever friend began to complain in a way that attracted and riveted attention.

The foolish judge, who perhaps did not know all the details, accused Beaumarchais of trying to corrupt him.

Then Beaumarchais published his account of the whole affair, written in a style which excited and amused the public. These memoirs glittered with wit, malice, and a kind of boyish gaiety and ap-



parent simplicity, that was a new thing in literature. Listen to what Voltaire says of them:—

‘I have read all the Memoirs of Beaumarchais. I was never so much amused. I begin to think that that brilliant madcap has some reason against all the world. What trickeries! Oh, heaven! what horrors! What a man!’ exclaimed he again. ‘He combines everything—pleasantry, reason, gaiety, force, pathos, all kinds of eloquence; and he does not appear to search for any of these qualities, yet he confounds his adversaries and gives lessons to his judges. His simplicity enchants me; I forgive him his imprudences and his freaks of temper.’

These imprudences and freaks of temper, according to Voltaire, were those of a passionate man, in the extremest danger, justly irritated, but naturally very agreeable and eloquent.

‘It is absurd to accuse such a man of having poisoned his wives; he is too gay and too amusing for that.’

The scene at the examination of Madame Gusman is deliciously funny. In her examinations by Beaumarchais, he made her say black was white, he enraged her and appeased her; when she did not know what else to say, nor how to disentangle her contradictions, she accounted for all by indisposition; when he pushed her too far, she threatened to box his ears; when he complimented her by saying that she only appeared eighteen instead of thirty, she smiled upon him, finding him no longer impertinent, and even went the length of asking him to conduct her

to her carriage. I must conclude this part of my subject by Beaumarchais' portrait of himself:—

‘And you who have known me, you who have followed me always, my friends, say if you have ever seen anything in me than a man constantly gay ; loving with an equal power, study and pleasure ; inclined to raillery, but without bitterness ; and even welcoming it from others against myself when seasoned with wit ; sustaining, perhaps with too much ardour, his opinion when he believes it just, but honouring emphatically, and without envy, all those he recognises as superior ; easy on his interests, even to negligence ; active when spurred, idle and stagnant after the storm ; careless when happy, but pushing constancy and serenity in misfortune to a degree that astonishes his most familiar friends.’

*The Barber of Seville* was first represented on February 23rd, 1775. The public, on the faith of those who had heard the piece read, expected so much wit and fun that it was at first disappointed. Besides, the play was too long. Beaumarchais reduced the five acts to four. He removed the fifth wheel from the coach ; it then rattled along as never a piece rattled before. When Beaumarchais published it he entitled the play, ‘*The Barber of Seville, Comedy in Four Acts, Represented and Condemned at the Theatre of the Comédie Française.*’

At first Figaro was not the caustic, philosophical personage we know so well. Beaumarchais' idea was : ‘Giving rein to my gay character, I have

attempted in my *Barber of Seville* to restore to the theatre that frank, open gaiety, in allying it with the light tone of our pleasantry of to-day; but as even that was a kind of novelty, the piece was bitterly opposed. It appeared that I had shaken the State.' The piece does not hang fire for a moment. It glitters; it sparkles; it has the irony of Voltaire, with some of the breadth of Rabelais. Figaro is as much a creation as Don Quixote or Mephistopheles. Its fault is almost too much wit—but that is so rare a fault, that in a comedy it becomes a virtue. Beaumarchais once spoke of a man 'who had much wit, but economised it a little too carefully.' That is what Beaumarchais never did. In that respect he resembled Sheridan, who puts jewels of wit and glittering epigrams into the mouths of the servants. Still, there are always plenty of dull, stupid plays to be seen, when one feels surfeited by the wit of a Beaumarchais and a Sheridan. Bad plays are always with us. The *Marriage of Figaro* was written in 1775 or 1776. But it required more wit to get it played than to write it. He had against him the king, the magistrates, the lieutenant of police, and all the great officials. Do you wonder? Listen to this:—

'FIGARO.—I was born for a courtier.

'SUSANNAH.—People say it is a very difficult business.

'FIGARO.—Receive, take, and ask for more; there is the secret in three words.'

Then the consummate astuteness of the man; he

tries to disarm wrath by saying: 'Only little men fear little writings.'

Figaro, speaking of politics, says:—

'To pretend to be ignorant of what one knows, to know all when one knows nothing, to understand what one does not comprehend, not to hear what one hears very well; to pretend to power beyond one's forces; to make a grand mystery of hiding nothing; to shut oneself up to cut pens; to appear very profound, when one is only void and hollow; to play ill or well the great man; to employ spies and pension traitors; to soften the seals of letters; and to try to ennoble the poverty of the means by the importance of the object: if these are not the secrets of politics, let me die.'

Let us listen to Figaro on law and lawyers:—

'The custom, Mr. Doublefee, is often an abuse; the client, if not altogether a fool, knows his own case better than certain advocates, who in a cold perspiration shout and gesticulate, and knowing everything, except the leading facts of the case, embarrass themselves as little about ruining their client as boring the audience and sending the judges to sleep. After which performance they are more conceited than if they had composed the *oratio pro Murena*.'

There is a fine passage in the *Marriage of Figaro*, where the countess says: 'I feel so bewildered that I cannot connect two ideas.'

Susannah replies: 'Ah! madam, quite the contrary; and it is that which teaches me how

the refinements of the best society enable ladies of your position to tell falsehoods with such exquisite grace that it is impossible to discover them.'

Then the dialogue with Marceline, of whom Figaro has borrowed money, and promised to marry her if he could not repay it. As you are aware, Marceline turns out to be Figaro's mother. Marceline, in speaking of the faults of her past life, says :—

' Yes, my life has been deplorable, and more so even than you believe. I do not deny my faults, to-day has proved them. But it is very hard to expiate them after thirty years of repentance. I was born with good dispositions, and I acted on them so soon as my reason asserted itself. But in the age of folly and illusions, of inexperience and of need, when tempters surround one, and cruel poverty stabs—what has a girl to oppose to such enemies? Those who perhaps have ruined ten unfortunate people judge us severely.

' FIGARO.—The most guilty are often the least generous.

' MARCELINE (*excitedly*).—Men, more than ungrateful, who brand by their contempt the playthings of their passions, it is you who should be punished for the errors of our youth; you and your magistrates, so vain of the right to judge us, and who take away from us, by their guilty negligence, all honest means of existence. There is hardly an occupation left for women. Their right to provide for the ornamentation of their own sex is denied them; thousands of the other sex rob them of honest work.

‘FIGARO (*angrily*).—Even the soldiers are allowed to sew !

‘MARCELINE (*passionately*).—In the highest ranks women only obtain a contemptuous consideration ; pleased by the apparent flattery, but undergoing real servitude ; treated as minors in our rights, but as majors for our faults ! Ah ! under all these aspects your conduct creates horror or pity.’

The *Marriage of Figaro* was performed on September 26th, 1783. Beaumarchais had tried again and again to put this masterpiece of wit, wisdom, and irony on the stage. On June 12th, 1783, he had made every preparation for its performance. The tickets were issued, a file of carriages were at the doors, when Louis XVI. sent express orders to the actors not to perform the piece. To this order of the king, Beaumarchais, enraged beyond measure, exclaimed : ‘ Well, gentlemen, if the king will not have it performed here, I swear, that rather than not play it, it shall be acted in the choir of Notre Dame.’

Rebellion was in the air. Genius defied prerogative ; that is the prerogative of genius.

But after delay upon delay, extending over years, the first night came. I ought to say that Beaumarchais, one of the most astute men who ever breathed, had read the piece to all the most important and influential people in Paris. He had tickled with consummate tact their curiosity.

The first performance was not attended by the queen, only through illness, but the Count d’Artois

and the Duchesse de Polignac were there. The flower of the French aristocracy came to laugh and applaud a piece which led as much as anything to their ruin by rendering them contemptible and ridiculous. An eye-witness said: 'Beaumarchais was intoxicated with excitement, and when some of us complained of the heat, instead of having the windows opened he broke them with his cane, so that people said after the piece that he doubly broke the glasses.'

There we have the man — ardent, passionate, daring. Beaumarchais once said, 'An author means a darer.'

Strengthened by his success, Beaumarchais persuaded the comedians to perform his piece again, and was only stopped by the lieutenant of police.

At last, on the 27th April, 1784, the piece was played in Paris.

The following account is from some memoirs of the day:—

'To-day must have been a great day for Beaumarchais, who loves noise and scandal' (he loved a good advertisement), 'for he had the satisfaction of drawing in his train not only the ordinary curious public and lovers of the stage, but the whole Court, princes of the blood, princes of the royal family; of receiving forty letters in one hour from gentlemen of all conditions asking for orders and to be allowed the honour of applauding him; of seeing Madame the Duchesse de Bourbon send her footman for tickets at eleven o'clock in the morning, although the office would not be open till four o'clock in the afternoon; of seeing decorated noblemen elbowing lacqueys in trying

to get tickets ; of seeing ladies of title, forgetting all decency and all modesty, shut themselves in the boxes of the actresses in the morning, and dine there under their protection, in the hope of being first ; of seeing at last the guard at the theatre dispersed, the doors battered in, the iron bars give way and break under the efforts of the assailants.'

'More than one duchess,' said Grimm, 'thought herself very fortunate to obtain a seat in the balcony, where ladies are usually ashamed to be seen, on a wretched stool by the side of "unfortunate females."'

'Three hundred persons,' said La Harpe, 'have dined at the Comédie in the boxes of the actors, so as to be sure of having places, and at the opening of the doors the crush was so great that three persons were stifled.'

This piece was played over one hundred times, and was a great political and social event, and led to other more important social and political events, as we know.

The *Barber of Seville* was gay, brilliant, witty, and amusing. The *Marriage of Figaro* is bitter, caustic, ironical. Napoleon said of it: 'It was the Revolution already in action.' La Harpe said of it: 'It is easy to conceive the delight of a public charmed to amuse itself at the expense of authority, which allows itself to be ridiculed on the boards.' But what did the gay, frivolous, gilded flies of fashion care, except to be amused, about the caustic



irony and bitter wit of the dialogue? It was a new sensation to people who had given up all hope of obtaining another. The same people ran after Rousseau's *Julie*, in spite of its scorn and contempt for them and their doings. Beaumarchais stabbed and tickled them; they only laughed. They seemed to agree with the doctor in *Figaro*: 'My faith! sir, men having only to choose between stupidity and folly, where I do not see profit I would have pleasure; so live, pleasure! Who knows if the world will last three weeks longer?'

The old order of things in France might have lasted many years longer if its members had not listened that night, and a hundred more nights, with transport to that gay, brilliant, insolent mockery of itself—if it had not taken a great part in its own undoing. Society was rotten. Beaumarchais, in the wittiest way, told it such was the case; and the audience agreed with him, and admired his penetration in finding it out and his wit in displaying it so amusingly.

Let me introduce a few of Beaumarchais' sallies from the *Barber*.

The first is at that charmingly-managed meeting of Figaro and Almaviva under the windows of Rosina's abode. Figaro has formerly been employed by the Count Almaviva. In the course of conversation Figaro says:—

'I thought myself too happy in being forgotten, persuaded as I am that a great man does one enough good when he does not do one any harm.'

‘ALMAVIVA.—You were a wild fellow when in my service.

‘FIGARO.—Eh, *mon Dieu*, my lord, would you wish a poor man to be without faults?

‘ALMAVIVA.—You were idle, dissipated.

‘FIGARO.—From the virtues people exact from a servant, does your excellency know many masters who are worthy to be valets?’

Then Figaro tries his fortune as a dramatic author. He thus describes his failure:—

‘In truth I know not how it was I did not succeed, because I filled the pit with excellent workers; hands to clap (I had forbidden gloves, canes, all which would deaden the applause); and on my honour, before the performance the *café* had shown the best disposition towards me. But the efforts of the cabal——

‘ALMAVIVA.—Ah! the cabal. The author fell?

‘FIGARO.—Just like another. Why not? They hissed me. But my good angel has caused me to find my old master. I left Madrid because I saw that the republic of letters was made up of wolves, always armed one against the other and given up to the contempt to which this ridiculous ferocity conducts them—all the insects, the mosquitoes, the envious, the penny-a-liners, the critics, the publishers, the censors, and all other parasites which attach themselves to the skin of the unhappy literary man, and finish by dissecting him and devouring the little substance which remains: tired of writing, tired of myself, disgusted with others, buried in debt and without cash; at last convinced that the useful revenue of the razor is preferable to the vain honours of the pen, I

quitted Madrid, and, my baggage on my back, travelled philosophically over the two Castiles, La Mancha, La Estremadura, the Sierra Morena, the Andalusias. Welcomed in one town, imprisoned in another, and everywhere superior to events; praised by these, blamed by those; enjoying good times, supporting the bad; laughing at fools, defying the wicked; you find me at last established at Seville, and ready to serve your excellency in all that it may please you to order.

‘ALMAVIVA.—Who has given you so gay a philosophy?’

‘FIGARO.—The custom of misfortune. I am eager to laugh at all for fear of being obliged to weep.’

I think even in the brightest touches of Figaro’s wit you will find a vein of sadness, as in the last quotation. But the grand soliloquy of Figaro in the *Marriage*—when the poor fellow thinks the count has an appointment with his intended wife, the only being he has ever had to love and the only being he thought loved him—I don’t think I can omit a word of it. The gay Count Almaviva has married Rosina, and tired of her in the usual aristocratic way. I came across a story the other day to this effect: A servant was complaining of some one who would insist on shooting over his master’s land. The servant said he was a gentlemen. ‘How do you know that?’ ‘Because, sir, he keeps twenty horses and another man’s wife.’

This is Figaro’s soliloquy:—

‘O woman! woman! Creature feeble and deceitful! No animal can be untrue to its instinct: is it thine to

deceive? No, my noble master, you shall not succeed; I will prevent it. Because you are a great lord you think yourself a great genius! Nobility, fortune, places, all that creates so much pride: what have you done to deserve so much? You gave yourself the trouble of being born, nothing more. Beyond that a very ordinary man; while as to myself—good heavens!—lost in the obscure crowd, it has been necessary to display more science and calculation to subsist only, than your class has shown to govern Spain and its colonies, and you would play . . . Some one comes . . . it is she . . . it is no one. The night is as black as the devil, and here am I playing the foolish part of husband, though I am only half married! Could anything be more extraordinary than my destiny? Son of I know not who, stolen by robbers, educated by them in all that was bad, I became disgusted and would try an honest career. I was repulsed everywhere! I learnt chemistry, surgery; and all the credit of a great lord could hardly put into my hand a veterinary lancet! Tired of adding to the suffering of sick beasts, and to do something quite different, I rushed to the theatre and composed a comedy in which I described the life of a seraglio. Being a Spanish author, I thought I could snap my fingers at Mahomet without fear. Immediately an envoy from I know not where complained that I offended in my verses the Sublime Porte, Persia, the whole of Egypt, the realms of Barca, of Tripoli, of Tunis, of Algeria, and of Morocco; and behold my comedy damned, to please Mahometan princes, of whom not one, I believe, knew how to read, and who politely call us dogs of Christians. Not being able to debase genius, fools revenge themselves by ill-treating it. My cheeks became hollow, my means

were exhausted. A question then arising on the nature of riches, and as it is not necessary to possess things in order to reason on them, not possessing a farthing, I wrote on the value and use of money. Very soon I saw from a hackney-coach, the drawbridge of a strong prison lowered for me, on entering which I left outside hope and liberty.

‘How I should like to hold one of these powerful titled mushrooms, so light-hearted about the evil they command, after some signal disgrace has cut down his pride! I would say to him . . . that printed impertinences have no importance except in places where people stop their course; that, without the liberty of blaming there can be no praise; and that only little men fear little writings.

‘Tired of nourishing an obscure prisoner, they dropped me one day in the street; and as it is necessary to dine, though one be no more in prison, I cut my pen, and asking every one I met what was the most burning question of the day, they told me that during my economical retreat there had been established in Madrid a system of free trade in all productions, that it extended even to those of the press; and that, provided I did not speak in my writings of the Government, nor of religion, nor of political matters, nor of questions of morality, nor of people in place, nor of any powerful corporation, nor of the opera, nor of any other spectacles, nor of anybody who was anything, I could print all I liked freely, under the inspection of two or three censors. In order to profit by this delightful liberty, I announced a newspaper, and believing that I was not imitating any other name, I called it *The Useless Journal*. But in a moment I see raised against me a thousand poor penny-a-liners. I am suppressed, and behold me again without

employment! Despair is about to seize me. They thought they had a place for me, but by my misfortune I was just the right man for it: a good arithmetician was required, therefore, the post was given to a dancer. Nothing was left for me to do than to steal. I made myself the head of a gambling-house; then I supped in town, and the most polite people opened their houses to me, retaining for themselves three-fourths of the profits. I commenced to recoup; I began even to understand that, for getting on, knowledge of the world was better than knowledge of everything else. But as every one stole around me, in exacting that I alone should be honest, I nearly starved again. I quitted the world, and twenty feet of water were about to divide us for ever, when some beneficent God recalled me to my first trade. I returned to my lather and strop; then leaving the smoke of fame for the fools who are nourished by it, and false shame in the middle of the road, as too heavy for a poor tramp, I went on shaving from town to town, and at last lived without care. A great lord staying at Seville recognised me; I arranged his marriage, and for the price of having gained by my cares his wife, he would now intercept mine! I have just escaped falling into an abyss. I was about to marry my own mother, when the secret of my birth is discovered, and I find both my parents at once. They dispute. It is you, it is he, it is she, it is thee; no, it is not I; who are we all then? O maddening confusion! Why do such things happen to me? Why these things, and not others? Who has fixed them on my head? Forced to pursue a path on which I entered without knowing, as I shall leave it without wishing, I have scattered as many flowers as my gaiety would allow me; yet I say my gaiety without

knowing if it is mine more than the rest, nor even what is that me about which I occupy myself; an unformed assemblage of unknown parts; then a wretched imbecile life; a gay little animal; a young man ardent for pleasure, having all the tastes for enjoyment, adopting all conditions in order to live; master here, valet there, just as it pleases fortune; ambitious through vanity, laborious by necessity, but idle . . . . with delight! Orator, if necessary; poet, for amusement; musician occasionally; amorous by temperament, I have seen all, done all, and am tired of all. All illusions are now destroyed, and thoroughly disabused. . . . disabused! . . . . Susan, Susan, Susan! what torments you give me! . . . I hear steps . . . . they come. The crisis has arrived.'

Can one imagine anything more true and scathing than this soliloquy? But of all the instances of crass folly on record, I think that of the gilded butterflies who laughed and fought for places for one hundred nights to listen to what held them up to ridicule and contempt is really the most stupendous.

Beaumarchais was the pioneer of destruction of the old order of things in France. He did not use a pike or a torch; he used what was infinitely more dangerous, the brightest and wittiest pen; a pen that shot sparks into barrels of gunpowder which were all nicely arranged for him. If there is anything that is more dangerous and deadly to unjust privileges than another, it is genius. As Dr. Johnson once said, 'Dukes and peers don't like men

of genius, because they don't like their mouths shut, sir.' The same thought must have struck you at meetings. Some great man—I mean great through money and title—will rise to address the audience, which will, after a few seconds, begin to droop on all sides. After some time the gentleman will subside, on which the audience will give a sigh of relief, as if a dentist had finished tugging at a tooth; then some poor devil of a genius will get on his legs, and after a few words, uttered with a beautiful rhythmic ring, the audience will become magnetic, and will cheer, laugh, and have what our American friends call a good time. But our exalted friends suffer so from *ennui*, that feeling as they do such contempt for writing-fellows, they laugh at the sharp epigrammatic sayings—I mean at those they are able to understand, which are usually the poorest and weakest—of the poor genius, and don't realise that he is throwing stones at their glass houses; in fact, they very likely have not realised the fact that their houses are glass.

A man of real genius patronised and petted by the aristocracy always reminds me of a tiger cub brought up on the domestic hearthrug and treated like a purring pussy. They think he is a purring pussy. He thinks so, too, very likely, but he is nothing of the kind; the terrible claws are there and the terrible strength to use them.

We will now turn to a less-known episode in the adventurous life of our shady hero. I refer to the subject of the relations between Beaumarchais'



sister and Clavico, of which Goethe made a play. Beaumarchais had two sisters settled in Madrid. The elder was married, and the younger was engaged to be married to a young man of promise, the keeper of the royal archives.

One day Beaumarchais' father came to him in great distress and agitation, with a letter from his elder daughter, stating that Clavico had basely deserted her sister and disgraced her in the eyes of her friends and acquaintances, and that in consequence of the shock her life was in great danger.

The letter finished with these words: 'If my brother has sufficient credit to gain us the support of the French ambassador, his Excellency might avert the evil that this perfidious man has done us, both by his conduct and his threats. Everybody in Madrid knows that my sister is blameless.'

Now I will let Beaumarchais speak for himself.

'My father came to find me at Versailles, and gave me my sister's letter. "See, my son," said he, "what you can do for these two unfortunate girls; they are not less your sisters than the others."' "

His father also showed him other letters from the French ambassador to the elder sister, in which he expressed the greatest esteem and consideration for them both.

'I read all the letters,' says Beaumarchais; 'they reassured me as to the conduct of my sister, and the words of my father, "they are not less your sisters than the others," penetrated to the bottom of my heart. "Take courage," I said to my

father; "I will take a course which may surprise you, but which appears to me the most certain and the wisest."'

In short, Beaumarchais, with characteristic impetuosity, packed his portmanteau, got a few letters of introduction and a great deal of cash, and started like a rocket for Madrid.

He arrives, sees his sister, assures himself that her conduct has been perfect, that she has been the victim of an ambitious schemer, takes a friend with him, and meets Clavico at an assembly. He introduces himself as a stranger who had heard of his literary reputation, and is invited by Clavico to take chocolate with him the next morning at nine o'clock.

Beaumarchais goes with his friend the next morning. The rest shall be told in the sparkling, vivid words of Beaumarchais.

'The next morning, at half-past eight, I was with him. I found him in a splendid mansion, which he told me belonged to a friend in the Ministry, and that while he was away he used it as his own.

"I am sent, sir," said I, "by a literary society, to establish in all towns through which I pass a literary correspondence with the most learned men in them. As no Spaniard writes better than the author of the articles in *The Thinker*, to whom I have the honour of speaking, whose literary merit is so great that the king has confided to him the care of the royal archives, I did not think that I could better serve my friends than in connecting them with a gentleman of your merit."

‘I saw that he was delighted and flattered by my proposition. He talked freely on the subject of literature. He caressed me with his eye; his tone became affectionate; he talked like an angel, and became radiant with pride and pleasure.

‘In the midst of his joy he asked me what my business was in Spain. He would be most happy to be of service. “I accept with gratitude your flattering offers, and will not have, sir, any secrets from you.”

‘Then I presented my friend to him, saying that he was not a stranger to the subject of this conversation.

‘I told my story thus: “A French merchant of limited means had several correspondents in Spain. One of the richest, in passing through Paris nine or ten years ago, made him this proposition—‘Give me two of your five daughters; I will take them with me to Madrid; they shall live with me, a solitary old bachelor, make the happiness of my last years, and shall succeed to my fortune.’

“The eldest, who was already married, and one of her sisters were confided to his care. Two years after this gentleman died and left them nothing, except the embarrassment of keeping up the business. In spite of difficulties, by the assistance of kind friends, they succeeded.

“At this time a young man presented himself at their house. Notwithstanding his poverty, the ladies, seeing his great eagerness for study, assisted him as much as possible.

“Full of ambition, he formed the project of publishing in Madrid a periodical resembling the English *Spectator*. He received from his friends encouragement and help of every kind. This paper was a great success.

Then, animated by the hope of making himself a career, he proposed to marry the young French lady.

“The elder sister told him that he must first succeed; and when some employment, court favour, or some other means of subsistence had given him the right to think of her sister, if she preferred him to other admirers she would give her assent.” (Clavico at this moved uneasily in his seat; and I, without appearing to notice him, continued.)

“The young lady, touched by the merits of the man who pursued her, refused several advantageous offers, and preferring to wait until he who had loved her for four years had made the success his friends dared to hope for him, encouraged him to give to his paper the imposing title of *The Thinker*.” (Here my man almost dropped off his seat.)

“The paper,” I continued with an icy coolness, “had a prodigious success. The king himself, amused by its ability, gave the author public testimony of his benevolence. He was promised the first available place. Then he drove away all other admirers by his constant and public attentions. The marriage was only delayed by the expectation of a post promised to the author. At last the appointment arrived, after six years’ delay, and the lover fled.” (Here my man heaved an involuntary sigh, and when conscious of it, blushed with confusion. I took notice of all without stopping.)

“The affair had made too much noise for people to see the end with indifference. The sisters had taken a house large enough for two families; the banns were published. This outrage enraged the common friends of each, who employed themselves eagerly to revenge the insult. The French ambassador took part in the

matter ; but when this man learnt that the lady had such a strong support, fearing a power which might overturn in a moment his rising fortune, he came and cast himself at the feet of his irritated mistress. In his turn he employed all his friends to appease her, and as the anger of a betrayed woman is usually disguised love, all was arranged ; the preparations for the marriage were recommenced, the banns republished, and they were to be married in three days. The reconciliation had created as much excitement as the rupture. He had to demand the consent of his chief. Before starting, he said : ‘ My friends, preserve me the heart of my mistress until I return from Situ-real, and arrange all things so that immediately on my return we can go to the altar together.’ ”

‘ At this point I deepened my voice, and fixing him with my eye, continued :—

“ He returned the day after next ; but instead of leading his victim to the altar, he told the unfortunate girl that he had changed his intention a second time, and would not marry her. Her indignant friends rushed to him immediately. The insolent man threw away all regard to decency, and defied them to injure him, telling them that if the French ladies tried to punish him, they must be careful that he did not ruin them in a country where they were without support.

“ At this news the poor girl fell into convulsions, which made her friends fear for her life. At the height of their desolation the elder sister wrote to her family a description of the public outrage they had sustained. This account moved the heart of her brother to such a degree that he determined to come to clear up this entangled affair, and he made but one bound from Paris to

Madrid. I am that brother! I have quitted country, duty, family, business, pleasures, to come to avenge in Spain an innocent and unhappy sister. I am here, armed with right and firmness, to unmask a traitor, to write in letters of blood his soul on his face; that traitor is yourself!"

'Try to form a picture of this astonished man, stupefied by my harangue, his mouth open by surprise, which appeared to have frozen his power of speech; the same face which a short time ago was radiant with pleasure, darkening by degrees; the eyes losing their brightness, every feature lengthening and assuming a leaden hue. He tried to stammer some excuses. "Do not interrupt me, sir; you have nothing to say to me and much to listen to. To commence, have the goodness to declare before this gentleman, who has come expressly with me from France, if by any want of faith, lightness, weakness, bad temper, or any other vice whatever, my sister has deserved the double outrage that you have had the cruelty of publicly inflicting on her." "No, sir; I acknowledge Doña Maria, your sister, to be a lady full of talent, graces, and virtue." "Has she given you any subject of complaint since you have known her?" "Never, never!" "Why, then, monster," said I, rising, "had you the barbarity to treat her as you have done, only because her heart preferred you to ten other better men?" "Ah! sir, there have been instigations, counsels; if you only knew——" "That is enough."

'Then turning towards my friend: "You have heard the justification of my sister—go and publish it. What I have now to say to this gentleman does not require a witness." My friend went. Clavico, more than astonished, rose in his turn. I made him sit. "Now, sir,

that we are alone, this is my project, and I hope you will approve it.

“It will suit your arrangements and mine that you should not marry my sister ; and you feel that I do not come here to play the absurd part of a brother in a play who insists on marrying his sister ; but you have outraged most impudently a lady of honour, because you believed she was without support in a foreign country ; that proceeding is characteristic of a vulgar and cowardly man. You must therefore commence by admitting, in your own handwriting, of your own free will, all your doors open and your servants in the room, who will not understand you, because we will speak French, that you are an abominable man who has deceived, betrayed, outraged my sister, without any cause ; and your declaration in my hands, I shall go to my ambassador at Aranjuez, I will show him your writing, I will then have it printed at once. After to-morrow the town and the Court shall be inundated with it. I have powerful friends here, time, and money ; all shall be employed to ruin you, to pursue you in every way without pause, until the resentment of my sister is appeased and she commands me to cease.”

“I will not make such a declaration,” said Clavico in an altered voice. “I believe it, because, perhaps, in your place I would not do it myself. But this is the only alternative, write or do not write : from this moment I remain with you ; I leave you no more ; wherever you go I will follow you, until, impatient of my company, you deliver yourself to me behind Buenretiro. If I am more fortunate than you, sir, without seeing my ambassador, without speaking to any one here, I will take my dying sister in my arms, place her in my carriage, and return to France with her. If, on the contrary, fortune favours

you, all is finished for me. I will make my will before meeting you. You will have every advantage over us; you may even laugh at our expense. Order them to bring you breakfast.”’

We need hardly say that before such wit, courage, and resources, Clavico threw up his arms. He begged Beaumarchais on his knees not to ruin him. His surrender to the brother was as cowardly as the outrage inflicted on the sister. Beaumarchais at last felt pity for the poor wretch, and eventually gave him hope of pardon. He knew very well that his poor sister really loved the good-looking, clever scoundrel. The reconciliation was celebrated, the banns were republished, when the miserable wretch took flight again. Beaumarchais was warned by a friendly officer to leave Spain at once. ‘You have not a moment to lose. Go at once, or to-morrow morning you will be arrested in your bed. The order is given; I have come to warn you. Clavico is a monster; he has prejudiced every one against you. Fly, fly at once, or, confined in a dungeon, you will have neither protection nor defence.’

Beaumarchais’ reply was:—‘I fly? I save myself? I will perish rather! Do not try to persuade me, my friends; provide a carriage for me with six mules by four o’clock to-morrow morning, and I will go to Aranjuez.’

‘I then shut myself up. I was nearly mad; my heart was in a vice; nothing could calm my agitation. I threw myself into a chair, where I re-



mained two hours, incapable of forming an idea or a resolution.'

In a state of the wildest excitement he performed the twelve hours' journey to Aranjuéz. He rushed into the presence of the French ambassador, who told him that Clavico and his powerful friends had acted with such consummate art that he could do nothing for him except retard his arrest for a few hours. Beaumarchais left the ambassador more desperate than ever. He then rushed to a personal friend of the king, who listened to his story with interest and sympathy. This gentleman introduced Beaumarchais to the cabinet of the king, to whom he read the history of the whole affair. The king instantly ordered the disgrace and dismissal of Clavico from all his posts. Then the wretched Clavico wrote to Beaumarchais for pity and assistance. And our fiery, good-hearted friend was fool enough to plead for the villain; but, thanks to the better sense of those who knew the facts of the case, he pleaded in vain.

Why are we all so in love with men like Beaumarchais?

I think because of the interest they take in humanity. Careful, prudent, painstaking, exemplary persons may be very laudable, very respectable; but although they may gain our approval, they never gain our love; while our erratic, sparkling, loving, quarrelling, disreputable Beaumarchais, Fielding, Mirabeau, Sheridan, Molière, Burns, live in our hearts, and their very names

make our eyes sparkle with delight. When it is a question of doing a generous action, they don't stop to count the cost. They are not always thinking of the opinion of Mrs. Grundy. The one thing needful with them is not a big balance at the banker's: they would not see a man they call friend go to ruin for 50% when they could easily spare 500%. In short, our dear scapegraces, with all their faults and shortcomings, can love some things and some persons even more than themselves. And we foolish people who love them are not such egregious idiots as some very respectable and cold-blooded people suppose.

MIRABEAU.



## MIRABEAU.

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THE family name of this deeply interesting family was Riquetti. They originally came from Florence to Marseilles, where John de Riquetti settled, engaged in commerce, and amassed great wealth. An unlucky bishop having, about the year 1562, in a public document, referred to John de Riquetti as a 'trader of Marseilles,' as though despising his occupation, John replied: 'With regard to the title of "trader of Marseilles," which would be derogatory to no one, since our kings have even invited nobles to become participators in the commerce of this city, I am, or was, a dealer in merchandise, in the same manner that you are a dealer in holy water.'

I think that John de Riquetti was a worthy ancestor of Mirabeau: he had a sharp, brilliant wit, backed up by shrewd common sense, and knew when and how to use it.

The following story will show that on the female side there was no lack of courage; and that the leonine energy which distinguished the family came from both sides.

Anne of Ponteves de Bon, the wife of a Riquetti,

was outrageously insulted by the Chevalier de Griaque, a well-known bully. 'Scoundrel,' she exclaimed, placing the muzzle of a pistol to his head, 'I would blow out your brains, but that I have children who will avenge me more worthily.' Accordingly her son Francis, then under seventeen years of age, hastened home from Malta, and instantly challenged and killed the ruffian.

Bruno de Riquetti, another spark of this fiery house, was the companion of Louis XIV. in his youth. He would never flatter the young King by being intentionally inferior to him in athletic sports. His temper, like that of the rest of the house, was that of a madman ; nor did he even try to restrain it. A great number of anecdotes show him to have been a man of the most brilliant qualities.

But we have so much to say about Mirabeau himself that we must lose no time over his ancestors. His father was a voluminous, not a luminous writer ; a man of the most pedantic and obstinate character, who quarrelled with his wife and formed an improper attachment abroad. He was, at first, very proud of the boy ; but his love turned to hate when he discovered that his son had a genius and will of his own, and that he could not be wound up and set just as he pleased, like an eight-day clock.

Gabriel Honoré Mirabeau, our Mirabeau, was the fifth son of the Marquis, and was born on the 9th March, 1749, at Bignon. The size of the child's head was so great that his birth nearly cost his mother's life. One foot was twisted, and his tongue

was tied, but, as we know, he got it untied to good purpose; his strength and size were extraordinary, and he had two teeth in his jaw when born: in fact he had a very strong jaw. He smote the Philistines indeed, but never with the jaw-bone of an ass. His father, writing about him to his brother, said: 'I have nothing to say about my enormous son, only that he beats his nurse, who does not fail to return it, and they try which shall strike hardest.' Again: 'The hale and robust farrier's wife of whom you speak, is the same that nursed my son. She is a woman of mark, who has well brought up two lots of children. She kept a forge, though a widow; for, having had two husbands, and finding that they did not last, she refused a third.'

By the above quotations you see that Mirabeau's father was no fool; a fool never has a sense of humour: that is why fools always hate witty men; they expect to be laughed at by them.

When three years old, Gabriel had the confluent smallpox. A hasty application of some injudicious prescription upon the tumefied face, caused the boy's countenance to be deeply furrowed and scarred. The Marquis wrote some time after to his brother, the Bailli:—'Your nephew is as ugly as the nephew of Satan.' As all the other children were remarkably beautiful, this accident may have been the cause of a secret aversion in the parent; it certainly had a great effect on others.

His private tutor, Poisson, an intelligent and meritorious man, took every pains to develop his

mind, which showed early signs of great power. From his fourth year Gabriel was curious, inquisitive, and fond of reading. He possessed himself of all the printed matter that came in his way. His uncle, then the Chevalier Mirabeau, and Governor of Guadeloup, displayed from the first great interest in him; inquired about him in his constant correspondence with the Marquis, and afterwards used a great influence in the formation of the young man's character. He seems to have regarded him as the true representative of the family. In Paris, during 1754, the father wrote to the uncle:—"Your nephew is fat and strong. He is not forgotten, and his education is excellent; for that is the only thing to prevent the smoke of the heart from drifting in a wrong direction. All Paris talks of his precocity; nevertheless, as he is your child as well as mine, I must tell you that his acquirements are not very extensive at present. He has little vice, except mechanical inequality, if it was permitted to break forth. He has not much sensitiveness, and is as porous as a bed of sand; but he is only five years old." And again: "May he" (Poisson) "make him an honest man and a courageous citizen. This is all that is necessary. With these qualifications he will make that race of pigmies tremble before him, who play the great men at Court. I repeat, with sincerity, the prayer which Joab made on behalf of Eliakim,—“May God hear my prayer!””

At the age of seven he was confirmed by a cardinal. It was at the grand supper which succeeded



the ceremony that he made the singular distinction related by himself. 'They explained to me that God could not make contradictions: for instance, a stick that had but one end. I inquired, whether a miracle was not a stick which had but one end. My grandmother never forgave me.'

The boy became soon after this almost ungovernable, and was subjected to perpetual chastisement. His precocity of mind, and also of body, was a cause of almost perpetual anxiety and trouble. His father, who really doated on him<sup>3</sup> at this age, humorously describes him thus:—'This child, though turbulent, is mild and easily controlled, but of a temper tending to indolence. As he does not ill resemble Punch in figure, being all belly and posterior, he appears to me very well qualified for the manœuvres of the tortoise—he presents his shell and allows one to strike.'

Traits of generosity and honour were more original with him; though for these a great deal must be attributed to instruction. The age was sentimental, the tradition of nobleness was in the family and belonged to him of right.

His father's aversion to him began to appear about his twelfth year, and strengthened with his growth. The Marquis writes thus:—'He has an elevated mind under the frock of a babe.' This shows a strange instinct of pride. 'Noble, nevertheless, he is an embryo of a bloated bully, who will eat every man alive before he is twelve years old.'

The whole of the extraordinary anecdotes related of this unpaternal jealousy, show it to have originated in a fear of the parent lest the son should prove of too powerful a nature for himself to control; a fear sufficient, and more than sufficient, to have caused the long animosity and separation which ensued. The old eagle feared the young one's beak, and would fain drive it from the nest. Yet there seems to have been no malice nor ferocity in the boy, only a natural disrespect for authority; the more painful, as it was united with a mature generosity and a precocious disposition to animal vices.

Finding it impossible to govern his son at home, the Marquis sent him to a military school at Paris, where he was subjected to severe discipline under the care of a wise master, who subdued his temper, and so excited the boy's ambition that he began to learn with great rapidity, and soon excelled all boys of his age. His prodigious memory became stored with an immense variety of knowledge. He mastered Greek, Latin, and nearly every living language, with marvellous quickness.

It is a very remarkable fact that Mirabeau, Goethe, and Burns, were all born within a few months of each other. Three born leaders of men; two of whom were badly received by their contemporaries: so badly that they retired from the scene at an early age. Goethe lived the life of a demigod; both the others wrecked themselves against the *vis inertia* of stupidity, against which, as Schiller says, 'the very gods fight to fail.'

But our concern is with the big-headed, pock-marked, fighting, loving mass of contradictions—Mirabeau. Let us listen to his Draco of a father, who thus again sketches the portrait of his son:—‘A type, profoundly inconceivable, of baseness, sheer dull grossness, and the quality of your dirty caterpillar, that will never learn to fly. . . . An intelligence, a memory, a capacity, that strike, that astonish, that frighten you. A nothing bedizened with crotchets. He may fling dust in the eyes of silly women, but will never be the fourth part of a man, if by good luck he be anybody.’ This is the opinion of a pedantic father of a son of genius. If he could have been drilled like a mere brainless, heartless noodle, his martinet of a father would have been satisfied with him. Nothing irritates pedantic souls so much as the bright dazzling light of genius.

At fifteen his father could stand the boy no longer, and sent him to school at Paris, where he made wonderful progress, not only in languages, music, and mathematics, but proved his power of winning all hearts by his fascinating manner.

To look at his face and to listen to his eloquent tongue was to love him. He had that passionate love of his fellow-man which shone in Burns, Garibaldi, and Gambetta, and which wins all hearts capable of loving. Love, like charity, covereth a multitude of sins. The pious, canting members of the community may talk of their faults—that is all they can understand of great men; but we see into

their glowing hearts, almost bursting with love for their suffering brothers and sisters, not to mention their dear little ones; and we feel that all the love we can give them is an inadequate return for the love they have showered on us. I would rather be condemned with such sinners than saved with the cold-blooded, canting saints who denounce them!

As the school in Paris was not sufficiently severe to the young scapegrace, his loving father decided that he should enter the army. So the boy's pock-marked, shaggy, big head, with its flaming eyes, was covered with a dragoon's helmet. He was then eighteen. His regiment was stationed at Saintes. The people soon learnt to like Mirabeau. His colonel was a sour martinet: pipeclay had disagreed with him. There was a bailiff in the town who had a pretty daughter. She preferred the seamy, beaming face of our hero to the colonel's. Then we can fancy Mirabeau's love-making: it must have been like Burns's. He had the tongue of the old serpent. If men could not resist him, we cannot expect women to do so. The colonel tried to be satirical at Mirabeau's expense. He retorted in a way that pulverised the poor colonel. One night our young friend went to the gambling-house, and lost four louis. Then he is denounced to his father as a reckless gambler and seducer.

'What is to be done,' screams the fond father, 'with this devil's cub?' He resorts to a *lettre de cachet*, and our fiery, passionate, big-headed friend is sent to prison, without the Archer's daughter. His

prison was on the Isle of Rhè, whose stone walls were beaten by the Atlantic.

Mirabeau wins the heart of his jailer, who pleads for his pardon. Fighting at that time was going on in Corsica. After a lot of pleading, his father consented to the boy going there: he might get knocked on the head. He is made sub-lieutenant of foot in the legion of Lorraine. But before leaving the Isle of Rhè, he fought his first duel. In Corsica our friend worked like a giant; studied, fought, loved—gaining, as usual, golden opinions from all manner of men and women. In May, 1770, Mirabeau returned to Toulon, with a lot of manuscript in his pocket; his head full of military and other learning, like a library turned topsy-turvy. Soon after this he visited his uncle, the brave Bailli Mirabeau, who was enchanted with him, finds under features terribly seamed and altered from what they were, bodily and mentally, all that is loyal and strong—nay, an expression of something refined; declares him, after several days' incessant talk, to be the best fellow on earth, if well dealt with, who will shape into statesman, generalissimo, pope—what they pleased to desire. Another less polished verdict was as follows: 'He is devilishly sharp; but with the wit of three thousand devils, and, by Jove, brave as a lion!'

Mirabeau proceeds to Paris, and wins still more golden opinions; but, of course, gets into mischief. His bewildered father asks this memorable question: 'In the name of all the gods, what prodigy is this

that I have hatched !' He was a swallower of formulas ; and France had enough to choke the biggest throat one can imagine. To crown our hero's misfortunes, he got married. A most unfortunate marriage. But what a demon to keep in order, even for a good and wise woman ! But poor Mirabeau's wife was neither good nor wise. He tried to make a home for her, but was already deeply in debt. His father-in-law helps him, but his stern father sends him a *lettre de cachet* instead of money. Then our fiery hero gets into hotter water still. A gentleman writes some satirical verses about his sister. Mirabeau meets him by chance, and, dreadful to relate, horsewhips him in the road. Another and stronger *lettre de cachet* is sent, with catchpoles to execute it. Mirabeau is lodged in the Château d'If. Girt with the blue Mediterranean, behind iron bars, without pen, paper, or friends, except the Cerberus of the place, who is ordered to be very strict with him, there he shall devour his own lion-heart in solitude. At last, even Cerberus relents, and gives our friend pens, paper, sympathy, and counsel. He is even visited by his sea-dog of a brother, who was called the younger Mirabeau, and also the barrel Mirabeau, because of his enormous girth, and the quantity of drink he could conceal about his person. Just try to fancy the genial joy of that meeting.

The wife, the brother, the sisters of Mirabeau, all plead for his pardon ; but the inexorable father refuses them all ; at last, he is sent to the Château

de Joux, in the Jura mountains, on an allowance of fifty pounds a year. His wife ceases to plead for him; next forgets him: they never met again.

Near the Château de Joux was Pontarlier, whither the prisoner is allowed to wander on parole. Here our hero visited the Monnier household. President Monnier was seventy-five, his wife a little over twenty. Her family had told her to choose between her husband and a convent. She submitted to the husband. Fancy our eloquent, fiery Mirabeau visiting and lighting up with a wild and vivid light this melancholy home. He was ugly, but he had the fascination of genius. All the latent poetry and passion of the poor, blighted girl woke up. Mirabeau felt the danger of the situation, and wrote to his wife to come to him. She replied icily to his passionate appeals, that she thought he must be mad to write as he did.

He returned to the Monnier family: the charm became stronger and sweeter; the welcome warmer and warmer. But Mirabeau's jailor had made advances to Madame Monnier. He is filled with rage at Mirabeau's success; orders him not to leave the castle; and writes to the husband. The consequence is an explosion and domestic chaos. To bring this painful subject to an end, Mirabeau and Sophie fled to Holland, where they lived on what he could earn by his pen. Their life was very hard and very shifty, but I think it was the nearest approach to happiness that our stormy-hearted friend ever enjoyed.

This lasted for eight months, Mirabeau working like a demon with his pen ; Sophie sewing, scrubbing, in fact, doing the roughest work for the man she loved. At last they were tracked : Mirabeau was condemned and sent to prison for forty-two months ; Sophie was placed in a convent. They were allowed to correspond. The letters are the most powerful and pathetic love-letters ever written. They met once more, only to quarrel. Poor Sophie, at last, committed suicide. Still, she tasted the bitter and sweet of life. She had lived and passionately loved. The severe treatment Mirabeau received during this long imprisonment nearly killed him.

In 1784 he visited England, where he became infatuated with our constitution.

Now, a few words on the personal bearing and manner of Mirabeau. He was a delightful companion, and could overcome the strongest personal prejudices by the generous and animated character of his intercourse. He rejected the mere conventional forms of good breeding ; called people by their names without ceremonial addition ; and made it his first care to remove all obstacles to a familiar intercourse ; using for that end an agreeable asperity, a pleasant crudity of expression, more apparent than real, for under the disguise of roughness, sometimes even of rudeness, was to be found all the reality of politeness and flattery. After the stiff and ceremonious conversations of conventional good breeding, there was a fascinating novelty in his, never rendered insipid by forms in common use. In fact,



he had the terrible power of familiarity. Mirabeau could adopt any style of conduct and conversation, and though not moral himself, he had a very decided taste for the society of moral people.

He inspired confidence by candidly confessing the wildness and vices of his youth, and by promising to devote the rest of his life to the cause of humanity and liberty, without allowing any personal advantage to lure him from his purpose. He had always preserved in the midst of his excesses a personal grandeur and dignity, which distinguished him from the wretched crowd of worn-out rakes, who, like walking shadows, haunted the streets of Paris. No man was more jealous of the esteem of those whom he himself esteemed; and no man was more sensitive and responded more readily when appeals were made to his honour or principle. But there was nothing uniform or permanent in his moral character. His mind moved by fits and starts, and was greatly governed by his passions. When excited by pride or jealousy he was a madman.

He was elected by Provence to the States-General. When Mirabeau's name was read at the opening of the Assembly it was received with jeers and hootings. It was even proposed that his election should be cancelled. He tried to speak two or three times, but a general murmur reduced him to silence. But one day, being called on to defend a friend, he carried the Assembly away in a torrent of generous eloquence, overcame all prejudices, and at once

gained general popularity. His dejection had been great ; but now his elation was extreme. From that time forth he ruled the feelings of the nation. Like Burke, he loved the monarchy, in which he made a great mistake, while he understood, and therefore loved, the people. The secret of his power and eloquence was that he dared to trust the inspirations of a generous soul. What he dared to think he dared with eloquent tongue to speak. He thought nothing of rhetoric : he was convinced and thought only of convincing. The laboured speeches of others contrasted with his were like paper flowers compared with fragrant wild flowers wet with the dew of the morning.

Here is a short extract from one of Mirabeau's speeches :—

‘Too often bayonets are the only remedy applied to the convulsions produced by oppression and want. But bayonets establish only the peace of terror—the silence of despotism—the quiet of death. The people are not a furious herd which must be kept in chains ! Always quiet and moderate when free, they are only violent and rebellious under governments which systematically debase them in order to have a pretext for despising them. When we consider what must result to the happiness of 25,000,000 men from a legal constitution, instead of ministerial caprices—from the consent of all the wills and the co-operation of all the lights of the nation in the improvement of our laws, from the reform of our abuses, from the reduction of taxes, from the economy in the finances, from the mitigation of the penal laws, from the

regularity of procedure in the tribunals, from the abolition of a multitude of servitudes which shackle industry and mutilate the human faculties—in a word, from that grand system of liberty which, planted on the firm basis of freely elected municipalities, rises gradually to the provincial administrations, and receives its completion from the annual recurrence of the States-General; when we weigh all that must result from the restoration of this vast empire, who does not feel that the greatest of crimes, the darkest outrage against humanity, would be to offer opposition to the rising destiny of our country, and to thrust her back into the depths of the abyss, there to hold her oppressed beneath the weight of all her chains?’

The following extract is from a speech Mirabeau made in support of Necker, the Minister of Finance:—

‘Two centuries of depredation and robbery have excavated the abyss wherein the kingdom is in danger of being engulfed. This frightful gulf must be filled up. Well, here is a list of proprietors. Choose from among the richest, so as to sacrifice the smallest number of citizens.

‘But choose! for is it not expedient that a small number perish to save the mass of the people? Come—these two thousand notables possess sufficient to make up the deficit. Restore order to the finances, peace and prosperity to the kingdom. Strike, and immolate pitilessly these melancholy victims, precipitate them into the abyss; it is about to close. What, you recoil with horror! Inconsistent, cowardly men! And do you not

see that in decreeing bankruptcy—or, what is more odious still, in rendering it inevitable without decreeing—you disgrace yourselves with an act a thousand times more criminal? for, in fact, that horrible sacrifice would remove the deficiency. But do you imagine that, because you refuse to pay, you shall cease to owe? Do you think that the thousands, the millions of men who will lose in an instant, by the dreadful explosion or its consequences, all that constituted the comfort of their lives, and, perhaps, the sole means of their subsistence, will leave you in the peaceable enjoyment of your crime? Stoical contemplators of the incalculable woes which this catastrophe will scatter over France; unfeeling egotists, who think these convulsions of despair and wretchedness will pass away like so many others, and pass away the more rapidly because they will be more violent! Are you sure that so many men without bread will leave you tranquilly to luxuriate amid the viands which you have been unwilling to curtail in either variety or delicacy? No! you will perish, and in the universal conflagration which you will not tremble to kindle, the loss of your honour will not save you a single one of your detestable luxuries.

‘Vote, then, this extraordinary subsidy, and may it prove sufficient! Vote it, because the public exigencies allow of no evasion, and you will be responsible for every delay! Beware of asking for time! Misfortune never grants it! What! gentlemen, in reference to a ridiculous movement of the Palais-Royal, a ludicrous insurrection which had never any consequence except in the weak imagination or the wicked purpose of a few designing men, you have heard, not long since, these insane words:—“Catiline is at the gates of Rome, and you deliberate!” And assuredly, there was around you

neither Catiline nor danger, nor faction, nor Rome. But, to-day, bankruptcy is there before you. It threatens to consume you, your country, your honour. And you deliberate !'

A deputation of the Assembly was preparing to wait upon the king to request him to dismiss the foreign troops, already three times refused. Mirabeau, fired with indignation, thus addressed the Committee :—

'Say to the king—say to him, that the hordes of foreigners by whom we are invested, have received yesterday the princes and princesses, the favourites, male and female, also their caresses ; their exhortations, and their presents. Say to him, that the whole night, these foreign mercenaries, gorged with gold and wine, have been predicting, in their impious songs, the enslavement of France, and invoking, with their brutal vows, the destruction of the National Assembly ! Say to him, that in his very palace, the courtiers have led their dances to the sound of this barbarous music, and that such was the prelude to the massacre of St. Bartholomew.'

The Abbé Maury once insulted Mirabeau in the Assembly. Mirabeau replied thus :—

'I will not stoop to repel the charge just made against me, unless the Assembly dignify it to my level by ordering me to reply. In that case, I would deem it sufficient for my vindication and my glory to name my accuser and to name myself.'

You all know his sublime speech to M. de Baizè,

Grand Master of the Ceremonies of the Court. Mirabeau thundered:—‘The Commons of France have resolved to deliberate: and you, sir, who could not be the organ of the king to the National Assembly; you, who have here neither seat, nor vote, nor right of speaking, go tell your master that we are here by the will of the people, and that we will not be driven from the hall except by bayonets.’

The exalted gold-stick was thunderstruck. He walked backwards out of the hall! It was the downfall of the monarchy: its surrender to the sovereign people.

Mirabeau made one great political mistake. He supported the veto of the king, which was as absurd then as the veto of the House of Lords is now. That mistake cost Mirabeau his popularity. But when the news of his illness reached the people, the whole population assembled round his house. They literally offered their blood to be transfused into his veins. At his death the whole people broke into sobs and lamentations; they harnessed themselves to his funeral car, and accompanied his remains to the Pantheon.

So died the maker and master of the great French Revolution, which, after his death, fell into the hands of Danton, the vile Marat, and the sea-green incorruptible Robespierre, and thus fell lower and lower till it became the prey of a greedy soldier and unprincipled adventurer. Had Mirabeau lived, the

whole history of Europe would have been different. Peace to his memory. Remember his burning and prophetic words:—‘Privileges, and the privileged classes must pass away—but the people are eternal!’

Think of him kindly, for, like Gambetta, he loved his fellow-creatures with his great lion-heart; and he loved those most who needed it most—the poor, the weak, and the neglected.





DANTON, ROBESPIERRE,  
AND THE CONVENTION.



## DANTON, ROBESPIERRE, AND THE CONVENTION.

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IN the short space at my disposal, I will not attempt to deal with the causes which brought about the great French Revolution. In the preceding essay on Mirabeau, I have referred to the opening of that grand protest of outraged humanity against the cruel oppression under which those who did not belong to the privileged classes were dwarfed and deformed. After the death of that Titan of passion and genius, Mirabeau, the Republic fell into the hands of Danton, of Robespierre, and, to some extent, into those of the abominable and detestable Marat.

In this article I am going to treat of Danton, Robespierre, and the Convention.

The struggle between the Girondists and the Mountain was a struggle for life; and on the defeat and death of the philosophical and moderate party, power naturally fell into the hands of the victors. There is no doubt that Danton desired the support of Roland and his followers against the mad violence of Marat and the implacable vindictiveness of the

‘sea-green incorruptible Robespierre ;’ but when the Girondists refused his offered hand, which they considered stained with the blood of the September massacres, Danton, to preserve his own life, had to attach himself to Robespierre, who instinctively hated and feared the full-blooded, hot-headed, eloquent, enthusiastic, popular orator and leader.

The cold-blooded, astute, calculating politician is the natural and instinctive enemy of the warm-hearted, noble leader, whose brain is fertilised by the rich, warm blood of a generous heart. The man who benefits the people is the man who loves them. The cold-blooded class love themselves too much to take much real interest in any one else’s welfare : they simply use the people as ladders to rise by ; but the people are getting tired of that treatment.

I will now refer to that unique assembly, the National Convention.

The Convention should not be described as a body perfectly free, orderly, consistent—arbiter of fact as well as law, absolute and spontaneous mistress of its own movements. From its opening, down to the death of the Girondists, it was merely an arena of death between two parties. To decree unanimously the arrest of the Girondists, Danton, and St. Just ; to vote unanimously one day the printing of Robespierre’s speech, and the next day his death ; was that reason, consistency, liberty ? Strange situation !

The Convention proved itself to be the most sovereign and the most subject of all assemblies ;

the most talkative and the most mute; the most excitable and the most serious; the most independent and the most abject; and it was precisely because it was at the disposal of the revolutionary government, an instrument powerful, dependent, passive, undivided, that it was able to mow down its enemies all around it, and impose upon them the silence of death.

Strictly speaking, the Convention was but the Chief Secretary of the Revolution. The Committee of Public Safety and of General Security really governed. To this dictatorship of the Committee, much more than to the Convention, it is that we are to attribute all the evil that was then committed; and, also, all that was achieved of great and victorious.

What men of iron were all those members of the Committee of Public Safety and General Security! What promptitude of execution! They dealt with questions of war, marine, finance, police, home, foreign affairs, and legislation; they were adequate to, and at home in, all! They made speeches at the Jacobin clubs, deliberated in the committees, worked fifteen hours a day, drew up plans of attack and defence, corresponded with fourteen armies; and, in fact, organized victory. There were giants in those days.

They were, at the same time, deputies and ministers, rulers and reporters, chiefs and agents; they sustained the weight of the government as a whole and in its details. Power overflowed, so to

speak, in their hands. It was co-extensive with their will, and limited but by the scaffold. If they dared too much, they were called dictators; if not enough, conspirators. Powerful over all, but responsible for all—responsible by death for success as for defeat. Too much success was as fatal to them as a failure. The office of representative was not in those days a place of leisure or of profit. Files of cannon, with matches lighted, were to be passed through in going to the Assembly.

The road was lined with hedges of pikes and muskets. The man who entered a ruler might depart an outlaw. The president once calmly put on his hat when some dishevelled women, reeking with blood, rushed in with a deputy's bleeding head fixed on a pike. Lanjuinais coolly continued his speech with the pistol of an assassin resting on his ear. Robespierre, with shattered jaw, lay on the floor in a room close to the Convention. Deputies stabbed themselves, not two paces distant, in the court-room of the Revolutionary Tribunal. Others drank poison to escape the executioner. These were quite ordinary events during that supreme period of storm and stress. What I wish to point out is the prodigious impulse impressed upon the world by the colossal might of France, when, freeing herself from the chains of feudality and absolute monarchy, she arose and walked forth erect, rejoicing in her strength and her liberty. Every village, from the Pyrenees to the Rhine, from the Alps to the sea, received and nourished the seed of freedom. The

contempt of death, the tragic grandeur of events, the enthusiasm of glory, attempered those souls of steel. The France of that day was but one vast camp, a manufactory of muskets and cannon, an arsenal of arms. Mothers made offerings of their sons to the country; young husbands tore themselves from the clinging arms of their newly wedded wives; legions of soldiers sprang as if out of the earth. Barefooted, without clothes, without bread, often without ammunition, they carried, at the point of the bayonet, the entrenchments and battlements of the enemy. What captains! Foubert, buried with the banner of Novi for his winding-sheet; Hoche, the pacificator of La Vendée; Marceau, the hero of Wissemburg; Pichegru, and many others. The generals of the Republic were to sink into marshals of the Empire. Ney, Soult, Murat, Masséna, and above all Bonaparte, greater than Napoleon: he was only an emperor. This young general of the Republic, who bombarded St. Roche, was destined one day to shake all Europe with his tread, and to sit, crowned by an unwilling Pope, on the throne of the Cæsars. What a farce for a Pope to crown a Bonaparte! Those ragged soldiers were to make with him the circuit of the globe; encamp at the foot of the Pyramids; conquer Italy, and wreathed with the laurels of Arcole, of Marengo, of Jena, and of Austerlitz, to plant their triumphant eagles on the towers of Vienna, Madrid, and Berlin. Around the Revolution moved a host of men of genius: some already illustrious, others on the eve

of becoming so. Enough of war, for which I entertain no admiration.

The eloquence of those days was uncouth, inflated, strong, gigantic, like the revolution it was defending : it smelt of gunpowder ; ours sometimes savours of molasses and beetroot. Theirs exalted the intellectual interests of society ; ours the material interests. Theirs was vehement to denunciation, coarse to outrage ; ours is sneering, intricate, loquacious, hypocritical. Theirs led its orators to poverty, to persecution, to ostracism, the prison, and the scaffold ; ours elevates its heroes by flowery ascents to the purple and fine linen of opulence, and to the honours of the ministry and the absurd position of hereditary legislator.

I must devote a little space to one of the most brilliant victims of the revolution—Camille Desmoulins. I must introduce here a little story which paints in vivid colours the caustic, brilliant wit of the man. The truculent, snarling Marat, of course, hated the brilliant, cultivated, beloved Desmoulins. He attacked him in the vile paper that he propagated in a sewer. Camille replied : ‘ So long as you defend the Republic, Marat, you may abuse me. I believe, like the inhabitants of St. Malo, that the Republic should be defended by men and dogs.’ That, I think, is a fine specimen of the polish and temper of Desmoulins’ wit.

Camille Desmoulins was endowed with an imagination too ardent, and a heart too susceptible. He loved liberty to idolatry, and his friends better than



himself. He was an extraordinary man. With giddy temerity he attempted to thwart the career of the Revolution. He would drive it backwards, after having launched it on its impetuous course, and he was crushed beneath the car that bore the fortunes of Robespierre.

Desmoulins had an impressive countenance, full of passion and feeling, and his gestures were oratorical. But an impediment of speech forbad him the tribune, and his hot-headedness did not allow him to arrange his ideas in a skilful and orderly discourse. Passionate, simple, picturesque in style, his pamphlets are at times gloomy, at other times brilliant; sometimes full of happy raillery, naturalness, and grace; but always fascinating. He began to fear, at length, for those who were afraid. He suffered for those who were suffering. He borrowed the vigorous pencil of Tacitus to paint the tyrants of the people. He turned round and round in their wounds the dagger of sarcasm. He tried to awaken remorse, he tried to arouse pity; but it was too late. Vainly did he precipitate himself, head foremost, from the bank into the torrent, for the purpose of restraining and guiding it; the wave rolled on, and the torrent swept him away to death.

He was cast into the dungeons of the revolutionary tribunals, and it was from thence that, as he was about to ascend the scaffold, he addressed to his young and idolised wife, to his Lucile, that touching letter, of which the close cannot be read without tears:—‘Adieu, Lucile! my dearest Lucile! I feel

the shore of life receding before me. I still behold my Lucile! My longing eyes still see thee! My loving arms entwine thee! My fettered hands embrace thee! and my severed head reposes on thy bosom! I die!’

I must now try to describe the grand and supreme contest between Danton and Robespierre—between the lion and the snake. As a rule, the slimy snake wins. Still, I would rather be the lion.

Robespierre’s report against Danton is contrived, arranged, and conducted, in all its parts, with infinite—I had almost said infernal—art. He begins by incriminating Bazire, Chabot, Camille Desmoulins, and others. He reserves Danton to the last. There he pauses—he takes a survey of his task, and collects all his forces to encounter the giant. He reiterates his proofs; he accumulates them; he concentrates them into a kind of poleaxe; and, to fire his auditory, he apostrophises Danton as if he had been present, like a criminal prosecutor in a court of justice. He unrolls the pretended list of his treasons, conspiracies, and crimes. He unveils his private life, and discloses even his confidential conversations. He denounces, he stigmatises him; he refuses to hear him in defence; he does not hear him; he judges him; condemns him; drags him upon the scaffold, and beheads him, more effectually than he would have done with the knife of the guillotine.

Robespierre, an orator of considerable fluency, practised in the harangues of the clubs and the contests of the tribunes; patient, taciturn, dis-

sembling, envious of the superiority of others, and constitutionally vain; a master of the subject of discussion and of himself; giving vent to his passions only by muttered exclamations: he was neither so mediocre as his enemies have made him, nor so great as his friends have tried to prove him; thinking far too favourably and speaking far too lengthily of himself, his services, his disinterestedness, his patriotism, his virtue, his justice; bringing himself incessantly upon the stage after laborious windings and circumlocutions, and overcharging all his discourses with the tiresome topic of his own personality.

Robespierre wrote his reports, recited his harangues, and scarce ever extemporised but in his replies. He could sketch with ability the external condition of the political world. He had, perhaps, in a higher degree than his colleagues, the views of the statesman; and whether from a vague instinct of ambition, or ultimate disgust of anarchy, he was for unity and strength in the executive power. His oratorical manner was full of allusions to Greece and to Rome, and the college truants who thronged the Assembly used to listen with gaping mouths to those stories of antiquity.

Who, at the present day, would speak in the tribune, without smiling irrepressibly, of the Cretans, of Lacedæmon, of the god Minos, of Numa and the nymph Egeria? What an oratorical drama, what a discourse in action, was that famous sitting of the 9th Thermidor! Robespierre

had barely accomplished the destruction of Danton, Desmoulins, and their friends. Now, all is silence, all is hesitation; then a growing murmur runs from bench to bench. The members accost each other, and groups are formed. They look searchingly from one to another; they count their numbers; they consult, they kindle into indignation, they break into passion. Robespierre becomes greener and greener—he is convulsed—he is ruined! St. Just flies to his aid and denounces Tallien. That name has scarce passed his lips when Tallien, pale, dismayed, half-dead, demands that the veil which covers Robespierre should be torn away.

Billaud-Vareennes exclaims:—‘The Convention is between two abysses; it will perish if it falters.’ [‘No, no! it must not perish!’ All the members are standing; they wave their hats, and swear to save the Republic.] Billaud-Vareennes exclaims:—‘Is there a single citizen would consent to live under a tyrant?’ [‘No, no! perish the tyrant!’]

Robespierre rushes to the tribune. [A great number: ‘Down with the tyrant! Down! down with him!’]

Then Tallien:—‘I witnessed yesterday the proceedings at the Jacobins; I trembled for the country. I have seen in training the army of the new Cromwell, and I have armed myself with a dagger to pierce him to the heart!’ [Vehement exclamations.] Robespierre, his back against the railing of the tribune, repeats his demand to be heard; he

begins to speak. His voice is lost in reiterated shouts of 'Down, down! Down with the tyrant! Down, down with him!' Robespierre persists. The cat-like nature was aroused; the green eyes darted flames. Tallien pushes him back and proceeds with the accusation. Then Robespierre casts an imploring look towards the most ardent of the Mountainists. Some turn aside the head, the others remain motionless. He then invokes the Centre:—'It is to you, men of purity and patriotism, that I address myself, and not to those brigands.' [Violent interruptions.] 'For the last time, President of Assassins, I demand the floor.' ['No, no!'] The uproar continues; Robespierre is exhausted from his efforts; his voice is become hoarse.] Garnier:—'The blood of Danton stifles you, Robespierre!'

After this scene he attempted suicide, broke his jaw with a pistol-shot, and, at his execution, showed abject fear.

Danton, whose blood mounted into the throat of Robespierre and suffocated him—this Danton, the inferior of Mirabeau, and of him alone, was taller by the head than any other member of the Convention. He had, like Mirabeau, a sallow complexion, sunken features, a wrinkled brow, a repulsive ugliness in the details of his countenance. But, like Mirabeau, seen at a distance and in an assembly, he could attract attention by the passionate energy of his expression, and by that manly vigour which is the beauty of the orator. Mirabeau resembled a lion—his wild hair the mane; Danton was like a

bulldog. Both animals are emblematic of strength and dauntless courage.

Born with capacity for the highest eloquence, Danton might, in ancient times, with his thundering voice, his impetuous gestures, and the tremendous imagery of his discourses, have swayed from the height of the tribune the tempestuous waves of the multitude.

An orator from the ranks of the people, Danton had their passions, understood their character, and spoke their racy language.

He was enthusiastic, but sincere; without malice, but without virtue; suspected of rapacity, though he died poor; coarse in his manners and his conversation. Sanguinary from system rather than temperament, he cut off heads, but without hatred, like an executioner, and his giant hand trickled with the carnage of September.

Abominable as well as false policy: he excused the cruelty of the means by the greatness of the end!

These two men, Danton and Robespierre, in turn ruled the Revolution. Both were party chiefs and masters of the Convention; both pushing on to the extremest measures; both intelligent in home and foreign affairs; both men of counsel and of combat; both accused of treason, of tyranny, and of dictatorship; both refused a hearing in their own defence, because they had refused to hear others; both decreed to prosecution by the unanimous vote of their own accomplices; both found guilty by the

Revolutionary tribunal they had themselves created; both outlawed almost in the bloom of life — although there was never much bloom about the cold-blooded Robespierre—Danton by Robespierre, and Robespierre on account of Danton; both, in fine, dragged to punishment in the same cart to the same scaffold.

Danton was intemperate, abandoned in his pleasures, and greedy of money, less to hoard than to spend it; Robespierre, sombre, austere, economical, incorruptible. Danton, indolent by nature and by habit; Robespierre, diligent in labour, even to the sacrifice of sleep. Danton disdained Robespierre, and Robespierre feared, despised, and hated Danton.

Danton was careless, even of his life; Robespierre, bilious, concentrated, distrustful; Danton, boastful of his real vices and of the evil which he had done, and a pretender even to crimes which he had never committed; Robespierre, varnishing his animosity and vengeance with colour of devotion to the public weal; Danton, in his brutal passion, utterly reckless of consequences.

Before concluding, I must give Carlyle's portrait of Danton:—

‘Still more interesting is it, not without a touch almost of pathos, to see how the rugged *Terræ Filius*, Danton, begins likewise to emerge, from amid the blood-tinted obscurations and shadows of horrid cruelty, into calm light; and seems now not an anthropophagus, but partly a man.

‘On the whole, the Earth feels it to be something to have a “Son of Earth;” any reality, rather than a hypocrisy and a formula! With a man that went honestly to work with himself, and said and acted, in any sense, with the whole mind of him, there is always something to be done. Satan himself, according to Dante, was a praiseworthy object compared with those *juste milieu* angels who “were neither faithful nor rebellious,” but were for their little selves only: trimmers, moderates, plausible persons, who, in the Dantean hell, are found doomed to this frightful penalty, that “they have not the hope to die; but sunk in torpid death-life, in mud and the plague of flies, they are doomed to doze and dree for ever—hateful to God and the enemies of God!”

‘If Bonaparte was the “armed soldier of Democracy,” invincible when he continued true to that, then let us call this Danton the *enfant perdu* and unenlisted revolver and Titan of Democracy, which could not yet have soldiers and discipline, but was by the nature of it lawless. An Earth-born, we say, yet honestly born of Earth.

‘In the memoirs of Garat, and elsewhere, one sees these fire-eyes beam with earnest thought, fill with the water of tears; the broad, rude features speak withal of human sympathies; that Antæus’ bosom also held a heart. “It is not the alarm-cannon that you hear,” cries he to the terror-struck, when the Prussians were already at Verdun; “it is the *pas de charge* against our enemies! To dare, and again to dare, and without limit to dare!—there is nothing left but that.”

‘Poor Mirabeau of the Sansculottes, what a mission! And it could not but be done—and it was done.’



The whole philosophy of the French Revolution is there in a nutshell. The proud and rotten flesh of France had to be cut and burnt away. It had to be done, and it was done.

A few more lines of Carlyle's superb portrait-painting:—

'But, indeed, may there not be, if well considered, more virtue in this feeling itself, once bursting earnest from the wild heart, than in whole lives of immaculate Pharisees and Respectabilities, with their eye ever set on "character" and the letter of the law. "Let my name be blighted, then; but let the Cause be glorious and have victory!" . . . "A rough-hewn giant of a man, not anthropophagus entirely; whose figures of speech," and also of action, "are all gigantic," whose "voice reverberates from the domes," and dashes Brunswick across the marches in a very wrecked condition. Always his total freedom from cant is one thing; even in his briberies, and sins as to money, there is a frankness, a kind of broad greatness. Sincerity, a great rude sincerity of insight and of purpose, dwelt in the man, which quality is the root of all: a man who could see through many things, and would stop at very few things; who marched and fought impetuously forward, in the questionablest element, and now bears the penalty in a name "blighted," yet, as we say, rapidly clearing itself. Once cleared, why should not this name, too, have significance for men? The wild history is a tragedy, as all human histories are. It is an unrhymed tragedy—bloody, fuliginous; yet full of tragic elements, not undeserving natural pity and fear. In quiet times, perhaps still at great distance, the happier onlooker may stretch

out the hand across centuries to him and say:—"Ill-starred brother, how thou foughtest with wild lion-like strength, and yet not strength *enough*, and flamedst aloft, and wert trodden down of sin and misery; behold, thou also wert a man!"'

Danton and Robespierre were the two men who brought the Revolution to a lurid and horrible conclusion, and by their excesses created a reaction of feeling which rendered possible the reign of the Corsican brigand, Napoleon.

The lesson, I think, taught by those events was this, that no nation can pass with one stride from despotism to order and liberty; and for this reason: the vices engendered by despotism are so great that it takes years for a people to free themselves from their degrading influences; and, before that is accomplished, full and perfect liberty is not for that people.

Still, the first step towards liberty and law is to shake off the chains of despotism.

But the French Revolution, with all its crimes and horrors, was an awakening of the people from a sleep of death.

Before they could bask beneath the glorious sun of liberty, they had to be scathed by the terrible lightning of revolution. How can men and women, degraded and outraged into wild beasts, be at once reasonable and moderate? Those who turn men and women into wild beasts must bear the penalty for their neglect of duty. We have arrived at maturity

now, and when wild and foolish men and frantic women talk of violence and blood, we should tell them that those days are passed: we call for more light; the days of revolutionary lightning are over.



BÉRANGER.



# BÉRANGER.

## THE FRENCH BURNS.

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BÉRANGER was born on the 19th August, 1780, at the house of his grandfather, a tailor. His first names were Peter John—apostolic names rather appropriate to a poet who had a distinct message to deliver, and who was not afraid to deliver it in the most emphatic and caustic manner. His father was a witty, clever, energetic man, who had the impudence not to be satisfied with his wretched condition, and despite of the prayer-book and the priests—who are, of course, never ambitious themselves—tried to rise to something higher and better.

He made some claim to a noble ancestry, but our poet laughed at such pretensions and gloried in being one of the people, as we shall hear presently in one of his best songs, 'Le Vilain.'

He lived with his grandfather, the tailor, nine years, and witnessed the taking of the Bastille.

Forty years later, in 1829, he was imprisoned in La Force jail for celebrating that event in terms too glowing for the long ears of Charles X. and his flunkeys. A short time after the glorious Bastille day he was sent to his aunt, who lived at Péronne and kept a wine-shop there. She was very good to the boy and fostered his young genius, and, I am glad to say, lived to be proud of it. This aunt had copies of Fénelon, Racine, and Voltaire, which the boy eagerly devoured.

From his aunt he received much pious and moral instruction. The religious teaching did not appear to cling to the bright, sharp, sarcastic boy. On one occasion he was rendered senseless by a thunder-bolt which struck the house. At the beginning of the storm his aunt had sprinkled the threshold and room with holy water of the best quality. When the boy recovered his senses he said to his aunt, 'What was the good of the holy water you threw about? It did not save me!' At about this time the fiery strains of the 'Marseillaise' fired our young poet's blood.

At fourteen years of age Béranger entered the printing-house of M. Laisné, and there he first learnt the rules of grammar. But the school to which he owed most was that of M. Ballue de Bel-langlise, ancient deputy of the Chamber. This gentleman was an enthusiastic admirer of Rousseau, and endeavoured to carry out his principles of education. The boys wore a military costume; at each great public event they named deputations,



delivered addresses, made speeches, and wrote to Robespierre or Tallien. Young Béranger was the orator, and wrote the best addresses. These exercises awakened his taste, helped to form his style, extended his knowledge of history and geography, and in addition made him take an interest in public events, and thus married his ardent young heart to his beloved country. But, dreadful to relate, no one taught him Latin, and worse still, he proved his possession of genius without it; that was perhaps better than proving his pedantry and stupidity with it. Béranger studied French translations of the great Greek and Latin authors, and it appears to me that he thoroughly mastered their spirit, without slavishly copying their forms. Then his study of Montaigne, the immortal Rabelais, Molière, and La Fontaine had been profound: their influence is perceptible in every page he has written.

At seventeen Béranger, furnished with the excellent moral teachings of his good aunt, and with his intellectual faculties thoroughly alive, returned to his father in Paris.

At eighteen our young poet felt the desire to write verse steal into his heart. This desire was awakened by a visit he paid to the theatre. He wrote a satirical comedy, where he laughed at coxcombs and fools, and at vain and affected women. But his appreciation of Molière and La Fontaine was too keen for him not to realise that his work was very poor stuff. So like a fine gritty fellow he set to work again to study these masters of satire

and comedy, analysing every little trait and detail, until he was able to divine and appreciate his own talent.

Still, his dramatic attempts served their end ; in my opinion they gave that racy, vivid, dramatic character to his poems which renders them quite unique in literature. Like La Fontaine's fables, Béranger's best songs are delightful little plays. But the boy was too young to be a satirist. He thought he would write an epic poem : Clovis was the hero he chose. The preparation for the gigantic task would take years ; but in the meantime he felt the bitter grip of poverty and hunger. He thought then of becoming a soldier, but fortunately was dissuaded from carrying out that project. But this bitter time had its sweet compensations. He lived in a garret, it is true, but he made friends with the people ; he turned his coat when one side was too shabby, but he learnt the hard, cruel facts of life, and how to do very well on very little. Some of his brightest poems were written during that time of privation. In the garret many friends met, and the laughter was louder and heartier, and better-natured, too, than the polite snigger one hears in conventional drawing-rooms. The good temper, the many interests, the good opinion genius has of itself and the contempt it cannot help feeling for respectable windbags and humbugs, made Béranger's poverty a thousand times happier than the dull, bovine pleasures of rich snobs.

When the poet was an old man, in writing to a

lady friend, he says of these days of his youth, outwardly so hard :—

‘ At that time I was so poor that a day’s pleasure cost me eight days’ fast. Still, in thinking of those old times when, without help—often without daily bread—without instruction, I dreamt of future fame, but did not neglect the little pleasures of to-day, my eyes overflow with tears. Oh, what a beautiful thing is youth, when it can spread its charm even over old age, that time so disenchanted and so poor! Employ well that which remains to you, my dear friend. Love and let yourself be loved. I have known that happiness ; it is the greatest in life.’

Béranger was drawn from his poverty by the hand of Lucien Buonaparte, brother of the First Consul. This was one cause for the liking he had for the family, in which I can’t agree with him.

Châteaubriand’s genius had great influence on Béranger, so great that he wrote a religious poem on the Deluge and other scriptural subjects. I need not say that our caustic, witty, genial poet did not shine in these efforts. But no one could shine in the Deluge : it would be too damp. Conversing one day with an Academician and poet, Béranger said that when he wrote of the sea, he called it the sea and not the realm of Neptune, and did not even once mention Amphitrite, Tethys, and Co. The Academician was lost in astonishment at the boldness of a man who dared to leave out the names sacred to conventional poetry.

Thanks to a friend, Béranger was made clerk to the University, and occupied this post, which produced him 2000 francs yearly, for ten years.

In 1821 his political poems cost him his situation.

But this is rather anticipating. The 2000 francs (80*l.*) satisfied amply the simple wants of Béranger. He understood the Spartan lesson, that to preserve one's independence it is necessary to learn to simplify one's wants. A crust of bread and a glass of wine sufficed for him. He sang like a bird, and could live on nearly as little. Not that he did not like good cheer, but he was equal to either fortune: master of Fortune instead of her slave. But our friend Béranger was a terrible fellow. He was like a bull in a china-shop. He thought nothing at all of making fun of kings, princes, senators, as we shall hear presently; aye, of bishops, cardinals, and even of the Pope himself. He had the supreme audacity of preferring a poor, honest man to a rich, greasy rascal. What an awful man! I almost feel my hair stand on end! Smug, canting respectability made him angry. No wonder he lost his place, poor as it was. He looked every one he met full in the eyes; and people with fishy, dishonest, mean eyes did not like the keen, flashing glance of our sarcastic poet. He gave a man just the amount of respect or scorn he was entitled to—no more and no less; so that every charlatan, humbug, and fool was his bitter enemy. And when we come to consider how many charlatans, humbugs, and fools there are in this world, one can imagine that Béranger lived

and died a poor man ; in fact he was locked up by the rogues for being honest. Now a few words about his personal appearance. He was a little man, his figure not much to speak of ; but his head was superb. The intellectual and distinguished brow marked him out at once as a king of men : his eyes were piercingly bright—full of fire, humour, and tenderness ; his mouth was large, the lips full, and I must admit, sensual—sweet or caustic, according to circumstances ; the mouth, in fact, of a richly endowed man of genius. Indeed, I don't know a finer head and face, or a countenance displaying more genius, rich humour and wit, than Béranger's.

The poets and wits of the Cave received Béranger as a member in 1813. At this time he wrote some of his highly-spiced poems, such as the 'Infidelities of Lisette,' the 'Orgies,' the 'Bacchante,' &c. He had not at that time discovered his true mission, which was to sing, as no one had sung before, the joys and sorrows of the people, and to introduce a distinct dramatic element into popular song. It was some years before he ventured, when at table with some literary friends, to sing one of these songs. He began with a faltering voice, but the passionate applause which greeted his effort taught him where his chief strength lay. He never forgot that lesson. Invitations to the gilded *salons* of fashion, to the court itself, were refused ; and he became the poet of the French people, putting into beautiful verse, full of wit, genius, and tenderness, their hopes, their sorrows, and their aspirations, not to mention their

bitter contempt for hypocrites and flunkeys. The public loved his songs so passionately that when his first collection was printed, the people knew them already by heart. A new song was passed from hand to hand, committed to memory and sung in the streets, until it was known by everybody.

Five editions of Béranger's works were published during his life; the first in 1815, the second in 1821, the third in 1825, the fourth in 1828, and the fifth in 1835. The first edition was very racy and gay; the third edition, which appeared during the ministry of M. de Villele, and the fifth did not cause the prosecution of Béranger. The edition of 1821, however, attacked by M. de Marchangy, cost our poet three months' imprisonment; that of 1828 sent him to jail for nine months. While the poet was behind the bars of his prison, the people were singing his songs under them and throughout France, in spite of the tender susceptibilities of those in power. So that while the beloved defender of the rights and liberties of the people was in jail, their betrayers, the slaves of power, were in palaces. I would rather have been the poet. I will now introduce to the reader's notice some of Béranger's songs, using the capital versions of John Oxenford.

I have tried to arrange the poems selected in a way that, I trust, will illustrate the life of the poet of the French people, the French Burns, and teach us to love truth more, and trust kings, courtiers, and priests less than ever.

The first song was composed during the early part of our poet's career, and is addressed to his coat.

My poor old coat, be faithful to the end :

We both grow old ; ten years have gone, [friend ;  
Through which my hand has brushed thee, ancient  
Not more could Socrates have done.

Now weakened to a threadbare state,

Thou still must suffer many a blow ;  
E'en like thy master, brave the storms of fate ;  
My good old coat, we'll never part—Oh, no !

I still can well remember the first day

I wore thee, for my memory's strong ;  
It was my birthday, and my comrades gay  
Chanted thy fashion in a song.

Thy poverty might make me vain ;

The friends who loved me long ago,  
Though thou art poor, will drink to thee again ;  
My good old coat, we'll never part—Oh, no !

This fine-drawn rent—its cause I'll ne'er forget ;

It beams upon my memory still :  
I feigned one night to fly from my Lisette,  
And even now her grasp I feel.

She tore thee, but she made more fast

My fetters, while she wronged me so ;  
Then two whole days in mending thee she passed :  
My dear old coat, we'll never part—Oh, no !

Ne'er drugged with musk and amber hast thou been,

Like coats by vapid coxcombs worn ;  
Ne'er in an antechamber wert thou seen,  
Insulted by some lordling's scorn.

How slavishly all France has eyed  
 The hands that ribbons can bestow !  
 The field-flower is thy ornament and pride,—  
 My good old coat, we'll never part—Oh, no !

We shall not have those foolish days again,  
 When our two destinies were one ;  
 Those days so full of pleasure and of pain ;  
 Those days of mingled rain and sun.  
 I somehow think, my faithful friend,  
 That to a coatless realm I go ;  
 Yet wait awhile, together we will end,—  
 My good old coat, we'll never part—Oh, no !

The next song is one of Béranger's best, and is  
 entitled—

### MY VOCATION.

Flung down upon this earth,  
 Weak, sickly, ugly, small ;  
 Half stifled by the mob,  
 And pushed about by all ;  
 I utter heavy sighs,  
 To Fate complaints I bring,  
 When lo ! kind Heaven cries,  
 'Sing, little poet, sing.'

The gilded cars of state,  
 Bespattering, pass me by ;  
 None from the haughty great  
 Have suffered more than I.



I feel my bosom rise  
 Against the venom'd sting,  
 But still kind Heaven cries,  
 'Sing, little poet, sing.'

In early days I learned  
 A doubtful life to dread,  
 And no employment spurned  
 To earn my daily bread.  
 Though liberty I prize,  
 My stomach claims can bring ;  
 Yet still kind Heaven cries,  
 'Sing, little poet, sing.'

Sweet love has often deigned  
 My poverty to cheer ;  
 But now my youth has waned,  
 I see its flight is near.  
 Stern beauties now despise  
 The tribute I can bring ;  
 Yet still kind Heaven cries,  
 'Sing, little poet, sing.'

To sing—or I mistake—  
 Is my appointed task ;  
 Those whom to joy I wake,  
 To love me may I ask ?  
 With friends to glad mine eyes,  
 With wine mine heart to wing,  
 Kind Heaven still to me cries,  
 'Sing, little poet, sing.'

Now for a song where Béranger strikes, with a strong, nervous hand, a sterner, stronger chord,

and shows how revolutions are brought about and justified.

JACK.

Jack ! wake from your slumber if you can,  
 For here's a fellow tall and stout,  
 Who through the village sniffs about :  
 He's coming for your tax, poor man.  
 So out of bed, Jack, quickly spring,  
 And pay the taxes of the king.

The sun is up—why thus delay ?  
 You never were so hard to waken.  
 Old Remi's furniture they've taken  
 For sale, before the close of day.  
 So out of bed, Jack, quickly spring,  
 And pay the taxes of the king.

By these hard taxes, poor as rats,  
 Unhappy wretches we are made :  
 My distaff only, and your spade,  
 Keeps us, my father, and our brats.  
 So out of bed, Jack, quickly spring,  
 And pay the taxes of the king.

Our land, with this small hovel, makes  
 A quarter acre—they are sure ;  
 The poor man's tears are its manure,  
 And usury the harvest takes.  
 Our work is hard, our gain so small,  
 We ne'er shall taste of meat, I fear,  
 For food has grown so very dear,  
 With everything—the salt and all.

A drink of wine new heart might bring ;  
But then the wine is taxed as well ;  
Still, never mind, love, go and sell,  
To buy a cup, my wedding-ring.  
Dream you of wealth, of some good change,  
That fate at last its grip relaxes ?  
What to the wealthy are the taxes ?  
Mere mice that nibble in the grange.  
So out of bed, Jack, quickly spring,  
And pay the taxes of the king.

He comes ! O, heavens ! what must I fear ?  
Your cheek is pale, no word you say ;  
You spoke of suff'ring yesterday,  
You, who so much in silence bear.  
She calls in vain—extinct is life.  
For those whom labour has worn out,  
A welcome end is death, no doubt :  
Pray, all good people, for his wife.  
So out of bed he could not spring—  
He paid his tax to Death, the king.

I have ventured to alter the last two lines.

In the following most dramatic and powerful poem, Béranger shows his sympathy with Napoleonic ideas ; but I think it was written to express his loathing of the Bourbons more than his love of Napoleon.

An old soldier, one of the Grand Army, has been insulted by a young sprig of nobility ; the veteran strikes him and is condemned to death. He is being led to execution.

## THE OLD CORPORAL.

Come, gallant comrades, move apace ;  
 With shouldered musket march away ;  
 I've got my pipe and your embrace,  
 So quickly give me my *congé*.  
 Too old I in the service grew,  
 But rather useful I could be  
 As father of the drill to you.  
     March merrily,  
     And do not weep,  
     Or sadly creep ;  
 No, comrades ! march on merrily.

An officer—an upstart swell—  
 Insulted me—I broke his head ;  
 I'm to be shot—he's getting well :  
     Your corporal will die instead.  
 My wrath and brandy fired me so,  
     I cared for nought—and then, d'ye see,  
 I served the great man long ago.

Young conscripts—you, I'm sure, will not  
 Lose arms or legs a cross to get ;  
 The cross you see me wear I got  
     In wars, where kings were overset.  
 You willingly would stand a drink,  
     Old battle-tales to hear from me ;  
 Still, glory's something, I must think.

You, Robert, who wert born and bred  
 In mine own village—mind your sheep ;  
 Soon April will its beauties shed,  
     And garden trees cast shadows deep.

At dawn of day I've sought the wood,  
 And, oh, what pleasures fell to me !  
 My mother lives—well, Heaven is good !  
     March merrily,  
     And do not weep,  
     Or slowly creep ;  
 But, old friends, march on merrily.

Who is it that stands blubb'ring there ?  
 Is it the drummer's widow, pray ?  
 In Russia, through the icy air,  
     Her son I carried, night and day ;  
 Else, like his father, in the snows  
     They both had died—her child and she :  
 She's praying for me, I suppose.  
     March merrily,  
     And do not weep,  
     Or sadly creep ;  
 But, comrades, march on merrily.

Hang it ! my pipe has just gone out ;  
 No, no, I'm merry—so ne'er mind.  
 This is our journey's end, no doubt :  
     My eyes, I pray you, do not bind.  
 Be careful, friends—don't fire too low :  
     I'm grieved so troublesome to be ;  
 Good-bye—to heaven I hope you'll go.  
     March merrily,  
     And do not weep,  
     Or sadly creep ;  
 But, comrades, march on merrily.

The following poem, in quite another key, was

written during the Restoration, and recalls the sanguine hopes of the enthusiastic boy-poet. The poem is supposed to be addressed to the actress who impersonated the Goddess of Reason, then young and fascinating, now old and wrinkled :—

### THE GODDESS.

And is it you, who once appeared so fair,  
 Whom a whole people followed to adore,  
 And, thronging after your triumphant chair,  
 Called you by her great name whose flag you bore?  
 Flushed with the acclamations of the crowd,  
 Conscious of beauty (you were fair to see),  
 With your new glory you were justly proud,  
 Goddess of Liberty!

Over the Gothic ruins as you passed,  
 Your train of brave defenders swept along;  
 And in your pathway flow'ry wreaths were cast,  
 While virgins' hymns mixed with the battle-song.  
 I, a poor orphan, in misfortune bred—  
 For fate her bitterest cup allotted me—  
 Cried, 'Be a parent in my mother's stead,  
 Goddess of Liberty!'

Foul deeds were done that glorious time to shame;  
 But that—a simple child—I did not know:  
 I felt delight to spell my country's name,  
 And thought with horror of the foreign foe.  
 All armed against the enemy's attack;  
 We were so poor, but yet we were so free.  
 Give me those happy days of childhood back,  
 Goddess of Liberty!

Like a volcano, which its ashes flings  
 Until its fire is smothered by their fall,  
 The people sleep : the foe his balance brings,  
 And says, ' We'll weigh thy treasure, upstart Gaul.'  
 When to high Heaven our drunken vows we paid,  
 And worship e'en to beauty dared decree,  
 You were our dream—the shadow of a shade,  
 Goddess of Liberty !

Again I see you—time has fled too fast :  
 Your eyes are lustreless and loveless now ;  
 And when I speak about the glorious past,  
 A blush of shame o'erspreads your wrinkled brow.  
 Still, be consoled ; you did not fall alone ;  
 Though lost thy youth, car, altar, flowers may be,  
 Virtue and glory too are with thee gone,  
 Goddess of Liberty !

So that if the Revolution was stained with crime,  
 the Restoration was altogether infamous. The fol-  
 lowing rollicking song was written in May, 1813,  
 and is full of genial satire :—

#### THE KING OF YVETOT.

There was a King of Yvetot,  
 Who, little famed in story,  
 Went soon to bed, to rise was slow,  
 And slumbered without glory.  
 'Twas Jenny crowned the jolly chap  
 With nothing but a cotton cap,  
 Mayhap.  
 Ho ! ho ! ho ! ho ! ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !  
 What a famous king was he, oh la !

Within his thatched palace, he  
 Consumed his four meals daily ;  
 He rode about, his realm to see,  
 Upon a donkey, gaily ;  
 Besides his dog, no guard he had,  
 He hoped for good when things were bad,  
 Ne'er sad.

Ho ! ho ! ho ! ho ! ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !  
 What a famous king was he, oh la !

No costly tastes his soul possessed,  
 Except a taste for drinking,  
 And kings who make their subjects blest,  
 Should live well, to my thinking ;  
 At table he his taxes got,  
 From each one's cask he took a pot,  
 I wot.

Ho ! ho ! ho ! ho ! ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !  
 What a famous king was this, oh la !

With ladies, too, of high degree  
 He was a fav'rite, rather,  
 And of his subjects I suspect  
 Rather too much a father.  
 He never called out troops,  
 Except to shoot the target, and then  
 He called them all his men.

Ho ! ho ! ho ! ho ! ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !  
 What a famous king was he, oh la !

He did not widen his estates  
 Beyond their proper measure ;  
 A model to all potentates,  
 His only work was pleasure.



And 'twas not till the day he died,  
 His faithful subjects ever sighed  
 Or cried.

Ho ! ho ! ho ! ho ! ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !  
 What a famous king was he, oh la !

This wise and worthy monarch's face  
 Is still in preservation,  
 And as a sign it serves to grace  
 An inn of reputation.

On holidays, a joyous rout  
 Before it push their mugs about  
 And shout,

Ho ! ho ! ho ! ho ! ha ! ha ! ha ! ha !  
 What a famous king was he, oh la !

Before concluding my very imperfect sketch of Béranger, for whom I hope the reader feels a friendly interest, I will quote one of the finest songs ever written ; it is equal to the best of Burns's. I cannot say more, and it would be unjust to say less. I will venture to use my own version of 'Le Vilain.' The poet was sometimes spoken of as *de Béranger*.

#### LOW BORN.

So, I learn, some criticise  
 The *de* before my name ;  
 Are you then of blue blood ?  
 No !—well I can say the same.  
 My humble name is of the lowest rank ;  
 I have no haughty title-deeds to show.  
 I love my country, that is all ;  
 My birth was low, O, very low !

I should not have a *de* before my name,  
 Because, if in my heart I read aright,  
 My fathers must have curst the power of kings ;  
 In which, in truth, I don't delight.  
 I love my country, that is all ;  
 My birth was low, O, very low !

My fathers never to despair drove the poor serf ;  
 Never their noble swords have drunk the blood of  
                   unarmed men ;  
 Never when tired of this have they  
 To dirty work of courts said their ' Amen !'  
 I love my country, that is all ;  
 My birth was low, O, very low !

In civil wars my ancestors did not take part ;  
 They ne'er to their own land a foreign foe invited,  
 Nor when the Church to crush the people tried,  
 To blacker deeds incited.  
 I love my country that is all ;  
 My birth was low, O, very low !

Leave me alone is all I ask,  
 Aristos, with the turned-up nose ;  
 Nobles of the button-hole,  
 Born legislators, go and doze !  
 I honour honest labour,  
 'Tis to pride I deal my blow,  
 I only bow to sorrow ;  
 For I am low, O, very low !  
 I love my country, that is all ;  
 My birth was low, O, very low !

Dr. Charles Mackay, in his vividly graphic and

brightly written *Forty Years' Recollections*, published by Messrs. Chapman and Hall, paints a most characteristic portrait of the poet and wit, Béranger, with whom he breakfasted in 1847. The poet was then living at Passy, and, singular to say, the other guest was, perhaps, the most intensely religious and enthusiastic humanitarian of the time: Lamennais, between whom and Béranger, in spite of the immense gulf dividing their characters and opinions, there was a warm and intimate friendship.

Dr. Mackay was conducted to a little front-room in which breakfast was placed. After waiting a few minutes, the poet entered and cordially welcomed his visitor, who found his likeness to Maclise's portrait which had appeared in *Fraser* very striking. Béranger was dressed in dressing-gown and slippers.

A woman of about sixty years of age waited on them. She bore in her face traces of youthful beauty, and made Dr. Mackay think of the famous Lisette of Béranger's early, passionate days. But Lamennais informed him that Lisette had disappeared from the poet's world many years ago, and had married or emigrated; or, perhaps, was, to a very great extent, made up from many Lisettes.

'Béranger' (to quote Dr. Mackay) 'had a broad, capacious forehead, a very bald head, and a good-natured, benign, but somewhat slovenly appearance.'

We all remember the lines to his dear old coat!

‘He looked like a man who would not encourage trouble to come to his door, much less to take up its abode in his house. He was encased in such a smooth, well-soldered, and well-fitting armour of Epicurean content, as to defy the stings and arrows of fate to pierce it, or even annoy him [he had learned by experience to properly estimate the “sweet voices”]; a good, easy man, who took things as they came, was satisfied with little, fond of the sunshine and of small enjoyments, a Diogenes in his contempt of outward show and in independence of character, but with a real, unaffected good-nature to which Diogenes had no pretensions.’

There was a good deal of the cool Epicureanism of the polished pagan, Horace, in Béranger, in addition to the popular racy richness and splendid humour of Burns.

‘Béranger, was in fact a *bonhomme* in the French sense of the phrase—kindly, without guile or thought of evil; fond of his pleasures, but never dreaming of doing harm to any one in order to obtain them; a very child in his simplicity; and yet a very wise man in his knowledge of the world. . . . Béranger impressed me with the idea that he was the most Parisian of all the Parisians I had ever met; the most unmitigated *badaud*, living in Paris for the sake of Paris, and with no thoughts but such as Paris inspired. . . . He had never seen a mountain in his life; and worse than all, did not remember to have seen the ocean, or heard the solemn music of the shore. . . . He loved flowers, he said, and a little garden; but he could not dis-

tinguish one tree from another by its name, and thought the trees of the Tuileries gardens, the Champs Elysées, or the Bois de Boulogne, superior to the groves of Tempe, Arcadia, Dodona, or Vallombrosa. He was so unaffected, so genial, so honest, so modest, and so kind, that it was impossible to be long in his company without feeling affection for him; and he was over and above all, so shrewd and sagacious—or, as the Scotch say, so “canny,”—that it was equally impossible to avoid feeling respect.’

The above pen-and-ink portrait is masterly, and depicts the granite common sense of Béranger on which wit and imagination played like sunshine on a rock. Before finishing, I must quote the worldly-wise and level-headed reply of the poet to one of the high flights of Lamennais’ transcendentalism. It is not difficult to imagine the sly twinkle in the bright eyes of the poet and the *nuance* of irony in the tone of the voice.

‘I own my inferiority to the Abbé,’ said Béranger. ‘He dreams of the future, and his dreams are all celestial. I never dream of the future, but content myself with to-day. I take the actual world as I see it; and, all things considered, come to the conclusion that the world has never been very much better than it is, and that it never will be. Our English friend thinks I have done much to encourage my countrymen in the love and admiration of the Great Napoleon. I never wished to do so. I recognise Napoleon’s high qualities. When he was in power, I passed my opinion freely on his errors. When he was dying in lonely misery on the

rocks of St. Helena, I forgot his faults and only remembered his glory and his calamities. But I want no revival of his glory or his system in our day. The Republic—with as much liberty, equality, and fraternity as we can command—that is my ideal of a government, and what I hope France will arrive at sooner or later: through perplexities, perils, and bloodshed, perhaps; but predestined, and therefore certain, whatever may be the sufferings that may fall upon us before the end is reached. Of one thing we are all certain, the present *régime* cannot last. France is a proud nation, and *ce roi bonhomme*, as people once called him—*cet épicier poltron*, as they call him now—will not long be permitted to sit on his present seat. We are not a very moral nation [in that feature of the national character, how admirably Béranger represented the French people; also in his detestation of the ridiculous and contemptible. Forgive crime and immorality? Yes. Meanness, vulgarity, and absurdity? No! Rochefort made Napoleon III. impossible because he made him appear absurd]; but the immorality of his Spanish intrigues is somewhat too much for us.'

Béranger was not an atheist. He believed in a God. In his own words: 'There is a God: to Him I bow; poor but asking nothing.'

The delicious touch 'as much liberty, equality, and fraternity as we can command' is the very key to Béranger's power as a writer. Genius is after all common sense in its sublimest form. A few months after this memorable conversation, the Revolution of 1848 confirmed the prophecy of the keen-

sighted poet; and the *épicier poltron*, accompanied by his umbrella and preceded by immense wealth, visited the country favoured by his bad faith and insults. Béranger died in his seventy-seventh year, on the 16th July, 1857. One hundred thousand troops lined the streets from the poet-patriot's humble lodging to his grave. But that demonstration showed fear and not love. Truly, genius is like a consuming fire. Imagine the Brummagem Cæsar trembling before the dead body of the poor poet!





VICTOR HUGO.



## VICTOR HUGO.

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THE father of Victor Hugo, Joseph Leopold Hugo, entered the army as cadet, at the age of fourteen years, in 1788. He became the friend of Kleber and Desaix, who continued his friends until their deaths. He was always distinguished by his loyalty to truth, justice and mercy. But Victor Hugo has painted the noble and beautiful character of his father in an exquisite poem, entitled—

### AFTER THE BATTLE.

My sire, the hero with the smile so soft,  
And a big trooper, his companion oft,  
Whom he loved greatly for his courage high  
And stature, as the night drew nigh  
Rode out together. The battle was done.  
The dead strewed the field. Long sunk was the sun.  
It seemed in the darkness a sound they heard,  
A feeble moan or some half-uttered word.  
'Twas a Spaniard from the army in flight,  
Shattered and livid and more than half dead ;  
Rattled his throat as quite faintly he said,—  
' Water—water to drink, for pity's sake !  
Oh,—one drop of water my thirst to slake !'

And my father, moved at these words heart-wrung  
The flask of wine at his saddle that hung  
To his trooper handed, who sharp down sprung.  
' Let him drink his fill,' cried my father ; and ran  
The trooper to the sorely wounded man,  
A sort of Moor, swarthy, bloody, and grim ;  
But soon as the trooper had bent o'er him  
He seized his pistol, turned fiercely about,  
And aimed at my father's head with a shout.  
The ball passed so near that its whistling sound  
He heard, while his cap fell pierced to the ground,  
And his horse reared back with terror aghast :  
' Give him the drink,' said my father, and passed.

The mother of Victor was the daughter of a Royalist and Catholic who resided at Nantes, and confounded in one passion his love of God and the king. He had three daughters ; and one of them, Sophie, became the mother of Victor Hugo. Leopold Hugo was then a major in the Republican army : a handsome, spirited officer, who had distinguished himself as much by humanity as bravery. Sophie was a small, delicate, spirited girl, with tiny hands and feet, and she made very short work with the major's heart. This marriage was at last made, and the young couple commenced their married life in a bright, brave, and humble way. As they had very little money, of course the children came without unnecessary delay. The two first were Abel and Eugène ; the third was the subject of this sketch. He was a poor little delicate fellow, without the good looks of his brothers ; in fact, the doctor said he

would not live. His mother described him as no longer than a knife. When the fragile little infant was first dressed, he was placed on a chair, which would have held a dozen like him. His brothers were then called to see him. He was so ugly, and it was his mother who said so, and looked so little like a human being, that Eugène, who was a big boy and could hardly speak, called him a little brat!

And this puny, contemptible body contained the germ of the greatest and noblest poetical genius since Shakespeare. The greatest miracle I can conceive is this: that a little piece of pink squalling humanity can contain the potential powers of a Raphael, a Mozart, a Beethoven, a Shakespeare, or a Victor Hugo!

All other miracles become commonplace when compared with this one.

Although the baby was half dead, his birth was officially recorded as taking place on the 26th of February, 1802, under the name of Victor Marie Hugo. But the half-dead did not die.

He has said, with touching pathos and tearful humour, '*What pure milk, what ardent wishes, made him twice the child of his obstinate mother.*' What a stupendous debt the world owes to that mother! Statues ought to be raised in her honour! But, perhaps, while we raise so many hideous monuments to the destroyers of life, we had better not raise any to preservers of it. Victor's parents hoped for a girl after the two first boys, a Victorine instead of a Victor. And when the boy was convinced that his

father and mother were not really angry with him for not being a girl, and that instead of wanting to get rid of him, were determined to retain him, he made up his mind to live.

And six weeks after the doctor had prophesied his death, he made the long journey from Besançon to Marseilles.

The following letter was written from Paris by Madame Hugo to her husband:—

‘Thy Victor enters, he kisses me, I kiss him for you, and make him kiss this place in my letter [there was here a blank space] so that you can find in your absence something of him. I have just given him some bonbons, of which I always keep a collection in my drawer. He goes out sadly sucking them.’

Victor remembers going to school in the Rue du Mont Blanc, where he made his first theatrical appearance in *Geneviève de Brabant*, Mlle. Rose, the daughter of the schoolmaster, sustaining the part of the heroine. Little Victor was dressed in a sheepskin and was armed with a short lance. He was very wearied with the performance, of which he comprehended nothing, and amused himself in the most pathetic part of the play by striking the point of his lance in the leg of Mlle. Rose, who, to the astonishment of the audience, exclaimed, ‘Leave off, you little villain!’ So that his first appearance on any stage was a decided failure.

Madame Hugo and her three boys joined her

husband in Italy, and followed him to Naples and Madrid, where General Hugo was made Marshal of the Palace by Joseph Bonaparte. This incessant travelling did not advance the education, at least apparently, of the boys; and their father decided that Madame Hugo should return to Paris and superintend their education.

Madame Hugo found a house in the Rue Feuillantines, No. 12; the proprietor occupied one part of the house and she the other. The house had been a convent, and there was a long, large garden. The boys were enchanted; their legs and eyes were not enough. Every moment they made new discoveries. 'Do you know what I have found? You have seen nothing! Look here! Look there! There is a row of chestnuts! There are more flowers than one could dream! And there are parts of the garden as wild as the woods! Why, there is so much fruit that we cannot pick it all!'

It was late autumn, and the grapes were ripe; the proprietor gave the children permission to pick them, and they returned intoxicated with pleasure, and smeared to the roots of their hair with the juice. But the serious claims of education interfered with this idyllic life. The two boys, Victor and Eugène, were sent to a very simple school, kept by a man and his wife who taught the three R's to workmen's children. When the schoolmaster commenced teaching little Victor reading, he was surprised to find that he had learned simply by looking at the letters. Then when school was over, what glorious

fun the boys had in the garden, of which they had undisputed possession.

Madame Hugo passed three years in Paris before she received a message from her husband inviting her to join him in Spain with her children. The boys commenced the study of Spanish, and in six weeks could speak the language.

In 1811, Madame Hugo prepared for her journey to Spain, where her husband did good service to Joseph Bonaparte, who had been seated on a very shaky throne by Napoleon. Even the garden lost its charm before the vision of a visit to Spain, and the prospect of embracing their father.

At last Madame Hugo, her three sons, and two servants, with as many of their belongings as they could carry in a diligence, arrived at Bayonne, where they learned they could not proceed for a month, because the escort would not be ready till then. I need hardly say that it would have been very unwise to travel then without an escort.

The next day a most extraordinary bepatched and bedizened gentleman waited on Madame Hugo, who turned out to be the director of the theatre, and begged her to take a box for the time of her stay. To the immense delight of the boys, she consented. A month of the theatre—it was too, too much! Every day a new performance—it was intoxicating! It was a great event formerly to visit the theatre now and then. The boys had lived on one performance for a year. That very night there was to be a repre-



sentation. The boys could not eat. They were at the theatre before the chandelier was lit. They admired the box draped with red calico, bestuck with yellow rosettes. They were not even weary with waiting; the theatre and the arrival of the audience amused them. When the band played a short overture very much out of tune they were delighted. The play was *The Ruins of Babylon*. It was all beautiful. There was a good genius, splendidly attired like a troubadour, whose appearances were looked for with eager interest; but his magnificent mantle and interminable plume were nothing to the scene of the dungeon. The victim of the tyrant naturally takes refuge in an underground retreat, where the good genius visits her with food and cheerful conversation. The boys enjoyed this piece for four successive nights. On the fifth they discovered that the hero talked through his nose. The sixth they went to sleep at the very climax of the interest. The seventh they begged their mother to allow them *not* to visit the play.

Madame Hugo lodged with a widow who had one daughter, a little girl of ten years of age. Victor was nine, and when his brothers went to see the troops exercise, he remained with the girl. She would say to him, 'Come with me, and I will read something to amuse you.' She would lead him to a corner where there were some stone steps, seat herself by his side, and read something interesting of which he did not hear a word, because he was so occupied in looking at the reader. She had dark

eyes, and her skin, smooth and transparent, had the delicate whiteness of a camellia. Victor looked at his ease while her eyes were fixed on the book. When she looked up his face became crimson. At times she would be angry with him for his lack of attention; then she would angrily say, 'Pay attention, or I will not read to you.' He would protest that he was paying attention, in order to induce her to lower her eyes to her book again.

Victor Hugo has since said that every one can find in his past these infantine love affairs, which are to real love what the grey light of dawn is to the full blaze of midday.

Thirty-three years later, in 1844, Victor Hugo revisited Bayonne. His first journey was to the house of the widow. Was it the memory of the widow or the girl-reader that attracted him? He found the house, but the stone steps they used to sit upon were gone. No one could tell him anything of the widow or of her daughter. Since then he has seen and heard nothing of either. This was Victor Hugo's first love affair.

I should like to linger over the voyage to Madrid, where, after many troubles and dangers, the family arrived to find only a letter from the husband and father who had been compelled to leave Madrid, for a time.

Madame Hugo arrived at the Palace Masserano, the residence of General Hugo, where the steward of the Prince Masserano received and conducted her to her apartments. On the first floor they were dazzled

by a splendid room. The antechamber was very large; the dining-room was ornamented by original works by Raphael and Romano; the salon was hung with crimson damask, the boudoir with blue damask, and lighted by two windows looking into two streets; the bed-chamber was hung with blue damask ornamented with silver; a large gallery, which was intended for receptions, was hung with the portraits of the ancestors of the prince; everything, in short, was of an incomparable opulence and taste. Gilding, sculpture, Bohemian glass, Venetian lustres, vases from China and Japan, were lavishly displayed in every room and passage. The children, Victor especially, were enraptured. Madame Hugo even began to think Madrid might be bearable. She was delighted with her bright bedroom, with its two windows looking on the cheerful, busy streets. But the first night in it—not of rest—broke the charm! I am almost afraid to go on—but 'tis my duty and I will!!

The magnificent hangings and the blue and silver curtains were inhabited—*horresco referens*—by millions of vermin, whose bloodthirsty appetites were insatiable!! Madame Hugo put the legs of the bedstead in pails of water, but the unsavoury insects dropped from the ceiling. She deserted the princely chamber, and took refuge in an almost bare room without hangings, curtains, or carpets, but it was of no use; the palace swarmed with vermin, and I suppose a change of diet was a treat—there was no escape. She had to cultivate a haughty Spanish in-

difference. The real Spaniard folds his cloak around him, and smiles a haughty smile as the little insects try to destroy his majestic calm.

Eight days after the arrival of Madame Hugo a troop of Westphalians arrived at the palace with a letter from General Hugo. The soldiers were General Hugo's guard, and lived at the palace. Imagine the delight of the boys with the soldiers and horses! The men also brought with them the luggage of the general, who sent a request to his wife to air his regimentals. The boys, of course, wanted to assist their mother, and watched with open mouths and dilated eyes their father's magnificent uniforms, gay with gold lace, embroidery, and splendid plumes, as their mother opened box after box. Madame left the room for a time, and on her return found little Victor almost smothered in an enormous helmet, and terrifying his brothers and himself with the paternal sabre.

But we must now pass over this delightful period of boyhood, over which I am afraid we have lingered too long, to the stern realities of Victor Hugo's noble and heroic life. The effect of his residence in Spain was enormous. It coloured his whole life and genius.

He adopted the literary calling, and made up his mind and his body to its privations. He attracted the attention of Châteaubriand, who patronised him in his most sublime manner. His first attempts were poetical; but his first success was gained by his story of St. Domingo—*Bug Jargal*; that was

followed by his weird and wonderful story, *Hans of Iceland*. His struggle was a long and bitter one. He is said to have breakfasted for twopence, and dined, when he did dine, for sixpence. But he preserved his independence and self-respect, and they gave a zest to very humble fare. His two first stories were published before he was twenty.

The fall of Napoleon had a very adverse effect on the fortunes of the Hugo family, although General Hugo had never been a favourite of his. He had too stiff a back. He could never 'boo' himself into fortune; and could and did keep his back straight, even before so great a man as Napoleon. This did not please the Emperor, who hated a man he could not use as a tool. But Joseph Bonaparte protected General Hugo during his life. After his death the fortune of the family was very limited, and Victor Hugo chose the literary life, with a full knowledge of the sacrifices it would entail.

His first great dramatic success, *Hernani*, is steeped in the sunshine and shadow of Spain. It seems to pulsate with the intense passions of love and hate of that hot-blooded people. *Hernani* appears to incarnate the highest type of the Spanish hidalgo; while *Doña Sol* seems only to live and breathe in order to love or hate. Victor Hugo appears to feel that the ordinary bounds of human nature are too narrow for him.

The same prodigious power and passion animates his *Marion de Lorme*. He exalts our idea of the

capacity for good in the characters that appear the most degraded. The poet is, indeed, a seer. He sees and tells us what we cannot see and cannot tell. His Lucretia Borgia is a woman steeped in lust and crime, who is yet capable of forgetting everything in her passionate and unselfish love for her son.

As the painter of genius, out of a bit of common, a hut, a few cattle, can make a lovely imaginative picture, so does Victor Hugo in a vile Court jester, or a Lucretia Borgia, show us the noble attributes of humanity. He makes us kinder to our kind; and teaches us again and again the truth of these immortal words that 'one touch of nature makes the whole world kin.' But we must really travel faster. I have tried to paint the boy, because the boy is father of the man, and it is so pleasant to think that this sublime prophet of truth, justice, and mercy had a beautiful, happy boyhood, to fit and brace him for the gigantic tasks he did and the sufferings he sustained as a man. He has not been an idle dilettante lotus-eater.

We must now consider Victor Hugo as the standard-bearer of the Shakesperian school against the cold, classical school of Racine and Corneille. The performance of *Hernani* was a revolution in dramatic art. His friends rallied round him like enthusiastic artists, and all their enthusiasm was required to fight the banded enemies of nature and original genius. But the fight at last ended in a glorious victory.

I cannot resist quoting a scene between Victor

Hugo and Mlle. Mars, who had condescended to accept the sublime part of Doña Sol, to show the opposition he met with even behind the scenes, and the consummate tact, politeness, and irony with which he subdued it. It is, also, I think, the finest piece of dramatic criticism extant.

In the midst of the rehearsal of *Hernani*, Mlle. Mars suddenly stopped:—

‘Pardon, my friend,’ she said to Firmin, ‘I have a word to say to the author.’ The actor bowed assent. Mlle. Mars advanced to the footlights, and although she knew exactly where to find the poor author, pretended to search for him. It was a little piece of acting on her part.

Mlle. MARS.—M. Hugo! M. Hugo! where is he?

VICTOR HUGO.—Behold me, madam.

MARS.—Ah! very good! thanks!—Now tell me, M. Hugo—

V. H.—Madam!

MARS.—Have I to speak this verse:—‘You are my lion, proud and generous?’

V. H.—Yes, madam! *Hernani* says to you: ‘Alas! I love you with a most profound passion! Do not weep! Why do I not possess a world! I would give it to thee! But I am very poor!’ And you answer: ‘You are my lion, proud and generous!’

MARS.—Do you *admire* that line, M. Hugo?

V. H.—Which?

MARS.—‘You are my lion!’

V. H.—I have written it, madam; therefore, I believe it is good.

MARS.—Then you hold to your lion ?

V. H.—I hold to it and do not hold to it, madam ; if you mention something better, I will alter it.

MARS.—It is not my place to find that. I am not the author.

V. H.—Very well, madam ; if that is the case we had better leave it as it is.

MARS.—Only it does appear so droll to call M. Firmin my lion !

V. H.—Oh ! that is because in playing the part of Doña Sol, you would remain Mlle. Mars ; if you were really the ward of Ruy Gomez de Silva—that is to say, a noble Castilian lady of the sixteenth century—you would not see in Hernani M. Firmin, but one of those terrible leaders of brigands who made Charles V. tremble even in his capital ; then you would comprehend that such a woman could call such a man her lion ; and that would appear to you less droll.

MARS.—Very well ! when you hold to your lion we will say no more. I am here to say what is written in my part : my lion ! . . . Mon Dieu ! mon Dieu ! well, never mind. Go on, Firmin.

But next day, at the same verse, Mlle. Mars stopped. As before she placed her hand above her eyes. As before she appeared to search for the poor author.

‘M. Hugo !’ she said in a dry voice, not her stage voice. ‘M. Hugo ! is he here ?’

‘I am here, madam,’ replied M. Hugo, with great calmness.



MARS.—Ah! so much the better! I am very pleased that you are there.

V. H.—Madam, I had the honour of paying you my respects before rehearsal began.

MARS.—That is true. . . . Well, have you reflected?

V. H.—On what, madam?

MARS.—On what I said to you yesterday.

V. H.—You did me the honour to say many things to me yesterday.

MARS.—Yes, you are right. . . . But I refer to the *famous* line.

V. H.—Which?

MARS.—Oh! mon Dieu! you know very well which!

V. H.—I swear to you no, madam; you make so many good and wise observations that I confuse one with another.

MARS.—I speak of the line of the lion.

V. H.—Oh! yes, 'you are my lion!' I remember.

MARS.—Well, well! have you found another line?

V. H.—I avow to you that I have not even searched for one.

MARS.—You don't think that line is dangerous?

V. H.—I do not know what you call dangerous, madam.

MARS.—I call dangerous that which might be hissed.

V. H.—I have never had the pretension to expect not to be hissed.

MARS.—Be it so, but one should endeavour to be hissed as little as possible.

V. H.—You think, then, the audience will hiss the line of the lion?

MARS.—I am sure of it.

V. H.—Then, madam, it will be because you will not speak the line with your usual consummate ability.

MARS.—I will do my best . . . still I should prefer——

V. H.—What ?

MARS.—To say something else.

V. H.—What ?

MARS.—Some other line.

V. H.—What ?

MARS.—Suppose I say . . . (and Mlle. Mars had the air of searching for the word which, for three days, she had been chewing between her teeth) . . . for instance—‘You are my lord, proud and generous!’ Now, is not ‘my lord’ as good as ‘my lion?’

V. H.—It may be, madam, only ‘my lion’ raises the verse and ‘my lord’ lowers it. I would rather be hissed for a good verse than applauded for a bad one.

MARS.—Very well, very well ! . . . Do not be angry. We will speak your *good* verse without alteration ! . . . Go on, Firmin, my friend, go on ;—‘You are my lion, proud and generous.’

The poet’s enthusiastic friends, men who have since distinguished themselves as poets, novelists, and painters, assembled in the theatre by mid-day attired in a fearful and wonderful way, where they ate, drank, laughed and sang until the commencement of the performance.

And what a performance it was ! On one side were the worshippers of stilted form and conventionality, and on the other the enthusiastic lovers of force, spirit, and nature. The audience broke into cheers and howls, not to mention blows. But the friends of truth and nature conquered—as they

always do when they are true to themselves and the noble cause they fight for. The piece ran for fifty-five nights. Ladies of title sat in the dirty galleries rather than not see it. It was the talk of Paris and France. Duels were fought about it. One dying man directed his friends to write on his tomb, 'Here rests one who believed in Victor Hugo.' France was divided into two hostile camps. It was almost impossible to be neutral!

This immense success was gained sixty-one years ago, in 1830, and yet the same sublime poet was only lately producing works full of fire, passion, and the grandest poetical inspiration.

I wish I had time to speak of his *Marion de Lorme*, *Lucretia Borgia*, *Ruy Blas*, and his other grand dramatic works. But I must refer to his greatest novel, *Les Misérables*. Into this most extraordinary prose poem, Victor Hugo seems to have fused all the passion, love, and tenderness of his unique genius. If there is one unmistakable quality of genius it is its individuality. One man's genius is like no other man's or woman's genius. The works of a man of genius grow out of his own special qualities of heart, intellect, and conscience. This gives to works of genius their unspeakable value!

Nathaniel Hawthorne is as much alone as Victor Hugo. Neither could do the other's work. One is like a mighty oak, the other a delicate lily.

*Les Misérables* seems to be pervaded by a holy and almost divine pity for all forms of suffering

under the pitiless sun. Jean Valjean, the poor ignorant victim of hard and unjust social laws, is one of the greatest creations of fiction. He is moulded from the clay of fact, but that clay is softened with the poet's heart's blood. This poor fellow, who commits a paltry theft of food when literally starving, is sent to the hulks to herd with the vilest scum of society. After many years of this most horrible life, he is released, with every principle of good utterly eradicated, attired in convict's dress, and carrying a convict's ticket, which he has to show at every place he visits. He is spurned from every door. He is treated like a wild beast and becomes one. He meets a poor little Savoyard boy in a lonely place, and robs him of a few coppers. At last he visits a most original and extraordinary bishop. It requires the imagination of a Victor Hugo to imagine such a bishop. This bishop speaks kindly and pityingly to him, feeds him, and lodges him. He robs the bishop—society had taken every means to prevent him knowing how to do anything else—and he is brought back with the stolen property in his possession. The bishop simply said:—'I gave the things to the man!' This sublime charity breaks through the hard crust society had accumulated round Valjean's heart. The bishop might have preached—he might have given him a tract—he might have given him sixpence—he might even have given him sixpence and a tract—but this most abnormal bishop gave the poor degraded wretch love and pity. The

effect was electrical! The innate goodness of the man asserted itself; the man conquered the wild beast; the dead soul lived again! It was a miracle wrought by love! That is a miracle, I hope, we all believe in!

Valjean becomes a wise and noble man, and therefore, in this world, 'where but to think is to be full of sorrow,' a most unhappy one. As you may imagine, his antecedents dog and embitter his life. He rescues poor little Cosette from the hands of the atrocious Thenardiers. This Cosette is delicious: so tender—so sweet—so flower-like and altogether charming is she, that I know nothing more ravishing out of Shakespeare. She shows that Victor Hugo's tenderness is as great as his gigantic strength and passion.

This work, of which I should like to write more, is in many respects his greatest creation. In it he pleads the cause of all who suffer, especially that of weak, ill-treated women and little children, with a holy pity that fills the eyes with tears.

Now I must strike a sterner chord, and speak of Victor Hugo as the grand apostle of truth, liberty, and justice, and the implacable opponent of all who spurn those principles. When the horrible *coup d'état* was perpetrated, Victor Hugo escaped from Paris to Guernsey, where he wrote his terrible *Châtiments* and his scathing 'Napoleon the Little.'

You all know that he made his home in Guernsey, where he lived a life of beautiful simplicity, doing

good on every hand, and beloved by every child in the place. It was his custom to invite the children of the fishermen to his home, where the grand poet and his wife waited on them with the greatest kindness and cordiality. His love of children was most touching. Even at the age of eighty he was still a child at heart. A man of genius is always a child : that is one of the most enviable traits of genius.

From his sea-surrounded home, Victor Hugo launched those terrible thunderbolts which made the Man of December quiver with rage and fear. Victor Hugo's friends had been shot, or transported to the horrible, pestilential climate of Cayenne, where they suffered unnameable horrors, and the author of all this crime and misery reigned in France and called himself Emperor by the grace of God and the will of the people.

No wonder Victor Hugo was transported with holy indignation against the crowned miscreant. Some one once said that perhaps Napoleon III. only existed for the purpose of developing the genius of Victor Hugo. But Victor Hugo himself would have been the first to repudiate such an abominable opinion.

To give some idea of what the *coup d'état* was, and also of the enormous command of Victor Hugo over pity and terror, I will here quote a poem from *Les Châtiments*, entitled 'A Souvenir of the Fourth,' and then one from the same work in which he contrasts Napoleon the Great and Napoleon the Little.

## A SOUVENIR OF THE NIGHT OF THE FOURTH.

The child had received two balls in the head,  
But his bosom still throbbed : he was not quite dead.  
His home was humble, peaceful and clean,  
A portrait on the wall,—beneath was seen  
A branch blest by the priest, for good luck kept ;  
His old grandmother sat quiet and wept.  
We undrest him in silence. His pale lips  
Ope'd ; death on his eyes cast dark its eclipse ;  
His arms hung down ; he seemed in a trance ;  
A top fell out of his pocket by chance ;  
The holes of his wounds seemed made by a wedge :  
Have you seen mulberries bleed in a hedge ?  
His skull was open like wood that is split ;  
The grandmother looked on, at us, and it.  
' God ! how white he is,—bring hither the lamp !'  
She said at last,—' and his temples are damp !  
And see his fair hair is glued to his brow !'  
And on her knee she took him, undrest now.  
The night was dreary ; random shots were heard  
In the street ; death's work went on undeterred.  
' We must bury the child,' whispered our men,  
And they took a white sheet from the press—then,  
Still unconscious of the death of her boy,  
The grandmother brought him—her only joy—  
Close, close to the hearth, in hopes that the fire  
His stiffening limbs with warmth would inspire.  
Alas ! when death touches with hands ice-chill,  
Nothing again can warm, do what we will.  
She bent her head, drew off his socks, and took  
The naked feet in withered hands that shook.  
Ah ! was not that a sight our hearts to tear ?

She said, 'Sir,—he was not eight,—and so fair !  
 His masters,—he went to school,—were content ;  
 He wrote all my letters, on errands went  
 When I had need,—and are they going now  
 To kill poor children ?—the brigands allow  
 Such to pass free. Are they brigands ? Or worse ?  
 A Government ! 'Tis a scourge and a curse !  
 He was playing this morn alert and gay,  
 There, by that window, in the sun's bright ray ;  
 Why did they kill the poor boy at his play ?  
 He passed on to the street ; was that a crime ?  
 They fired on him straight ; they wasted no time.  
 Sir, he was good and sweet as an angel,—  
 Ah ! I am old ;—by the blessed Evangel  
 I should have left the world with light heart,  
 If it would have pleased Mr. Bonaparte  
 To kill *me* instead of the orphan child !'  
 She stopped—sobs choked her, then went on more wild,  
 While all wept around, e'en hearts made of stone—  
 'What's to become of me, left here alone ?  
 Oh ! tell me this, for my senses get dim—  
 His mother left me one child—only him.  
 Why did they kill him—I would know it,—why ?  
 Long live the Republic, he did not cry,  
 When that shout, like a wave, came rolling high.'

We stood silent, heads low, hearts full of grief,  
 Trembling before sorrow past all relief.

Mother, you understand not politics,—  
 Master Napoleon, that's his true name, sticks  
 To his rights. Look ! he is poor, and a prince,  
 He loves the palaces he enjoyed long since ;



He likes to have horses, servants, gold  
 For his table, his hunt, his play high and bold,  
 His alcove rich-decked, his furniture brave,  
 And by the same occasion he may save  
 The Family, Society, and the Church !  
 Should not the eagle on the high rock perch ?  
 Should he not take advantage of the time  
 When all ends can be served ? 'Twould be a crime ;  
 He must have St. Cloud bedecked with the rose,  
 Where Prefects and Mayors may kiss his dear toes.  
 And so it is,—that old grandmothers must  
 Trail their grey hair in the mire and the dust,  
 While they sew with fingers trembling with cold,  
 The shroud of poor children, seven years old.

'The top fell out of his pocket by chance' is  
 only equalled, in my humble opinion, by the death  
 of Cordelia, the death of Mignon, and the murder  
 of Lady Macduff and her little ones.

The following poem grows out of the preceding  
 one: the rain of tears first—then the lightning of  
 terrible wrath :—

#### NAPOLEON THE LITTLE CONTRASTED WITH NAPOLEON THE GREAT.

His grandeur dazzled history ;  
     The god of war,  
 A star he was,—a mystery,  
     To nations far.  
 All Europe at his nod inclined  
     With terror dumb.  
 Art thou his ape ? March, march behind,  
     Tom Thumb, Tom Thumb.

Napoleon by the cannon's light,  
Through smoke and cloud  
Guided across the hottest fight  
The eagle proud.

He forced his way in at Arcole,  
And out, with drum—  
There's gold for thee, regale thy soul,  
Tom Thumb, Tom Thumb.

Berlin, Vienna, Moscow, all  
Before him bent ;  
Not more an angel could appal  
On vengeance sent.

Ho ! forts and fields ! Ho ! kings and  
'Tis he—succumb !

But thou—for thee, lo ! here are girls,  
Tom Thumb, Tom Thumb.

He rode o'er mountains and o'er plains,  
And held confined  
Within his palm, the guiding-reins  
Of all mankind.

His glories would the navies sink  
So vast their sum !

For thee—see blood, come run and drink,  
Tom Thumb, Tom Thumb.

Dark, dark archangel—but he fell !  
Earth felt the sound,  
And ocean opened by a spell  
Its gulf profound.

Down headlong, but his name e'en time  
Shall overcome—

Thou, too, shalt drown, but drown in slime,  
Tom Thumb, Tom Thumb.

The following letter, addressed by Victor Hugo to the late Bishop of Orleans, Mgr. Dupanloup, is very characteristic of the sledge-hammer invective of the fiery Republican poet :—

‘SIR,—You are impudent. You remind those who may have forgotten it that I was educated by a Churchman; and that if my life commenced in prejudice and error it was the fault of the priests, not mine; that such education is pernicious, and that up to nearly forty years of age, as you observed, I was under its influence. I dwell not upon this, as I incline to eschew useless details. You insult Voltaire, and do me the honour to abuse me. Be it as you will. We are two individuals, between whom the future will judge. You say that I am old, and insinuate that you are young. I think you are, for the moral sense seems to be so inchoate in you that you make a reproach of that which is to my honour. You pretend to give me a lesson. By what right? Who and what are you? Let us come to the point, and compare your conscience with mine. France was free. One night a man traitorously seized and gagged her. If a nation could be killed, that man would have killed France. He deadened her sufficiently to reign over her. He began his reign—for reign it is called—by perjury and massacre. He maintained it by tyranny, despotism, and a vile parody of religion and justice. He was at once monstrous and little. For him were sung *Te Deum, Magnificat, Salvum Fac, Gloria Tibi*, &c. Who sang them? Ask yourself. He trampled under foot his oath, equity, probity, the glory of the national flag, the dignity of man, the liberty of citizens. The prosperity of this man outraged the human con-

science. This lasted nineteen years. During all that time you were in a palace and I was in exile. I pity you, sir.'

Carlyle also condescended to give Bishop Dupanloup a lesson. That gentleman tried to convert Carlyle, which at least showed his courage. The reply of the great philosopher was characteristic:—

'You believe,' he said, 'a great many things that I do not; on the other hand, I believe a great many things that you disbelieve; but of the two, I think I believe in more than you.'

To refer again to Victor Hugo's love of those human flowers—children. The grand old man, like Lear, stood almost alone. He lost his dear wife some years ago. His brothers, Eugène and Abel, died many years back. The former—Eugène—died insane in 1837. The noble old soldier-father died of apoplexy, which struck him down like a bullet. All Victor Hugo's children are dead. His strong, passionate affections clung to his grandchildren, to whom he addressed the following tender and beautiful lines:—

#### TO MY GRANDCHILDREN.

Children beloved, they will tell you later of me,  
How your grandsire held you well pleased on his knee;  
How he adored you, and how he strove on the earth  
To do his best always; how alas! from his birth  
Of joy he had little, and of grief he had much;  
How many maligned him, though he cared not for such;

How at the time you were young and he very old  
 He never had harsh words and airs fretful or cold  
 For you or for any,—and then how at the close  
 He left you for ever in the time of the rose ;  
 How he died,—how he *was* a kind man after all ;  
 How in the famed winter when rained shell, shot, and ball,  
 He traversed Paris—Paris girt by a horde,  
 Paris tragic, and full of the gleam of the sword—  
 To get you bright playthings, strange puppets and dolls,  
 And bearded Jack-in-the-box, whose spring sudden appals,  
 And sometimes a flower pearled with the bright morning  
     dews :  
 —Then sadly under the dark trees you will muse.

#### ON THE DEATH OF HIS DAUGHTER.

Oh, I was wild like a madman at first,  
 Three days I wept tears cruel and accurst ;  
 O those whom God of their hope hath bereft !  
 Fathers and mothers like me lonely left !  
 Have ye felt what I felt, and known it all ?  
 And longed to dash your heads 'gainst the wall ?  
 Have ye been like me in open revolt  
 And defied the Hand that had hurled the bolt ?  
 I could not believe at all in the thing,  
 I gazed and I gazed for a light to spring.  
 Does God permit such misfortunes, nor care  
 That our souls be filled with utter despair ?  
 It seemed as the whole were a frightful dream,  
 She could not have left me thus like a gleam !  
 Ha ! that is her laughter in the next room !  
 Oh, no, *she cannot* be dead in the tomb.

There she will enter—come here by this door,  
 And her step shall be music to me as before.  
 Oh! how oft have I said,—Silence, she speaks;—  
 Hark!—’tis her hand on the key, and it creaks;  
 Listen,—she comes! I must hear,—she’s there;  
 Her footstep falls like a flower on the stair.

Victor Hugo has dealt with the weightiest and sublimest question which can engage the attention of man:—the soul and its yearning for some answer to the enigma of life and death.

*The Pope* I consider to be one of the most profoundly beautiful and religious poems ever written. It embraces the essence of the Christian religion—truth, justice, and mercy.

The sublime address of the Pope to the people as he leaves the Vatican will, I think, justify that opinion. He dreams—mind, he only dreams—that he has really become a humble follower of Christ. He abandons the Vatican, with all its mighty grandeur, glory, and pomp; he leaves his crowd of courtiers and lackeys; strips the tiara from aching brow, throws off his pompous robes, and goes forth poor to feed the poor; he visits them in their hovels; comforts the sick; and becomes instead of a proud Pontiff a humble Christian bearing the cross of poverty and humility.

The address to the people is as follows:—

‘People, I have said to the world:

‘No more war—civil or foreign. No more scaffolds.

Before the blue heaven, Liberty ; Equality before death ; Fraternity before the Father of all men. Love ! Strength, help weakness ! Enlighten those who injure you ; cure those who wound you. Peace and pardon. Be merciful to the criminal. The right of the good is to be brotherly to the wicked ; the just man who is without love does not obey the Divine command ; and the sun is no longer the sun if it does not shine on wolves and tigers.

‘ Pity ! let repentance grow. Judges, think ; executioners, recoil ; live, Cain ! Do not take to-morrow from the man who has lost to-day ; leave to all time to redeem their faults.

‘ Be humble thinkers, be lofty souls. Ye rich, it is by giving ye will be richer ; *sow !* Ye poor, poverty is not hate ; *love !* Every good thought is a deliverance. However black the sorrow, retain hope. Hate is a wind, gloomy and pestilential ; love, love, love—be brothers !’

A speech by Victor Hugo, delivered at a banquet given in his honour at Brussels in 1870 by the principal journalists of Europe, is worth quotation as a specimen of his oratorical power. In the course of this speech, Victor Hugo said :—

‘ What is the auxiliary of the patriot ? The Press. What is the terror of the coward and the traitor ? The Press. I know it ! the Press is hated, and that is our reason for loving it. I recollect a celebrated encyclical, some remarkable words in which have remained in my memory. In this encyclical a Pope, our contemporary, Gregory XVI., the enemy of his age, which is sometimes the misfortune of Popes, and having ever present in his

mind the old dragon and beast of the Apocalypse, thus described the Press in barbarous Latin, "*Gula ignea, caligo, impetus immanis cum strepitu horrendo*" (a fiery throat, darkness, a fierce rush with a horrid noise). I dispute nothing of the description. The portrait is striking. A mouth of fire, smoke, prodigious noise! Just so. It is a locomotive which is passing; it is the Press, the mighty and holy locomotive of progress. Where is it going? Where is it dragging civilisation? Where is this powerful pilot engine carrying nations? The tunnel is long, obscure, and terrible, for we may truly say that humanity is yet underground, so much matter envelopes and crushes it, so many superstitions, prejudices, and tyrannies form a thick vault around it, and so much darkness is above it. Alas! since man's birth the whole of history has been subterranean. We see nowhere the divine ray; but in the nineteenth century there is hope, there is certainty. Yonder, far in the distance, a luminous point, a star of hope, appears. It increases, it increases every moment; it is the future; it is realisation; it is the end of woe; it is the dawn of joy; it is the Canaan, the future land where we shall only have around us brothers and above us heaven. Strength to the sacred locomotive! Courage to thought! courage to science; courage to philosophy; courage to all you writers!

'The hour is drawing nigh when mind, delivered at last from this dismal tunnel of six thousand years, will suddenly burst forth in all its dazzling brightness!'

I must conclude my rambling sketch by a short reference to the sublime exhibition of love by the



people of Paris and France generally to Victor Hugo.

Four hundred thousand people, principally poor people, spent a whole day marching past the poet's house on his seventy-ninth birthday. Men, women, and children passed the window at which the grand old poet sat, and, depositing their flowers, walked on singing, in the most beautiful and orderly way. Bands of bright-eyed, but, I am afraid, pale-faced children filled the old man's face with smiles and his eyes with tears, which now and then, and I think very often, ran over.



EUGÈNE SUE AND ÉMILE  
ZOLA.



# EUGÈNE SUE AND ÉMILE ZOLA.

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THE rapid readers of sensational novels have forgotten Sue's powerful works, which, at one time, were translated into every European language. The *Mysteries of Paris* dealt with the lowest depths of Parisian life; but Sue's manner was totally different to that of Zola. The former was an enthusiastic humanitarian. He loved and hated his creations with an intensity equal to Dickens and Victor Hugo. Zola, especially in his later works, is merely an expositor of whatever is unclean and horrible. He appears to look upon an atrocious villain as a doctor looks on some horrible development of disease—with acute interest. He seems to take no interest in manly love or womanly devotion. All is dark with him; no light, no relief. The horrible odours of a moral cesspool seem to suit him; in fact, the more abominable it is, the more at home he appears to be. 'Evil, be thou my good,' appears to be his motto.

Take his most powerful story, *Germinal*. What

horrors, what human degradation! The life described in the coal-mine is doubtless true; but there should have been some light of love; some relief to the grim horror and unspeakable vileness of the men and women described.

*Germinal* is Zola's best work. It is full of weird, lurid, diabolical force. It is certainly the handwriting on the wall so far as our present social arrangements are concerned. On one side we have luxury, comfort, affluence, vicious indulgence; and, on the other, men and women living lives of the vilest, the most inhuman degradation; and, what is worse, that degradation is proved by the author to be the inevitable and direct outcome of the social and political system—'devil take the hindmost!'—and the hindmost are millions, not thousands—which obtains in the so-called civilised world to-day. He grimly proves, by the inexorable logic of overwhelming facts, that to millions of men and women life is a dire and dreadful curse; and, perhaps, the world needed to be taught that lesson. His horrible word-pictures may be wanted by the coarse and the callous, who might remain untouched by a more artistic and imaginative presentment of the same terrible truths. Let such people read Zola. He may possibly teach them that the luxury in which, and for which, they live, is in danger: that their brutal selfishness is producing and sharpening the hunger of human, or rather inhuman, wild beasts, who will devour them and theirs, and all they live for, and live by.

The following scene shows the wonderful descriptive power of Zola; it is from *Germinal*.

The wretched, famished miners, half starved when they work, and quite starved when they don't, are on strike, and meet at night. Snow is at their feet, the leafless branches of trees surround them, and hunger and despair lash them to madness.

'It was the *Place des Dames*, an open space surrounded by forest trees. There was a slight incline, around which was a high hedge; superb beech-trees, with straight and regular trunks, made a white colonnade, partly covered by green lichen: giant trees, lately felled, lay in the snow, and to the left a heap of branches was piled. As night closed in the cold increased, the frozen snow crunched under the footsteps. It was bitterly cold; the high branches were sharply etched against a pale sky, where the full moon, slowly rising from the horizon line, would shortly extinguish the pale stars.

'Nearly three thousand miners met at this spot; a crowd of men, women, and children, filled little by little the cleared space, appearing from under the dark trees; still they came, and their heads, massed together, spread further and further into the neighbouring paths. A harsh murmur, like the rushing of a stormy wind, arose in the forest, before so still and icy.

'Above, commanding the incline, Etienne stood with Rasseneur and Maheu. A quarrel had commenced, excited voices were heard. Near them the miners listened; Levaque with clenched fists, Pierron turned his back.

\* \* \* \* \*

‘ The quarrel arose through Rasseneur, who wished to proceed regularly by the election of a committee. His recent defeat at the *Bon Joyeux*, enraged him : and he swore he would be revenged, hoping to reconquer his ancient authority when he should be face to face, not with the delegates, but with the miners themselves !’

Rasseneur addresses the miners, but his old influence has departed, he is laughed at, frozen snow and stones are thrown at him, and he is obliged to retreat.

Then old Bonnemort, one of the most powerful creations in this extraordinary book, addresses the crowd. Bonnemort has lived all his life in the mine ; mind, body, and character are utterly distorted. He has been entirely subdued to his horrible surroundings ; and is as much an animal as the wretched over-worked, cruelly treated horses used underground.

‘ After the jeers, which accompanied the retreat of Rasseneur, the crowd were surprised to see Father Bonnemort standing on the prostrate trunk of a tree, commencing to speak. Up to that moment Moque and he appeared absorbed, as usual, with their thoughts of the past. Doubtless he yielded to one of those sudden desires to talk, which, now and then, took possession of him with such violence that recollections of the past rose and flowed from his lips for hours together. There was silence at once, all listened to the old man, who, in the white moonlight, looked as pale as a ghost ; and as he recounted things unconnected with the discussion the astonishment increased. He spoke of his youth, of the



death of his two uncles crushed in the mine at Voreux ; then he passed on to the death of his wife.

‘ But he never lost his one fixed idea, things were always bad ; always the same. Thus, in this forest, five hundred of them met, because the king would not reduce the hours of work ; but he stopped abruptly, and commenced the story of another strike ; he had seen them all. They always met under the trees, here at *Place des Dames*, yonder at *la Charbonnière*, further still, near *Saut du Loup*. Sometimes it froze, sometimes it was hot. One night, it rained so heavily that they all had to retire without a word being spoken ; and the king’s soldiers arrived and fired at them as they went. “ We raised our right hand like this, we swore never to descend the mine again. . . . Ah ! I have sworn. Yes ! I have sworn ! ”

‘ The crowd listened open-mouthed, oppressed, when Etienne, who had watched the scene, jumped on the tree, keeping the old man by his side.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*       \*

“ Comrades, you have heard, this is one of our old men, behold what he has suffered and think of what our children will suffer if we do not finish with the robbers and executioners ! ”

‘ He was terrible, never had he been so violent. With one arm he supported old Bonnemort ; he held him up as a flag of starvation and misery, demanding vengeance. With rapid phrases, he went back to the first Maheu, he exhibited all his family used up in the mine, devoured by the Company, more famished after a hundred years toil than before. Then he sketched the Directors, rolling in money, the shareholders with nothing to do but

look after their pampered bodies. Was not it frightful? Thousands of men dying underground, from father to son, in order to pay for luxuries for ministers, and to enable great nobles and capitalists to give grand *fêtes* or to fatten at the corner of their fires! He had studied the maladies of the miners; he described them with horrible details: scrofula, black bronchitis, stifling asthma, and rheumatism which paralyses. The contemptible wretches cast them as food to their machines, the great companies absorbed them little by little, regulating their slavery, menacing to enrol them like soldiers, enslaving millions of arms, to make the fortune of a thousand do-nothings. But the miner was no longer an ignorant brute crushed in the belly of the mine. An army was rising from the bowels of the earth, a harvest of citizens which would scatter the earth in all directions, one glorious day. And we would know then if, after forty years of toil, they dared offer one hundred and fifty francs pension to an old man of sixty, who spat coal-dust, and whose legs were swollen through working for years in water. Yes! labour demands its account from capital, that impersonal god, unknown to the workman, crouching somewhere, in the mystery of its tabernacle, where it sucked away the life of the starved wretches who nourished it. They intended to find it, to see its face by the light of incendiary fires; they would drown the unclean beast, that monstrous idol, gorged with human flesh, in blood! He was silent, but his arm, always stretched out, pointed to the void, as if the enemy were yonder, he knew not where, but at one end of the earth or the other. The clamour of the crowd was now so great that the people at Montsou heard it and looked towards Vaudame, filled with inquietude and fearing an

explosion had occurred. Night-birds flew over the heads of the trees, in the clear, moonlit air.'

The strike fails; the men are conquered by starvation. The following description of the return of the men to their work shows the gloomy power of Zola:—

'Little by little the deserted road became peopled, the miners passed Etienne continually. The Company, they said, abused its victory. After a strike of two and a half months, conquered by famine, when they returned to the mine, they had to accept the new tariff, which disguised a fall in their wages, execrable now, because stained by the blood of their comrades. They had stolen an hour of their work, they had made them break their oath to never surrender, and that perjury stuck in their throats, like a bag of gall. Work recommenced everywhere, at Merosé, at Madeleine, at Crèvecœur, at la Victoire. Everywhere, in the mist of the morning, along roads drowned in darkness, the men stumbled, with noses to the ground, like sheep going to the slaughter-house. They shivered under their thin canvas clothes, they crossed their arms, their legs trembled under them, their backs were bent, and the loaf carried between the shirt and blouse made them appear hump-backed. And in that universal return to work, in those mute shadows, all black and gloomy, without a laugh, without a look around them, one divined teeth clenched with rage, hearts swollen with hate; it was only a surrender to the brute necessity of the belly.'

The inner lesson of the horrible book, *Nana*, is,

that such a creature, beautiful and deadly, corrupt and corrupting, is born and bred like a dungfly, in filth, and preys upon and destroys the most exalted representatives of the society which, by its neglect and indifference, rendered such a creature possible.

‘ Our pleasant vices are the whips that scourge us.’

But the important lesson taught by Zola in *Nana* does not, in my opinion, justify the crude horrors of the book; and I firmly believe the harm done by such a work is ten times greater than the good.

Take, in contrast, Sue’s *Mysteries of Paris*. In this most powerful story, we are plunged into the vilest society; but there are potential love, self-sacrifice, and heroism even in the Chironeur and Fleur de Marie. Sue does not make us despair of humanity. No real man of genius ever does, or ever did; genius imparts faith and love. Fleur de Marie gradually emerges from the vile life in which—poor, unprotected victim of the callous selfishness of the comfortable classes—she had been plunged for sixteen years. With fine art, Sue shows us the beautiful possibilities of this naturally sweet and tender-hearted girl. He awakens a vivid interest in her. The Chironeur, too, has noble instincts. When his heart and courage are appealed to they respond nobly. Even the hideous Brigand is not altogether lost in utter degradation; there is a spark of good in him. The Chouette is, indeed, lost to all humanity; she is altogether vile and hideous. She

loathes what is good and beautiful, because of their goodness and beauty. That is, unfortunately, possible. The horrible boy, Tortillard, hateful in mind and body, has a gleam of love for this vile woman. But the grand lesson in Sue's book—and there are no grand lessons in Zola's abominable Chamber of Horrors, in thirty volumes—is the belief, the potent belief, he had in the perfectibility of human nature. Who could support life without that belief? The influence of the sweet temper and angelic self-forgetfulness of Fleur de Marie on La Louve, a woman of ferocious passions, but generous character, is beautifully described; and, thank God, it is credible! Zola never proves that a bad character can become better; he painfully tries to prove that nearly every apparently good character can become bad. His creations are usually moral abortions. He is master of the apes; and does not write like a man writing of men and women, with human sympathy and love; but like a man looking at the ugly gambols of a lot of monkeys, spying out all the ugliest tricks they play, and then dilating, in the most elaborate manner, on the worst that he has seen. Dickens overdid his pathos; Zola overdoes his beastliness. We can forgive one, but not the other. 'One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.' One touch of Zola degrades love, debases friendship, and robs the human heart of its one priceless solace—belief in the perfectibility of human nature.

We know that a man should not fall into mud-holes through looking too much at the stars. But

he should not by only studying the mud, forget there are stars. I am afraid of quoting the crude horrors of Zola to prove my case. I have only read *L'Assommoir*, *Nana*, *Therese Raquin*, *Germinal*, and *La Terre*, and I don't think I am called upon to read any more. No man can write twenty pages without proving his metal.

Every good and noble work of fiction should awaken our love for the good, and intensify our hatred of evil. Fielding does that; Sue, Dickens, Scott, Thackeray, George Eliot, all do the same. They make us kinder to our kind; they enlarge our sympathies, they purify our hearts. Zola's works take the blue out of the sky; they dim the stars; they rob us of hope; and when we are robbed of that we are robbed of all.

To return to Sue. When Rodolphe causes, by his faith in the Chironeur, the noble chords, never touched before, of his heart to vibrate, we feel our heart vibrate too. That is the proper, the noble function of fiction. To take us out of our narrow groove of life, and by a broad, sympathetic picture of humanity to touch the deeper chords of our nature, producing a nobler music to enrich and beautify our lives; that is the noble mission of great fiction. With all his faults and exaggerations, Sue does that, and Zola distinctly does not; it is not in his heart. He not only does not do that, he does the direct contrary to it. Sue's *Wandering Jew* is an imaginative masterpiece; it refines and elevates by pity and terror. The picture of Rose and Blanche is pathetic and beau-

tiful ; Rodin arouses horror and detestation. The generous and enlightened Hardy, the pioneer of sane socialism—co-operation—is painted with warm enthusiasm. Sue was a man who did not coldly look on mankind, as a vivisectionist might look, with scientific interest, at a cat, but with eyes that were sometimes filled with tears, and at others flashed and flamed with indignation. Sue wrote from the heart, and, therefore, his writings, with all their faults, touch our hearts. Sue teaches hope, faith, and love. Zola pronounces the doom of a society which renders such a writer possible and successful.

Take the following passage where Sue describes a day spent by Rodolphe and Fleur de Marie, the first day of pleasure the poor girl had ever enjoyed, outside the walls of Paris :—

‘ They arrived at the Quai aux Fleurs, where a carriage awaited them. Rodolphe assisted his companion into it, and, after placing himself at her side, said to the coachman, “ To St. Denis ; I will tell you shortly which road to take.” The horses started ; the sun was radiant, the sky without a cloud ; but the air was a little sharp as it circulated briskly through the open windows of the carriage. “ Hold ; there’s a woman’s cloak,” said Marie, pointing to one on part of which she was seated.

‘ “ Yes, it is for you, my child ; I brought it purposely, fearing you might feel cold ; wrap yourself well in it.

‘ Unaccustomed to such care, the poor girl looked at Rodolphe with astonishment. The species of intimidation he had caused her increased each moment, and also a vague sadness she could not account for.

“Oh, M. Rodolphe, how kind you are! You make me feel quite ashamed.”

“What, because I am kind?”

“No, but it seems to me that you speak no longer as you did yesterday—that you are some other——”

“Come, now, Fleur de Marie, would you rather that I should be the Rodolphe of yesterday or to-day?”

“I like you more as you are to-day: but yesterday I seemed to be more your equal.” Then, fearing she had mortified Rodolphe, she added, “When I say your equal, M. Rodolphe, I know that that can never be.”

“There is one thing in you that surprises me, Fleur de Marie.”

“What is that, M. Rodolphe?”

“You seem to forget that La Chouette told you yesterday she knew your parents—that she knew your mother.”

“Oh, I have not forgotten that; I thought of it all night, and I have wept bitterly; but I am sure it is not true. She only invented the story to give me pain. . . .”

“It may be that La Chouette knows more than you imagine; if it is so, would not you be happy to find your mother?”

“Alas! M. Rodolphe, if my mother never loved me, what good would it be to find her? She would not wish to see me—what a disgrace I should be to her; it would, perhaps, kill her.”

“If your mother loved you, Fleur de Marie, she would pity you, she would pardon you, she would love you again. If she has forsaken you, in seeing to what a horrible fate her conduct has reduced you, her shame would be your revenge.”



“And why should I be revenged? If I were, it seems to me that I should no longer have the right to consider myself unfortunate: that belief often consoles me.”

“Perhaps you are right; let us speak no more about it.”

‘At this moment the carriage arrived near St. Ouen, at the junction of the road to St. Denis and that to la Revolte. Notwithstanding the monotonous appearance of the country, Fleur de Marie was so delighted at seeing the fields, that, forgetting the sad thoughts which the recollections of La Chouette had awakened in her mind, her charming face brightened, she leaned out of the window, and, clapping her hands, cried, “M. Rodolphe, how delightful—fields and hedges! If you would only let me alight—the weather is so fine! I would like so much to run in the meadows!”

“We will take a run together, my child. Coachman, stop!”

“What! you also, M. Rodolphe?”

“I also? yes, we will make it a holiday.”

“What happiness! M. Rodolphe.”

‘And he and Fleur de Marie, hand in hand, ran over the new-mown field till they were both out of breath.

‘To attempt to describe the gambols, the little joyous cries, the delight of Fleur de Marie, would be impossible. Poor child! for so long time a prisoner, she breathed the pure air with intoxication; she came, she went, she ran, she rested, always with fresh transports. At the sight of several tufts of daisies and some marigolds spared by the first frost of approaching winter she could not refrain from new exclamations of delight; she did not leave one of the flowers, but gleaned the whole

meadow. After having run thus over the fields, being unaccustomed to such exercise, she became tired, and, stopping to take breath seated herself on the trunk of a tree, near a deep ditch.

‘The fair and transparent complexion of Fleur de Marie, ordinarily pale, was now lit up with the most vivid colour. Her large, blue eyes shone sweetly, her rosy mouth half open, disclosed her pearl-like teeth, and her heart throbbed under the little orange shawl she wore. She kept one hand on her bosom, at if to still its pulsation, while with the other she offered Rodolphe the flowers she had gathered.

‘Nothing could be more charming than the innocent, joyous expression which shone on this lovely face.

‘As soon as she could speak, she said to Rodolphe, with touching simplicity :—

“How good of the Almighty to give us so fine a day.”

‘A tear came to the eye of Rodolphe at the thought of this poor, abandoned, despised, lost creature, without a home, without bread, offering thus a cry of joy and of thanks to the Creator, because she enjoyed a ray of sunshine and the sight of a meadow !

\* \* \* \* \*

“Now that you are satisfied with me, Fleur de Marie, we can amuse ourselves, as we said just now, by building castles in the air ; it won't cost much, so you can't scold me for being extravagant.”

“Oh, no ! You begin.”

“I'll try. I will suppose that this road will lead us to a charming village, some distance from the main road

“Yes, because it will be more quiet and tranquil.”

“It is built on a rising ground, and surrounded by trees.”

“And there is a little streamlet, close by?”

“Exactly so—a streamlet. At the end of the village there is a beautiful farm, and a dining-room for the mistress.”

“Yes, and the house must have green blinds. They look so cheerful, M. Rodolphe.”

“Green blinds—yes, I am of your opinion; there is nothing so lively as green blinds. Naturally the mistress of the farm would be your aunt.”

“Oh, naturally. And she would be a kind, good woman.”

“An excellent woman, who would love you like a mother.”

“Good aunt! it must be so delightful to be loved by some one!”

“Yes, and you could love her also?”

“Ah!” cried Fleur de Marie, joining her hands, and lifting her eyes towards heaven with an expression of happiness impossible to describe.

“Oh, yes, I would love her, and, besides, I would help her with her work—to sew, wash, bleach—to dry fruits for the winter, enough for the whole household. She should not complain of my idleness, I assure you. In the morning——”

“Stop, stop! Fleur de Marie; how impatient you are. Let me finish describing the house”

“Come, come, M. Painter, it is easy to perceive that you are accustomed to make pretty landscapes on your fans,” said the girl, laughing.

[Rodolphe is supposed by Fleur de Marie to be a painter of fans.]

“Little prattler, let me finish my house!”

“It is true that I do prattle; but it is so amusing! M. Rodolphe, I will listen; pray finish your house.”

“Your room shall be on the first floor.”

“My room! Oh, how delightful! Come, let us see my room.” And the young girl fixed her large, widely opened eyes on Rodolphe.

“Your chamber shall have two windows, which look upon the flower-garden, and on the meadows through which the little river flows. On the other side of this river will be seen a little hill, all planted with chestnut trees, from the midst of which peeps the spire of a church.”

“Oh, how pretty, M. Rodolphe; it makes me desire to be there!”

“Three or four cows are grazing in the meadow, which is separated from the garden by a hedge of hawthorn.”

“And can I see the cows from my window?”

“Perfectly.”

“Then one of them shall be my favourite, M. Rodolphe. I’ll make her a fine collar with a bell to it, and I’ll accustom her to come and eat from my hand.”

“She won’t fail to do so. She is very young and pure white, and we’ll call her Musette.”

“Ah! what a pretty name; poor Musette! I love her already.”

“Let us finish your chamber, Fleur de Marie; it is hung with a pretty Persian chintz, with curtains to match. A honeysuckle and rose tree cover the walls of the cottage on this side, and the flowers hang over your window, so that in the morning you have only to stretch out your hands to gather the fragrant blossoms.”

“ Ah ! M. Rodolphe, what a painter you are ! ”

“ Now we'll see how you will pass the day. Your good aunt will come and awaken you in the morning by a gentle kiss on the forehead ; she will bring you a bowl of warm milk, because your chest is weak, poor child ! Then you'll get up ; you will go and see the farm, Musette, the chickens, your friends the doves, and the flowers in the garden. At nine o'clock your writing master will arrive.”

“ My writing master ! ”

“ You know you must learn to read, write, and keep accounts, so that you can help your aunt with the books of the farm.”

“ True, M. Rodolphe ; I never think of anything. I must learn to read and write to help my aunt,” said the poor girl, seriously, so much absorbed by the charming picture of this peaceable life that she believed in its reality.

“ After your lessons, you will work at the linen of the house, or you will make yourself a pretty peasant bonnet. At two o'clock you will return to your writing, and then you will take a long walk with your aunt, see the hay-makers in summer, and the labourers in the fall ; you will come home quite tired, bringing with you a handful of sweet herbs that you have gathered in the meadows for Musette.”

“ For we will return by the meadows, won't we, M. Rodolphe ? ”

“ Without doubt ; there is a wooden bridge over the river. At your return, bless me ! it is six or seven o'clock, and a fine fire is blazing in the large kitchen of the farm ; you will go there and warm yourself, and have a talk with the good folks just returned from work ; then

you will dine with your aunt. Sometimes the curate, or some other old friend of the house, sits down to talk with you. After that, you read or work, while your aunt has her game of cards. At ten o'clock she kisses you, and you retire to your chamber. Then next morning you begin again."

"I could live for a hundred years in that manner, and never be tired, M. Rodolphe."

"But all that is nothing to the Sundays and holidays."

"And these days, M. Rodolphe?"

"You will make yourself very fine; you will put on your pretty peasant's dress, and the little round cap that becomes you so well; then you will get into the basket waggon with your aunt and James, the farm boy, to go to grand mass at the village; after that, during the summer, you will not fail to go with your aunt to the fêtes of the surrounding parishes. You are so kind, so good, such a nice housekeeper, your aunt loves you so much, the curate will give such a good account of you, that all the young farmers around will wish to dance with you, because that is the way all marriages begin. Then by-and-by, you will perceive one—and——"

Rodolphe, astonished at the silence of the young girl, turned to look at her; the poor child could hardly restrain her sobs; for a moment, deceived by the words of Rodolphe, she had forgotten the present, and the contrast of it with a dream, a picture so charming and delightful, recalled to her the horrors of her position.

"Fleur de Marie, what is the matter?"

“Ah! M. Rodolphe, without intending it you have caused me deep pain. For a moment I believed in the paradise you painted.”

“But, poor child, this paradise exists—look, look—stop, coachman!”

‘The carriage stopped, Fleur de Marie mechanically raised her head. She found herself at the top of a hill; what was her astonishment, her amazement! The pretty village built on the hillside, the farm, the meadows, the cows, the little river, the chestnut trees, the church spire rising above the leaves—all were before her eyes; nothing was wanting; even Musette was there, a beautiful white heifer, the future favourite of Fleur de Marie. The charming landscape was lighted by a fine warm November sun. The yellow and dark green leaves still covered the noble chestnut trees, standing out in bold relief from the blue and smiling sky.

“Well, Fleur de Marie, what say you now? Am I a good painter?” inquired Rodolphe, gaily.

‘She looked at him with surprise and inquietude; it seemed to her almost supernatural.

“How is this, M. Rodolphe? But, good heavens! is this a dream! it almost makes me afraid. How! what you told me is——”

“Nothing is more simple, my child. The woman here is my nurse; I was brought up here. I wrote to her this morning that I should come to-day; I only painted after nature.”

“Ah! it is true, M. Rodolphe!” said the girl, with a profound sigh.’

In this retreat Rodolphe leaves Fleur de Marie to enjoy a little peace and calm. She is torn from

her new life by La Chouette, the Brigand, and Tortillard.

The Chironeur twice saves the life of his benefactor, Rodolphe; the last time at the expense of his own.

Rodolphe is attacked by a mob, led by the Skeleton, and the poor outcast wretch, whom he had raised from a beast to a man, is stabbed in defending him.

The death of the poor fellow is powerfully painted.

‘The Chironeur had just opened his eyes, when Rodolphe entered. At the sight of him, his countenance, of death-like pallor, brightened a little; he tried to smile, and said, in a feeble voice:—

“Ah, M. Rodolphe, how fortunate it was that I was there!”

“Brave and devoted—as always, you have saved my life again,” replied Rodolphe.

“I was going to the Barrier de Charenton, to see you depart—happily, I was stopped here by the crowd—besides, this was to happen to me—I said so to Martial—I had a presentiment.”

“A presentiment?”

“Yes, M. Rodolphe—the dream of the sergeant, I had it last night——”

“Forget such ideas. Hope! the wound will not be mortal.”

“Oh, yes—the Skeleton has struck home. Never mind, I was right—to say to Martial—that an earthworm like me could sometimes be—useful—to a great lord like you.”



“But it is life—life—that I owe you again.”

“We are quits, M. Rodolphe. You told me that I had a *heart* and *honour*. Those words—do you see—Oh, I suffocate, my lord!—without you—command—do me the honour—of—your hand—I feel that I am going——”

“No, it is impossible!” cried Rodolphe, bending over the Chirneur, and pressing in his hands the icy fingers of the dying man. “No! you will live—you will live!”

“M. Rodolphe—do you see there is something—up there—I have killed—with the blow of a knife!” said the Chirneur, in a voice more and more feeble and indistinct.

At this moment his eyes became fixed on Fleur de Marie, whom he had not yet perceived. Astonishment was painted on his dying face.

“Ah! my God! La Goualeuse.”

“Yes, she is my daughter. She blesses you for having preserved her father.”

“She—your daughter! here—that reminds me of our acquaintance—M. Rodolphe—and the blows with the fists—at the end—but this—blow with the knife—will be also—the blow—of the end. I killed—they—kill—it is just.”

Then he uttered a deep sigh, his head falling backwards—he was dead.’



LOPE DE VEGA AND  
CERVANTES.



# LOPE DE VEGA AND CERVANTES.

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To compare Lope de Vega with Cervantes appears on the surface absurd. A novel of character by Lope de Vega would not have compared favourably with one by Cervantes; but a comedy by the latter, so far as invention, intrigue and stage 'go' are concerned, could not and did not stand its ground against one by the former.

Shakespeare's plays stand out in the boldest relief when compared with the best work of his contemporaries; but his poems do not bear comparison with Milton and Spenser.

Lope de Vega's dramatic works deal with the mere outside of life, Cervantes' immortal *Don Quixote* searches into the depths of life and passion. We find in it some of the broad humanity, the rich humour, the genial tolerance of human weakness and folly that make Shakespeare the never-failing delight of the whole world. Cervantes' genius had attained a ripe perfection before he produced his masterpiece. All his other works were so much

preparatory training. A work like *Don Quixote* is for all time and all nations, and does not spring up like a reed. The genius of Lope de Vega was ripe at once. It was not the result of deep study and profound reflection. It was the success of a day, and his best plays were written almost as rapidly as they were performed.

This is what his friend and contemporary, Montalvon, says of the almost miraculous rapidity of his productive powers :—

‘His pen was unable to keep pace with his mind, as he invented even more than his hand was capable of transcribing. He wrote a comedy in two days, which it would not be easy to copy out in the time. At Toledo, he wrote fifteen acts in fifteen days, which made five comedies. These he read at a private house, where Maestro Joseph Valdebieso was present, and was witness of the whole ; but, because this is variously related, I will mention what I myself know from my own knowledge. Roque de Figueroa, the writer for the theatre at Madrid, was at such a loss for comedies that the doors of the Theatre De la Cruz were shut ; and, as it was in the Carnival, he was so anxious upon the subject that Lope and myself agreed to compose a joint comedy as fast as possible. It was the *Tercera Orden de San Francisco*, and it is the very one in which Arias acted the part of the saint more naturally than was ever witnessed on the stage. The first act fell to Lope’s lot, and the second to mine ; we dispatched these in two days, and the third was divided into eight leaves each. As it was bad weather, I remained in his house

that night, and, knowing that I could not equal him in execution, I had a fancy to beat him in the dispatch of the business; for this purpose I got up at two o'clock, and at eleven had completed my share of the work. I immediately went out to look for him, and found him very deeply occupied with an orange-tree that had been frost-bitten in the night. Upon my asking him how he had gone on with his task, he answered: "I set about it at five; but I finished the act an hour ago; took a bit of ham for breakfast; wrote an epistle of fifty triplets; and watered the whole of the garden, which has not a little fatigued me." Then, taking out the papers, he read me eight leaves and the triplets; a circumstance that would have astonished me, had I not known the fertility of his genius and the dominion he had over the rhymes of our language.'

Lope de Vega's fame was so enormous that it became a synonym for every kind of excellence, so that people talked of a Lope melon, a Lope cigar, a Lope horse, as perfect specimens of their kind. Lope de Vega's reputation was not ephemeral in Spain. He is still read and acted there. In spite of this prodigious popularity and success, he was unable to bestow a dowry on his daughter. The bridegroom was noble, but so poor that he could not marry her without one.

In this difficulty, the poet addressed the king in the following terms:—

'Lope says, sire, that he served your grandfather with his sword. He did nothing remarkable then, and

has since done less ; but he showed his zeal and his courage. He served your father with his pen. If it has not carried your father's name and praises from one end of the world to the other, it is the fault of his want of talent, and not a deficiency of zeal. Lope has a daughter, and he is old. The Muses have made him honoured, but poor. Assist me ; I am endeavouring to get my child a husband. Spare me, O great Philip, a slight portion of your riches, and may you have more gold and diamonds than I have rhymes !'

The king gave a handsome dowry in response to this appeal.

#### THE GARDENER'S DOG.

Instead of saying, 'the dog in the manger,' a Spaniard says 'the gardener's dog.' The play with the above title, is one of the author's most brilliant and amusing productions. The opening scene will enable the reader to form an idea of the glittering rapidity of the author's style. Teodoro is secretary to the Countess Diana. She is in love with him, but is too proud to own it.

SCENE I.—*Enter* TEODORO, *the secretary, in a cloak, and*  
TRISTAN, *his servant, as if pursued.*

TEODORO.—Let us fly, Tristan ; this way.

TRISTAN.—What a disgrace !

TEODORO.—No one has recognised us.

TRISTAN.—I don't know ; but I fancy so. [*Exeunt.*

*Enter the* COUNTESS DIANA.

DIANA.—Stop, ah ! stop, worthy gentlemen ! Listen



to me. What can I say? . . . Is this the way I am treated? Hollo! no servant here? Ho! no one? . . . Did not I see a man, or was it but a dream? Ho, there! is all the house asleep?

*Enter FABIO, a servant.*

FABIO.—Did the senora call?

DIANA.—Did I call? . . . His calmness maddens me! . . . Run, booby! run at once, and see who that man was that just passed through this room!

FABIO.—This room?

DIANA.—Fly: answer with your feet, not with your tongue.

FABIO.—I fly.

[*Exit.*

DIANA.—Learn who it is. . . . What treason!

*Enter OCTAVIO.*

OCTAVIO.—Although I heard your voice, senora, I could not believe it was you calling at such an hour.

DIANA.—You take things calmly. You go to bed, and come quietly and slowly even when called. Men may enter my house, and almost my apartment; and you, faithful squire, what do you do to assist me?

OCTAVIO.—Although I heard your voice, senora, I could not believe it to be you calling at such an hour.

*Enter FABIO.*

FABIO.—I never saw anything like it. He flew away like a sparrow-hawk.

DIANA.—You recognised him?

FABIO.—By what signs?

DIANA.—A cloak embroidered with gold.

FABIO.—As he descended the staircase—

DIANA (*impatiently*).—Pretty guardians, my servants!

FABIO.—He extinguished the lamp with his hat; he then ran on, and at the doorway drew his sword—and vanished—(*aside*) and so did I.

DIANA.—You are a pretty hen!

FABIO.—What would you have wished?

DIANA.—Courage: you should have awaited him sword in hand.

FABIO.—But suppose he was a gentleman? It would have been casting your honour into the open street.

DIANA.—A gentleman here! and for what?

OCTAVIO.—Is there no one in Naples who loves and would marry you? And would not he seek every means of seeing you? Are there not hundreds who are blind with love for you? Besides, you say yourself that he was fashionably dressed; and Fabio saw him extinguish the lamp with his sombrero.

DIANA.—Without doubt it was a cavalier, who out of love has sought to corrupt my servants. What servants mine are, Octavio! . . . But, I will know who it was. The hat must have had feathers. Go; fetch it.

FABIO.—If it is still there.

DIANA.—Dolt! do you think that he had time to return for it when he was flying?

FABIO.—I will take a light and see. [*Exit.*

(*He returns with the hat.*)

FABIO.—This is the hat I run against; and a pretty thing it is.

DIANA.—That!

OCTAVIO.—I never saw a shabbier one.

FABIO.—That's it, however.

DIANA.—Do you mean to say that is it?

FABIO.—Does the senora think I would deceive her?

DIANA.—I tell you I saw feathers ; a hat with waving plumes ; and that is what you dare to bring me !

FABIO.—As he threw it on the lamp, of course, the feathers were burnt ! Icarus, ignorant that the sun would singe, fell into the white foam of the sea. Here we have the same story again. The sun—that's the lamp ; Icarus—that's the hat ; the sea—why, that's the staircase where it fell.

DIANA.—I am in no humour for jesting. This event makes me thoughtful.

OCTAVIO.—We shall get at the truth in time.

DIANA.—In time ? When ?

OCTAVIO.—Repose yourself now, and to-morrow—

DIANA.—To-morrow, indeed ! . . . I am Diana, countess of Belflor, and I will not rest till I have discovered the truth. . . . Call all my women ! [Exit FABIO.]

*Re-enter with DOROTEA, MARCELA, and ANARDA.*

ANARDA (*aside*).—This night the sea will be troubled and its waves will rage. (*Aloud*) Do you wish us to remain alone with you, senora ?

DIANA.—Yes. (*To FABIO and OCTAVIO*) Leave us.

FABIO (*aside*).—Pleasant examination !

OCTAVIO (*aside*).—She is mad !

FABIO (*aside*).—Yes, and suspects me.

[*Exeunt FABIO and OCTAVIO.*]

DIANA.—Come here, Dorotea.

DOROTEO.—I am here, senora.

DIANA.—Who are the cavaliers who usually hover about this street ?

DOROTEA.—The Marquis Ricardo and the Count of Paris.

DIANA.—Answer my next question with frankness.

DOROTEA.—I have nothing to hide.

DIANA.—With whom have you seen them talking?

DOROTEA.—Had I thousand tongues I could give but one reply : with you, senora, and with you only.

DIANA.—You have had no letter given you? Has no page entered the house?

DOROTEA.—Never, senora.

DIANA.—Stand aside.

MARCELA (*to ANARDA*).—Here's a pretty inquisition!

ANARDA.—Yes! the torture will be applied next.

DIANA.—Listen, Anarda.

ANARDA.—What does the senora desire?

DIANA.—Who is the man who quitted the house just now?

ANARDA.—A man!

DIANA.—Yes, he passed from this room. Come, I know your manœuvres. Who brought him here to see me? Who is the go-between?

ANARDA.—Do not fancy, senora, that any of us would be so bold. A man in your apartment . . . and brought here by one of us! No, no; it is impossible.

DIANA.—Come nearer. If you are not deceiving me, you have thrown a new light on the matter. It is, perhaps, to see one of my maids that this man has dared to penetrate my house?

ANARDA.—Senora, seeing you so justly angry makes me throw off all restraint; I must tell you the truth, although in so doing I may injure my friend Marcela. She loves some one, and she is loved in return. But I can't find out who it is.

DIANA.—It is wrong to conceal anything. When you admit the principal thing, why conceal the rest?

ANARDA.—Well, I know I'm a woman, and so the

secrets of others are hard to keep. But let it suffice you to know that the cavalier came after Marcela; but you need be under no apprehension. It's all quite proper. . . . Besides, it's only just begun.

DIANA.—Oh, what impudence! . . . And a nice opinion will be formed of me, who am unmarried. By the memory of the Count, my late husband——

ANARDA.—Pray be calm, senora; and let me set all right. The man who comes to see Marcela is not a stranger to the house, and he can come without danger to you.

DIANA.—Then he is one of my servants?

ANARDA.—He is.

DIANA.—And who?

ANARDA.—Teodoro.

DIANA.—My secretary?

ANARDA.—I know they have spoken together, but I know no more.

DIANA.—Retire.

ANARDA.—Senora, be prudent. [*Exit ANARDA.*]

DIANA (*aside*).—I am more tranquil now I know he did not come for me. . . . (*Aloud*) Marcela!

MARCELA.—Senora?

DIANA.—Listen.

MARCELA.—What is your will? (*Aside*) I tremble.

DIANA.—Is it you to whom I confided my opinions and my honour?

MARCELA.—What can they have said of me? Do they accuse me of being wanting in devotion and fidelity?

DIANA.—Fidelity? You?

MARCELA.—It is Teodoro, senora, who is in love, and whenever he sees me he does nothing but talk of love——

DIANA.—Ah! he talks of love! Very well, very well!

MARCELA.—I mean that as soon as he sees me his tongue reveals the feelings of his heart——

DIANA.—What does he say?

MARCELA.—It would be difficult to recollect

DIANA.—I insist!

MARCELA.—Sometimes he says, ‘Those eyes slay me;’ ‘By those eyes I live;’ ‘All night I sleep not; your beauty is ever present to me.’ Once he asked me for a single hair which, he said, had power to enchain him. But why should I repeat such absurdities?

DIANA.—But these absurdities never fail to please you!

MARCELA.—I confess it, senora. Teodoro is honest, and wishes only to marry me.

DIANA.—Shall I arrange it all for you?

MARCELA.—Oh, senora, you are too kind!

DIANA.—Marcela, I have decided upon marrying you, and will do so as soon as it is proper. . . . But I owe much to the name I bear, and I must not forget that. I cannot, therefore, permit your meetings with Teodoro; above all, not openly. As your companions know of this attachment, I must appear to oppose it; and I advise you to act with the greatest discretion. In due time I will be a friend to both of you. Teodoro has been brought up in my house; I have a real friendship for him. As to you, Marcela, I have, as you know, a true liking for you, and will not forget your services.

MARCELA.—I cast myself at your feet, senora.

DIANA.—You may retire. (*Exeunt DOROTEA and MARCELA.*) I have remarked the beauty, eloquence, elegance, and wit of Teodoro a thousand times. Were it not for the

distance which my rank has placed between us, I should love him. Love is our common nature ; but I prize my honour more than love. I respect my name, my family ; and such thoughts as I have of love are degrading. . . . Jealousy, I know, will be my portion ; and if one can envy the happiness of another, I have sufficient cause. Oh, that Teodoro could raise himself to me ! or that I could lower myself to him !

[*Exit.*

In another scene the Countess enters with a letter supposed to be written by her for a lady friend, and she asks Teodoro's opinion of it. As it is a love letter, he excuses himself by saying that he knows nothing of love.

DIANA.—You know nothing of love ? That, perhaps, was the reason why you concealed your face in your cloak last night.

He then reads the following letter :—

'To love because one sees another loving, is envy ; to be jealous before one loves is a marvellous invention of love, which has been thought impossible. My love is born of jealousy. I am uneasy, because being more beautiful, I envy one who is more happy. I am suspicious without a motive, and jealous without love ; although I feel I ought to love, since I desire to be loved. I neither yield nor oppose. I would be understood without speaking. Let him understand who can, I understand myself.'

This is Teodoro's opinion of the letter :—

TEODORO.—If that is the lady's thought I can only say

that she has expressed it beautifully. But I confess I do not see how love can be born of jealousy; for it is always the contrary, love being the root of jealousy.

DIANA.—The lady, I suspect, had been in the habit of regarding the young man with pleasure, but not with love. Still, when she saw him pay court to another, jealousy awakened love in her bosom. May it not be so?

TEODORO.—Certainly. But that jealousy had a motive, and was not that motive love?

DIANA.—I do not know, Teodoro. The lady told me that jealousy awakened her love; laid bare her heart, and forced her to renounce the indifference in which she had resolved to continue. Endeavour to reply to her.

Teodoro at first refuses, but, pressed by the Countess, retires to prepare his answer. It is as follows:—

‘To love only because one sees another love would be envy, if love did not already exist; for she who never thought of love, would not love because she witnessed love. Love which sees what it desires in the power of another, easily betrays itself; for as the colour mounts into the face at the sight of the beloved, so does the tongue express that which excites the soul. I say no more, and refuse to be happy, because if I should be deceived my baseness would offend her greatness. I speak only of what I comprehend; and I will not comprehend that which I do not merit, lest I should be supposed to believe I merited it.’

The scene ends by the Countess saying that if



ever he loved a woman of rank, he must not despair; for to make himself beloved he only needs to be constant. 'Our hearts are not made of stone.'

After the departure of Diana, Marcela enters, and joyfully tells Teodoro that the Countess has consented to their union. This convinces him that the Countess does not love him. He embraces Marcela just as Diana re-enters, who orders Marcela to be locked into her room, lest her example should corrupt others.

Soon after this, the Countess consults Teodoro on the choice of a husband, and, on his advice, chooses the Marquis in preference to her cousin, and orders Teodoro to bear him the good news and receive his reward. When the delighted Marquis arrives to thank Diana, she tells him that he is mistaken and dismisses him.

After this, Teodoro, who, if he loves anybody besides himself, loves Marcela, tries to reconcile himself with her. She pretends to be in love with Fabio, but is persuaded at last by Tristan to pardon her ambitious lover. In order to do this he calls the Countess ugly, affected, and volatile. She overhears this, and comes forward, when Marcela and Tristan take flight.

Teodoro is confounded. Diana, with cold politeness, orders him to write to her dictation as follows:—

'When a woman of rank has declared herself in favour of a man beneath her, it is unpardonable in him to speak

to another. But he who knows not how to value his good fortune is a fool.'

When Teodoro asks her to whom the note is to be addressed, she replies, 'To you ;' and leaves him overwhelmed by ambitious thoughts.

Marcela returns to learn the issue of his interview with Diana. He tells her that the Countess intends to unite her to Fabio, wishes her joy, and politely regrets that he cannot marry her. Soon after this he boldly avows his love to Diana. She does not take his declaration seriously. He accuses her of acting the part of the Gardener's Dog, and entreats her to decide to accept him, or to permit him to marry Marcela.

She replies that he shall not marry Marcela. He, very angry now, declares that he loves Marcela, and receives a vigorous slap in the face, so vigorous that it draws blood. She repents her violence, and presents him with two thousand scudi to buy handkerchiefs.

In the next act, Federico, Diana's cousin, and the rejected Marquis employ a supposed bravo to assassinate Teodoro. Tristan, the supposed bravo, informs Teodoro of the plot against his life.

In the end Teodoro is palmed off as the son of Count Ludovico, who had been sent by him to Malta, captured by the Moors, and since lost sight of.

The last scene I can quote is very fine :—

DIANA.—Teodoro, have you cured your sadness ?

TEODORO.—I love my sadness, cherish my woe, and desire no cure. Blessed be the sufferings so pleasant to endure, that he who feels that he is perishing loves the sweet cause. I have but one sorrow, and that is being forced to quit the source of my sorrow.

DIANA.—You leave me? Why?

TEODORO.—My life is threatened.

DIANA.—Your life?

TEODORO.—They envy me even my woe, coming from so fair a source. Let me return to Spain!

DIANA.—Yes; it must be. You thus place yourself out of danger, and though your absence will be painful to me, it will dispel the suspicions which hang over me. Since the day when I forgot myself in the presence of my cousin, he has been so suspicious that I must consent to your departure. . . . Go to Spain. I will see that you have six thousand scudi for the voyage.

TEODORO.—My absence will silence your detractors. I kiss your fair feet.

DIANA.—Go, Teodoro, depart. . . . Do not delay . . . Leave me, for I am a woman.

TEODORO.—Ah, you weep! What would you have me do?

DIANA.—So, then, Teodoro . . . . you leave me?

TEODORO.—Yes, senora.

DIANA.—Stay. . . . No depart. . . . Listen——

TEODORO.—What do you command?

DIANA.—Nothing. . . . Leave me.

TEODORO.—I go.

DIANA (*aside*).—I tremble. Is there a torment equal to love? . . . (*Aloud*) Well—you are not gone?

TEODORO.—Yes, senora; I am gone. [*Exit.*]

DIANA.—Malediction upon honour! Malediction!

Tristan, Teodoro's servant, passes him off on Count Ludovico as his long-lost son.

Teodoro informs the Countess that it is a trick. She, only caring for appearances, marries him.

\* \* \* \* \*

Cervantes, the Shakespeare of Spain, led a life of the most romantic and adventurous kind. In fact, no novelist has ever invented a story as fascinating and varied as the bare facts of his most extraordinary career. He was a soldier, a dramatist, a patriot, a slave; and after producing, perhaps, the greatest novel ever written, a work which is the glory of Spanish literature and a delight to the civilised world, he died poor and neglected.

His family was noble and was first settled in Galicia, from whence it moved to Castille. Cervantes was born in 1549. His family although honourable was very poor, but he received a liberal education. He became a page, chamberlain and, afterwards, a soldier, and fought at the naval battle of Lepanto—'Where,' he said, 'I lost my left hand by an arquebuse under the conquering banner of the son of that thunderbolt of war, Charles V., of happy memory.'

He also distinguished himself at the siege of Tunis, and, later, was taken prisoner by a Barbary corsair, and was kept in cruel captivity for five years at Algiers. It was customary with the Algerines to treat their prisoners according to their supposed rank and expected ransom. The

avarice of the masters sometimes alleviated the lot of the Christian slaves; but, unfortunately for Cervantes, he was treated with extreme severity, in order to compel him to obtain ransom from his friends, while he, the very soul of independence, tried to escape in order to avoid trespassing on their resources. The interest of the Moors was to pretend to believe that their captives were of exalted rank and position, in order to obtain a bigger ransom. Dr. Sosa, a Christian captive, gives the following account of his experience:—

‘What are we to think of the depth of their infernal devices, when, out of me, who am only a poor clergyman, they have already, upon their own authority, made a bishop; and soon afterwards, secretary to his Holiness, his Great Councillor and Plenipotentiary; nay, closeted me together with his Holiness for eight hours a day, treating together of most grave and weighty matters connected with the interests of Christendom? When I denied having ever attained to such great honours, they made me a cardinal. When I also disclaimed that, they declared me to be Governor of Castelnuovo, at Naples; and, as that would not serve their turn, they made me father confessor and master, as they call me, to the Queen of Spain. To establish this fact, as they stoutly maintain it, they have not scrupled to suborn both Turks and Moors who should affirm it; and there were not wanting bad Christians in their house, as well as out of it, who, the better to please my master, averred that they knew it to be the case; nay, so great is their impudence as almost to confound me, for they brought

forward some Turks, lately escaped from Naples, who, being confronted with me, declared that they had been engaged in my service when Governor of Castelnuovo, at Naples, as cooks and scullions. In the same way, they have made another captive, a great lord, a most wealthy Knight of Malta, a relation of the first noblemen and prelates of Italy and Portugal; and poor Juan Botto, who is now at my elbow, is not only a very rich man, but a celebrated Knight of Malta; and our friend Antonio Garces, one of the most distinguished nobles of Portugal.'

Cervantes in one of his novels makes Ricardo give an account of this notable custom in the story of his adventures. His master, Fetale, is always complimenting him upon his exalted rank, and telling him that, from a sense of honour, he should pay a high ransom. He tells him that it is not becoming his rank to remain an idle and inglorious captive, and laughs at the repeated disclaimers of his prisoner. Unfortunately, when Cervantes was captured he had in his possession letters of introduction from public personages of the day, which caused him to be highly valued. This led to cruel sufferings, inflicted in the expectation of obtaining a heavy ransom. He was sentenced to be imprisoned in a place called the Baths. The Moorish dungeons had three depths of caverns, like underground granaries. In mockery of the light of heaven, there was one small window, and that was crossed with iron bars. The sun and air never entered this awful place. The only sights

were harrowing; the only company was that of convicts, thieves, murderers and the lowest Moorish rabble; and the sounds and voices, mixed with blasphemies and oaths, were re-echoed as if from the vaults of the dead. Every sense was outraged by the accumulation of horrors that combined to disgust and horrify. Hunger, nakedness, thirst, heat, damp and cold, all combined to swell the catalogue of their miseries and their woes. We can easily picture the sufferings of Cervantes, whose captivity was as severe as it was possible even for his Algerian master to make it. No wonder that a man so full of energy as Cervantes should try again and again to escape from his infernal captivity. On four occasions he was on the point of being impaled, hanged, or burned alive for his daring attempts to liberate himself and his unfortunate comrades. But, of all the enterprises which entered the imagination of this fearless soldier, the most generous, noble, and remarkable, as regarded its consequences, made too at a period when Europe trembled at the clank of the Ottoman chains, was that of rising upon their tyrants and destroying them in the very stronghold of their cruelty and their power.

There is the best authority for believing that, if the good fortune of Cervantes had been equal to his courage, perseverance and skill, the city of Algiers would have been taken by the Christians, for his bold and resolute project aimed at no less a result. Moreover, if he had not been sold and betrayed by those who undertook to assist him in his grand and noble

undertaking—to liberate the captives of so many lands—his own captivity might have proved a fortunate event.

At last Cervantes returned to Spain, after five years' slavery at Algiers. He returned fired with animosity against the Moors, and filled with ardent sympathy for those Christians still in slavery. Thus his comedy of *El Trato de Argel*, *Los Baños de Argel*, his tale of the Captive in *Don Quixote*, and that of the *Generous Lover*, were not mere literary works, but charitable endeavours to serve the Christian captives, and to excite the public sympathy in their favour.

I have dwelt fully on this extraordinary experience of Cervantes, an experience which brought him into direct contact with the lowest classes and the elementary passions of mankind, with a view of showing how profound and terrible was his knowledge of human character and human passion.

Before producing his immortal masterpiece, *Don Quixote*, Cervantes wrote a great number of plays which were not successful. The following racy account of the rise of the Spanish drama is from the pen of Cervantes:—

'I must entreat your pardon, dear reader, if you should see me in this prologue a little overstepping my accustomed modesty. Some time since I happened to find myself in company with a few friends who were discoursing about comedies and other matters relating thereto, and they treated this subject with so much ability and refinement that they appeared to me almost to approach per-



fection. They spoke of the man who was the first in Spain to free the drama from its swathing bands, and to clothe it with pomp and magnificence. As the oldest of the company, I remarked that I had frequently heard the great Lope de Rueda recite, a poet equally celebrated as a man and as a scholar. He was born at Seville, and was by trade a goldbeater. As a pastoral poet he had great merit, and in that species of composition no one, before or since his time, has surpassed him. Although I could not judge of the excellence of his poems, for I was then but a child, yet some of them still remain in my memory, and, recalling these at a riper age, they appear to me to be worthy of their reputation. In the time of this celebrated Spaniard all the apparatus of a dramatist and a manager was contained in a bag, and consisted of four white cloaks bordered with gilt leather, for shepherds, four beards and wigs, and four crooks, more or less. The dramas were mere dialogues, or eclogues, between two or three shepherds and a shepherdess, and these conversations were enlivened and prolonged by two or three interludes, in which negresses were introduced as confederates or go-betweens; and, occasionally, some clowns and Biscayans made their appearance. At this time there was no scenery, there were no combats between Moors and Christians, on horseback and on foot; no trap-doors by which figures might appear to rise out of the earth. The stage was merely composed of four square blocks of wood, upon which rested five or six planks, so as to elevate the actors a foot or two above the ground. No angels or spirits descended in clouds from heaven. The sole ornament of the theatre was an old curtain, supported at both ends by strings, which separated the dressing-room from the audience. At the back were placed the

musicians, who sang, without any guitar, some ancient ballad.

‘Lope de Rueda at last died, and, on account of his celebrity and excellence, was buried between the two choirs in the great church of Cordova, where he lies in the same place in which that renowned madman Luis Lopez is interred.’

Before quitting the father of the Spanish drama, Lope de Rueda, I will introduce his celebrated and amusing proverb, *The Olives*.

#### THE OLIVES.

*Enter TORUVIO, a peasant. (He throws down a bundle of wood.)*

TORUVIO.—God be with me! What a tempest pursued me from the mountain! I thought that the sky would fall down, and I dare say my wife has not got my supper ready—confound her! Halloh! daughter . . . Menciguela! So every one is asleep in Zamora? . . . Do you hear me?

*Enter MENCIGUELA.*

MENCI.—Good heavens! Father, are you going to break open the door?

TORUVIO.—There’s a chatterbox! There’s a tongue! . . . And where is your mother, senora?

MENCI.—She is at one of the neighbours’.

TORUVIO.—Deuce take her and you! Go and fetch her.

*Enter AGUEDA.*

AGUEDA.—Now, then, my lord, what next? Because you have returned home with a wretched bundle of wood, there’ll be no bearing with you.

TORUVIO.—So! This bundle seems a trifle to your ladyship; but I swear before Heaven it was with the utmost difficulty, with the assistance of your godchild, that I could lift it on my shoulders.

AGUEDA.—Well, be it so. . . . But how wet you are!

TORUVIO.—I have just had some soup—of water. Come, wife, let me have something to eat.

AGUEDA.—And what the devil would you have me give you? I have nothing.

MENCI.—Father, how wet the wood is!

TORUVIO.—Wet indeed! yet your mother will swear it's only dew—to the rain.

AGUEDA.—Run, child, run, and dress a couple of eggs for your father's supper, and prepare his bed. (*Exit MENCIGUELA.*) Now, I'm certain, husband, that you haven't thought of planting that olive-tree I asked you to plant.

TORUVIO.—And what should have kept me so late, but planting it?

AGUEDA.—That's well. And where have you planted it?

TORUVIO.—Down there by the fig-tree . . . you remember . . . there where I kissed you one day.

*Enter MENCIGUELA.*

MENCI.—Father, you can come to supper; it's quite ready.

AGUEDA.—Husband, do you know what I've been thinking? The branch of the olive-tree which you have just planted will furnish us in six or seven years' time with four or five measures of olives; and by planting a branch here and there you will have a fine field of them . . . in five-and-twenty or thirty years.

TORUVIO.—That's true, wife ; how surprised every one will be !

AGUEDA.—Look here, my man ; do you know what I've been thinking ? I will gather the olives ; you will carry them to market on our donkey, and Menciguela will sell them. But remember, child, my strict orders that you don't sell them under under two *reals* of Castille for each peck.

TORUVIO.—Eh ? Two reals of Castille ? You have no conscience. It will be enough if we ask fourteen or fifteen *dineros* the peck.

AGUEDA.—Hold your tongue. The tree is of the very rarest kind ; it is from Cordova.

TORUVIO.—Well, suppose it is ; the price I named is enough.

AGUEDA.—To-day you distract me . . . hold your tongue ! Look here, child, you heard me say that the very least you must ask is two *reals*.

TORUVIO.—The devil, two *reals* ! . . . Come here, my child ; how much will you ask ?

MENCI.—As much as you please, father.

TORUVIO.—Fourteen or fifteen *dineros*.

MENCI.—Very well, father.

AGUEDA.—Very well, indeed ! Come here, child ; *how* much do you intend to ask ?

MENCI.—Whatever you please, mother.

AGUEDA.—Two *reals* of Castille.

TORUVIO (*furious*).—What ! two reals ? I promise you, child, that if you do not ask what I bid you, I shall hold myself ready to give you two hundred stripes. How much will you ask, now ?

MENCI.—What you told me, father.

TORUVIO.—Fourteen or fifteen *dineros*.

MENCI.—Yes, father.

AGUEDA.—Yes, father? Take that (*beating her*), and that; and do as I bid you.

TORUVIO.—Leave the child alone.

MENCI.—Oh, mother! Oh, father! don't kill me!

*Enter ALOJA, a neighbour.*

ALOJA.—What's this, neighbours? Why do you beat your child thus?

AGUEDA.—Ah, sir, this wretched man pretends to sell things under price, and ruin his family. . . . Some olives as big as walnuts! . . .

TORUVIO.—I swear by the bones of my ancestors they are not as big as millet-seeds.

AGUEDA.—Yes, they are.

TORUVIO.—No, they are not.

ALOJA.—Come, neighbour, be good enough to go in; I will undertake to arrange this matter. (*Exit AGUEDA.*) Now, Toruvio, explain. Bring out your olives, that I may see and measure them; and I will promise to buy them all.

TORUVIO.—But the olives are not in the house; as yet they are only in the ground.

ALOJA.—Then bring them here; you may be sure I will give you a fair price.

MENCI.—My mother says she will have two *reals* a peck.

ALOJA.—That's enormously dear.

TORUVIO.—Doesn't it seem so to you?

MENCI.—My father only asks fourteen *dineros*.

ALOJA.—Show me a sample.

TORUVIO.—A sample? God bless me! you don't understand. To-day I planted an olive-tree, and my wife says that in six or seven years hence it will yield us four or

five measures; that she will gather them, I will carry them to market, and our daughter sell them, and the price is to be two *reals* a peck. I say, No; she says, Yes; and there's a dispute and a row.

ALOJA.—What a pleasant subject for a dispute! Whoever heard the like? The olives are scarcely planted, and they cause the poor girl to cry.

MENCI.—Doesn't it look absurd, sir?

TORUVIO.—Don't cry, my child. That girl, sir, is worth her weight in gold. Go and prepare supper, and I will buy you a frock from the money we get from our first olives.

ALOJA.—And you go home, too, neighbour, and live in peace with your wife.

TORUVIO.—Adieu, sir. *[Exit, with his daughter.*

ALOJA.—Well, we certainly do see strange things in this world. The olives have not grown, and yet they have caused quarrels!

To resume Cervantes' vivid sketch:—

'Naharro, a native of Toledo, succeeded to Lope de Rueda. He attained a great celebrity, more especially in his representations of a busy, meddling poltroon. Naharro added something to the stage decorations, and changed the bag in which the wardrobe was contained for trunks and portmanteaux. He introduced music upon the stage, which had formerly been placed in the background; and he took away the actors' beards; for, until his time, no actor dared to appear without a false beard. He, on the contrary, wished all his actors to appear undisguised, with the exception of those who represented old men, or changed their characters. He was a great

inventor ; he invented scenes, clouds, thunder, lightning, challenges and combats, but nothing of this kind was carried to the perfection which, at this day, we behold (and it is here that I must trespass upon my modesty), until the time when the theatre of Madrid exhibited the *Captives of Algiers*, which is my own composition, as are also *Numantia* and the *Naval Engagement*.

‘It was then that I made an attempt to reduce the comedies of five acts to three, and I was the first to represent the phantoms of the imagination, and the hidden thoughts of the soul, by introducing figures of them upon the stage, with the universal applause of the spectators. I composed, during this period, from twenty to thirty dramas, all of which were represented without a single cucumber, or orange, or any other missile, usually aimed at bad comedians, being flung at the actors’ heads. They proceeded through their parts without hisses, without confusion, and without clamour. I was at length occupied with other matters, and I laid down my pen and forsook the drama. In the meantime that prodigy, Lope de Vega, appeared, and immediately assumed the dramatic crown. He seduced under his dominion all the farce-writers, and filled the world with excellent and well-combined comedies, of which he wrote so many that they could not be comprised in ten thousand pages. What is no less surprising, he himself saw them all represented, or was credibly informed that they had been so. All his rivals together have not written a moiety of what he himself achieved alone.’

When Cervantes speaks of his own dramatic work in his old age, his simplicity and gaiety is

very touching, because he was evidently deeply wounded at the neglect of his plays.

‘Some years ago,’ he says, ‘I returned to the ancient occupation of my leisure hours ; and, imagining that the age had not passed away in which I used to hear the sound of praise, I again began to write comedies. The birds, however, had flown from their nest. I could find no manager to ask for my plays, though they knew that I had written them. I threw them, therefore, into the corner of a trunk, and condemned them to obscurity. A bookseller then told me that he would have bought them from me, had he not been told by a celebrated author that much dependence might be placed upon my prose, but not upon my poetry. To say the truth, this information mortified me much. I said to myself, “Cervantes, you are certainly either changed, or the world, contrary to its custom, has grown wiser, for in past times you used to meet with praise.” I read my comedies anew, together with some interludes, which I had placed with them. I found that they were not so bad, but that they might pass, from what this author called darkness, into what others might perhaps term noon-day. I was angry, and sold them to the bookseller, who has now printed them. They have paid me tolerably ; and I have pocketed my money with pleasure, and without troubling myself about the opinions of the actors ; I was willing to make them as excellent as I could, and if, dear reader, thou findest anything in them good, I pray thee, when thou meetest any other calumniator, to tell him to amend his manners, and not to judge so severely, since, after all, the plays contain not any incongruities or striking faults.’



It may appear very daring to compare the author of *Don Quixote* with Æschylus; but *Numantia* may be compared with the *Persians* for the burning intensity of its patriotism. The city of Numantia is attacked by the Romans, and the heroic defenders prefer death in any form to surrender to the hated enemy.

‘Numantia only, careless of her blood,  
Has dared to draw her shining sword and strike  
For that old liberty she long has cherished.  
But now, oh grief! her time of doom is near;  
Her fatal hour approaches, and her life  
Is waning to its close; but her bright fame  
Shall still survive, and, like the phoenix, burst  
More glorious from her ashes.’

\* \* \* \* \*

In one of Cervantes' novels Asturiano goes to market for the purpose of buying an ass.

‘He examined a great many, but did not meet with one that took his fancy. A gipsy followed him about, and endeavoured to persuade him that he had one that would exactly suit him, but Asturiano thought it was too small and weak, although it appeared to be very lively; besides, he mistrusted the gipsy; in addition, some one pointed out to him that the ass moved so briskly because quicksilver had been put into his ears. The man who told him this had his own views, for, a moment afterwards, he whispered to Asturiano that, if he was seeking for an animal fit to carry water, he had, in a meadow near, the finest ass he ever saw in his life. “Follow me,”

said he, "I will only take you a few steps." Asturiano consented, and the other seized him by the arm, like an old friend, and led him to a large field, where they found a number of water-carriers watching their asses graze. Asturiano approved of the animal, and counted down twelve ducats for the ass and trappings necessary for the occupation of a water-carrier. There was vast delight amongst the water-carriers when they made the acquaintance of their new associate; they congratulated Asturiano on becoming a member of their body, and all assured him that he had obtained a most valuable animal; for, "be assured," added they, "that the man from whom you bought him, now about to return to his own country, has gained in one year two full suits of clothes and the twelve ducats which you have just paid him, besides having fed and supported himself and his ass very creditably." Four of the water-carriers now agreed to play at the game of prime, and immediately seated themselves on the grass, the ground serving for a table, and their cloaks for a carpet. Asturiano placed himself to overlook them, and was greatly surprised to find how boldly they played. The stakes ran high; two of the players in a short time lost their all and withdrew. The seller of the ass had a great desire to try his fortune, but, as he thought the game would be awkward with only three players, he said to Asturiano that if he would make the fourth he would stake a few ducats. Asturiano, who never willingly broke up a party, and was a skilful player, readily agreed to play. They seated themselves on the grass, and the game went on so rapidly that in less than an hour Asturiano had lost seven or eight crowns of gold.

"You have a great superiority over me," said he to his opponents, "but no matter; I have no more money

about me, but I have my ass, and I will stake him, if you please; he is, as you well know, strong and valuable, and I will either lose him or recover my unfortunate crowns."

'Asturiano was taken at his word, and it was arranged that they should play for the ass by quarters. He was most fortunate at the beginning of the play, but his first gains were soon retaken by his opponents, and he lost one quarter of his donkey; this was soon followed by the loss of another quarter; in fact, in a short time he lost the four quarters, and the man who won them was the very man who had just sold him the animal.

"So you return again to me, my dear ass!" said the winner, laughing. "Come, then, my profitable companion, my dear little Mexico! But I shall not be thy master long; I shall sell thee again on the first good opportunity."

'Then he rose to take possession of his beloved donkey.

"Stop! stop there, my friend!" exclaimed Asturiano, "do not be in such a hurry to seize the sacrifice; the ass is not wholly yours. I know well that I have lost four quarters of the animal, and that those four quarters belong to you. I do not dispute that fact, and you may take them away whenever you please, but the ass's tail belongs to me, as I have not yet staked that."

'This statement made all the water-carriers shout with laughter.

"You may laugh as much as you like," continued Asturiano, gravely, "but I have not lost the tail of my ass, and he who will have it must first win it."

"What!" exclaimed the water-carrier; "how can that be? When we sell a sheep, for example, we do not separate the tail. Does not the tail belong to one of the hind quarters?"

“That is true,” replied Asturiano, “with respect to sheep in general, but I maintain it is wholly false with regard to the sheep of Barbary. Those sheep have really five quarters, and the tail forms the fifth. It is true,” continued he, “that when they sell sheep alive they sell the whole together, that is, all the five quarters, but my ass has only been played for; he has not been sold at all; I never thought of hazarding his tail, and surely no person can possibly tell, better than myself, what my intentions were in this respect. Give me, then, the tail, and take the four quarters. That each should have his own is quite right, and if any one attempts to act otherwise he must first settle with me. I know very well how to protect my right, and I mean to do it. Your number renders you powerful,” said he to the water-carriers, with an angry countenance, “but if your number were ten times greater, if you were all the water-carriers in the world, I would have you know that I don’t fear you. I say, in addition, that if you were to offer me the value of the tail ten times told I would not take it. I will have the tail itself, and nothing else, so that you have only to dismember the ass this instant, so that I may have my tail.”

‘He threw his cap into the air, showed them a glittering dagger under his cloak, and, putting himself in the posture of a man ready to fight, he appeared so formidable to the water-carriers, that not one amongst them dared to move.

“What do you intend to do?” inquired one of the men of the winner of the four quarters of the donkey. “Asturiano may not be quite right, but, at the same time, he is not altogether wrong, as the point in dispute ought to have been well understood before the game began.”

‘Pressed on all sides, by one and the other, the general opinion being that it was better for the winner to play one of the quarters against the tail, rather than risk his life for such a trifle, he agreed at last to this proposal. This was just what Asturiano wanted, and, seeing his opponent somewhat frightened, he, in a friendly manner, shook him cordially by both hands, and they again seated themselves to continue the game. The stake was for the tail against one quarter. Asturiano won it; he won another immediately after; in short, he won back his ass. Never was a man more astonished than the water-carrier.

“‘You have won back your ass,” said he to Asturiano. “I do not know how it has happened; but I would rather that you should win him than see my old companion cut to pieces. Let us play for the money.”

“‘I have done,” said Asturiano. “I am satisfied; I care not for the loss of my golden crowns, but I will not again hazard the loss of my ass, as your ‘dear little Mexico’ will produce me a livelihood.”

‘But Asturiano could not resist their urgent importunities to play again, and he continued to play so successfully that he did not leave even half a real to the water-carrier. It is impossible to describe the mortification and despair of this ruined knave, whom nothing could console.’

I must not dwell further on Cervantes’ minor works, but will pass to his great masterpiece, *Don Quixote*.

This work contains the hoarded experience of a life. It was written when its author was declining

in years. No young man could have written it, because no young man can be a master, especially of humour and human nature. Don Quixote himself is a character of the most complex kind. His single-heartedness, his enthusiasm, his utter want of the sense of the ridiculous, his power of adding romantic charms and romantic attributes to a frowsy servant girl, are developed and used by the author with a variety of power that has never been equalled. Don Quixote's life is entirely in the imagination; this enables him to see castles in windmills, beauty and refinement in coarseness and vulgarity, and poetry, wisdom, and genius in bombastic and absurd works on chivalry, love, and knight-errantry. To emphasise the romantic and preposterous exaltation of the mad gentleman of La Mancha, we have his coarse, vulgar, practical, almost grovelling squire, Sancho Panza. The master lives in the clouds; Sancho is most at home in the mud. Everything that can be done to bring out the contrast between these two characters is put in the most amusing and effective manner. No extracts could convey to the reader the adventures of the master and man at the inn, a very vulgar inn, too, which Don Quixote takes for an enchanted castle, in spite of the smell of rancid oil and garlic, and where, as a climax to all the other piled-up absurdities, poor Sancho, who is short and fat, is tossed in a blanket. Don Quixote always expresses himself in a stilted and oratorical manner; Sancho's language is of the coarsest kind, and is interlarded with the vulgarest illustrations and proverbs. His

master is tall, attenuated, in fact, merely skin and bone, his face is long, his nose prominent, his eyes hollow and very bright; Sancho, on the contrary, is short, fat, his face is round, eyes small and pig-like, mouth large and coarse, nose nothing to speak of; in fact, it is a contrast between the poetical gone mad and the coarsest realism.

This work was the delight of Spain; it was read with shouts of laughter by the king and the peasant. Poor Don Quixote is a type of the fatal results which follow the possession of romantic feelings and enthusiasm without common sense to guide and control them. On the other hand, and that is the priceless lesson of the book, his man, Sancho Panza, shows what the mere worship of ease and vulgar prudence will degrade a man to. If the enthusiasm and mad exaltation of Don Quixote could have been combined with a little of the vulgar self-love of Sancho, one extreme might have corrected the other, and we might have had a wise gentleman instead of a maniac and a brute.

Such was the success of this wonderful work that, as Philip III. was one afternoon standing in a balcony of his palace at Madrid, he observed a student on the banks of the river Manzanares, with a book in his hand, which delighted him so much that, every now and then, he broke into an ecstasy of laughter. The king looked at him and, turning to his courtiers, said, 'That man is either mad or reading *Don Quixote*.'

Although the king thought so highly of this

great work, its author was bowed down by poverty and infirmities, and nothing was done for him by the king or his courtiers.

The last glimpse of the life of Cervantes I have space for is from his own inimitable pen, and is taken from the preface to the *Labours of Persiles and Sigismunda*, which was published by the author's widow.

‘It happened afterwards, dear reader, that as two of my friends and myself were coming from Esquivias, a place famous for twenty reasons, but more especially for its illustrious families and for its excellent wines, I heard a man coming behind us, whipping his nag with all his might, and seemingly very desirous of overtaking us. Presently he called out to us to stop, which we did; and when he came up he turned out to be a country student, dressed in brown, with spatterdashes and round-toed shoes. He had a sword in a huge sheath, and a band tied with tape. He had indeed but two tapes, so that his band got out of its place, which he took great pains to rectify.

“‘Doubtless,” said he, “señors, you are in quest of some office or some prebend at the court of my lord of Toledo, or from the king, if I may judge from the celebrity with which you get along; for, in good truth, my ass has hitherto had the fame of a good trotter, and yet he could not overtake you.”

‘One of my companions answered, “It is the steed of Señor Miguel de Cervantes that is the cause of it, for he is very quick in his paces.”

‘Scarcely had the student heard the name of Cervantes



than, throwing himself off his ass, while his cloak-bag tumbled on one side and his portmanteau on the other, and his hands covered his face, he sprang towards me, and, seizing me by the hand, exclaimed :—

“ This, then, is the famous one-handed author, the merriest of all writers, the favourite of the Muses !” As for me, when I heard him pouring forth all these praises, I thought myself bound to answer him ; so, embracing his neck, by which I contrived to pull off his bands altogether, I said, “ I am indeed that Cervantes, señor, but not the favourite of the Muses, nor the other fine things which you have said of me. Pray mount your ass again, and let us converse together for the small remainder of our journey.” The good student did as I desired. We then drew bit and proceeded at a more moderate pace. As we rode on, we talked of my illness, but the student gave me little hope, saying :—

“ It is an hydropsy, which all the water in the ocean, if you could drink it, would not cure ; you must drink less, Señor Cervantes, and not forget to eat, for that alone can cure you.”

“ Many other people,” said I, “ have told me the same thing, but it is impossible for me not to drink as if I had been born for nothing but drinking. My life is pretty nearly ended, and, to judge by the quickness of my pulse, I cannot live longer than next Sunday. You have made acquaintance with me at a very unfortunate time, as I fear I shall not live to show my gratitude to you for your obliging conduct.”

‘ Such was our conversation when we arrived at the bridge of Toledo, over which I was to pass, while he followed another route by the bridge of Segovia.

‘ As to my future history, I leave that to the care of

fame. My friends, no doubt, will be very anxious to narrate it, and I shall have great pleasure in hearing it. I embraced him anew, and repeated the offer of my services.

‘He spurred his ass, and left me as ill inclined to prosecute my journey as he was well disposed to go on his; he had, however, supplied my pen with ample materials for pleasantry. But all times are not the same. Perhaps the day may yet arrive when, taking up the thread which I am now compelled to break, I may complete what is now wanting, and what I would fain tell. But adieu to gaiety; adieu to humour; adieu, my pleasant friends! I must now die, and I wish for nothing better than speedily to see you—well contented in another world.’

Such was the calm, philosophical gaiety with which this long-suffering heroic man and Christian contemplated his approaching death; and, in the words of Sismondi, it may be safely asserted that this unaffected fortitude was characteristic of ‘the soldier who fought so valiantly at Lepanto, and who so firmly supported his five years’ captivity in Algiers.’

Cervantes died at Madrid in 1616. It is, perhaps, interesting to reflect that he was a contemporary of Shakespeare, so that the two greatest humourists the world has produced were living at the same time.

The following is Cervantes’ description of his own personal appearance. He supposes, in his preface to his ‘Exemplary Novels,’ that one of his friends was going to engrave his portrait for the frontispiece,

and that the following inscription was to accompany it :—

‘ Him whom you see here, with aquiline visage, chestnut hair, his forehead high and open, with lively animated eyes, his nose curved though well proportioned, a silver beard (though not twenty years ago it was all golden), large moustachios, a small mouth, but few teeth, and those so bad and ill-assorted that they don’t care to preserve harmony with each other, a body neither fat nor lean, neither tall nor short, a clear complexion, rather light than brown, a little stooping in the shoulders and not very light of foot—is the author of *Galatea*, and of *Don Quixote de la Mancha*, and of other works which run through the streets as if they had lost their way, and, perhaps, without the name of their master. . . . He is commonly called Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra ; and, lastly, as this occasion has failed me, and I may remain blank without cutting a *figure*, it becomes necessary that I should make myself known by my tongue, which, though lisping, will be at no loss to say truths which can be well understood by signs.’

The following passage, on the place of burial of Cervantes, is from the pen of a Spanish author, Navarette :—

‘ The misfortunes which pursued Cervantes during his life seemed to follow him even into the tomb, and to conceal the spot where he lay in the silent seclusion of the cloisters. The same doubt and uncertainty which attached to the circumstances of the daughter extended to the fate of the father ; the actual spot where they repose must ever remain unknown, but the obscurity in which so interesting a fact remains involved cannot,

fortunately, diminish the lustre of that fame which fills the world, and it should rather act as an inducement to his grateful countrymen to repair, as far as may be, the injustice of fortune and of his contemporaries, by erecting to him a monument every way worthy of his genius, which is yet to be done.'

At last the pure and gentle soul, in which there was no gall, passed away from an ungrateful world which knew not how to value him. He added largely to the sum of human happiness, and, although he was poor, he was happy in the possession of a noble, loving heart; and, in his life and death, proved the truth of the divine words 'that the kingdom of Heaven is within.'

CALDERON.



## CALDERON.

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SOME critics have compared Calderon to Shakespeare. The comparison is utterly preposterous. No two authors could differ more in method, substance, and style. Shakespeare's men and women show us their inmost souls and hearts. Calderon's creations are scarcely men and women; they are beings moved by one passion, as a machine might be moved by one spring. Calderon incarnates an idea and calls it a man or woman; Shakespeare reduces and subordinates all to the individual mind and character of the person portrayed. In Calderon there is no gradual unfolding and development of character; no striking out new phases of thought and passion by the shock of circumstances. There are in Calderon's plays the jealous and implacable husband, the ardent lover, the determined villain; but they remain to the end of the fifth act exactly what they were in Scene I., Act I. They all wear their hearts on their sleeves. They are distinctly lay figures, dressed and posed and made to articulate from the teeth words of love or hate; but no thought animates their brains, no real blood circulates in their hearts. All the

action is arranged by a consummate stage manager, but there is no character, no humour, no mixed passions, no awful and tremendous struggle between the good and bad angels in man and woman; all is mechanical and proceeds from the head alone; the heart has no part in it.

Most of Calderon's plays illustrate some proverb. For instance: *Life is a Dream*; *In this Life all is True and all is False*; *Beware of Still Waters*; *Jealousy the Worst of Monsters*; *All is not so Bad as it Appears*; *A House with Two Doors is Difficult to Guard*.

Calderon was half a preacher and half a dramatist, and there was not enough of him to be great in both parts.

Then a Spaniard's religion had nothing to do with the conscience and the heart. No. It consisted, in Calderon's time, in slavish devotion to the Holy Inquisition and to the Catholic dogmas and ceremonies. Take to illustrate this important point the hero of the *Devotion to the Cross*. Ennio boasts that:—

‘Horrid crimes, theft, murder, sacrilege,  
Treason and perfidy—these are my boast  
And glory!’

Then this truculent gentleman regales us with an account of some of the enormities he has committed, including the murder of an old hidalgo and the abduction of his daughter, stabbing another hidalgo and carrying off his wife. After these little escapades



he sought refuge in a convent, and seduced a nun. This outrage on the Holy Catholic religion awakened his slumbering conscience, and taught him for the first time that he was a scoundrel. His soul is saved through his abject terror of the power of the offended Church. Conscience does not touch him.

In another piece, by Tirso de Molena, a hermit whose life has been most virtuous has been the victim of religious doubt. This damns him. His soul is sunk into the abyss, while a bandit, who perishes on the scaffold for hideous crimes, dies penitent and is saved!

Spain at that time was not distinguished by lofty morality.

Don Pedro Calderon de la Barca was born at Madrid at the commencement of the year 1600. He was baptized on the 14th February of that year. His family, on both sides, were of noble blood. When nine years of age, he was placed in the Royal College at Madrid, under the care of the Jesuits. He soon surpassed all his fellow-students. The fame of Lope de Vega was then at its height, and aroused the emulation of the boy. His first comedy, fortunately lost, was written before he was fourteen.

Calderon afterwards studied at the celebrated University of Salamanca, where he soon became the pride of the college. The drama still fascinated him, and before leaving Salamanca he enjoyed the delight of seeing some of his plays acted. He returned to Madrid, and learned there, from the plays of Lope de Vega, the art of constructing a complicated plot of intrigue.

At the age of twenty-five he joined the army, and went to Flanders and Milan. During these ten years of travel and adventure he collected materials for his future work.

In 1636 Calderon returned to Madrid, at the command of Philip IV., who made him superintendent of the dramatic festivities of the court. Lope de Vega had been dead one year. Four years afterwards the Chevaliers of the Four Orders were ordered to join the army in Catalonia. The king, who wanted a comedy, intimated to Calderon that he would accept a comedy as a substitute for his military services. The poet preferred to write and fight; he dashed off a play and then joined the army.

At the conclusion of the campaign he returned to court, and was received with much favour. In 1651 Calderon took religious orders, but did not relinquish the theatre. In 1663 he joined the congregation of St. Peter, composed exclusively of priests born at Madrid, and was soon elevated to the post of chaplain of the congregation. He died at the age of eighty-one, on the 26th May, 1681.

Although for fertility Calderon could not compare with Lope de Vega, he left the world one hundred and twenty comedies of three acts each, one hundred auto-sacramentales, two hundred loas (a kind of prologue), one hundred interludes, besides an indefinite number of poems, songs, and romances.

*The Physician of His Own Honour* is one of the most remarkable and characteristic of Calderon's tragic plays. I will therefore introduce a sketch

of it. It is intense, gloomy, and the situations are arranged with great art.

Don Enrique, the prince, is thrown from his horse and remains insensible. The king exhibits a cool indifference to his brother's fate, and leaves him. The injured Enrique is carried into the castle of Don Gutierre, and Doña Mencia comes to attend him. To her horror she recognises the prince who had formerly made love to her, and whom she still loves. The prince does not know that she is the wife of Don Gutierre. When he recovers consciousness he recognises Doña Mencia, and a stilted love scene occurs. The prince, on learning that the lady is married, exclaims:—

‘Troy burns ; and the Æneas of my heart  
Must from the flames be rescued.’

The lady rises to the occasion and does justice to her chaste reserve in the following language:—

‘It was a mountain of snow conquered by the flowers,  
Squadrons armed by time.’

The husband, Don Gutierre, enters to pay his respects to the prince. The latter calls for his horse. Don Gutierre, urges him to stay, but he protests that he is anxious to reach Seville. He tells Gutierre that a friend had betrayed him, by assisting another to gain the heart of the woman he loved.

Doña Mencia then humbly suggests that the prince should not condemn his friend unheard ; that perhaps all could be satisfactorily explained. He says he will profit by her advice, and leaves them.

Gutierre then asks his wife's permission to go to Seville to see the king. Mencia affects to be jealous of a certain Leonora, but finally gives her permission. After his departure Mencia tells her maid that she was forced into her marriage with Don Gutierre, and that the prince loves her more than ever, but that she relies on her sense of honour.

In the next scene Leonora begs for justice of the king against Don Gutierre, who refused to marry her according to promise.

Don Gutierre arrives, and is questioned by the king. He answers that he would have married the lady, but had seen a man descending from her balcony, and for that reason refused. Then Don Arias avows that he descended from the balcony after visiting another lady residing in the same house. This gentleman also offers to defend Leonora's honour with his sword.

Don Gutierre attempts to draw. The king, indignant, orders the arrest of both.

In the second act, Prince Enrique gains admission to the house of Doña Mencia, whose husband is under arrest.

The lovers are together when the husband, who has been released on parole, arrives to surprise them. The prince is hidden in her bedroom. Gutierre is prodigal with his expressions of love. Mencia talks with him calmly, and leaves him to see about his supper. She soon returns with every mark of terror in her face and voice, and tells Gutierre that a man is concealed in her chamber. The furious husband

draws his sword; Doña Mencia snatches up a light and offers to conduct him, but she pretends to stumble, and drops the light, which is extinguished. In the darkness and confusion the prince escapes. Gutierre enters Doña Mencia's room to search for the intruder. He returns with the prince's dagger which he found there, under his cloak. His suspicions are vague, and he is silent on them. He tells his wife that her fears were baseless; no man could have been there. His manner is grim, but very polite. He bids her farewell, and, opening his cloak to embrace her, she discovers Enrique's dagger pointed at her. She shrieks and exclaims:—

MENCIA.—Hold, señor! Your dagger pointed at me! I have never wronged you! I——

DON GUTIERRE.—What troubles my beloved wife?

MENCIA.—Why—ah! seeing you thus I fancied myself already bathed in my own blood. That dagger——

DON GU.—When seeking your imaginary intruder I drew my dagger to punish him.

MENCIA.—I have never wronged you.

DON GU.—Sweet wife, your defence is most superfluous.

MENCIA.—Ah! when you are absent from me my sadness so confuses my brain as to make me fear even shadows.

DON GU.—Courage! . . . If it is possible, I will come to-morrow night. Till then, God bless you!

MENCIA.—God bless you! [*Exit.*]

DON GU. (*alone*).—Oh, Honour! you and I have a fearful account to settle when alone!

Gutierre is set at liberty. He sees the prince again, and notices that his sword resembles the dagger he found in his wife's chamber. This arouses his suspicions, which he resolves to clear up. The next scene is at Don Gutierre's. Doña Mencia is sleeping in a chair. Don Gutierre arrives. He is delighted at finding her alone and asleep, and, therefore, out of mischief. Yet, on deeper thought, she being alone in her chamber, may be waiting for some one for whom her maid is perhaps on the watch. He extinguishes the light and awakens her. The following dialogue takes place in whispers:—

MENCIA.—O God! what is this?

GUTIERRE.—Hush, speak softly.

MENCIA.—Who art thou?

GUTIERRE.—Knowest thou me not?

MENCIA.—Ah, yes! There is but one who dares to be so bold.

GUTIERRE (*aside*).—She recognises me. (*Aloud*) Mencia, wonder not that love should be so bold.

MENCIA.—Love will not pardon the crime your highness now commits.

GUTIERRE (*aside*).—*Your highness!* Then she knows me not! She speaks not *to me!* O God! what have I heard! What a chaos of fresh doubts! O misery! O heavy day!

MENCIA.—Wilt thou a second time thus risk my life? Think'st thou that every night——

GUTIERRE (*aside*).—O death!

MENCIA.—That every night thou canst hide here?

GUTIERRE (*aside*).—O Heavens!

MENCIA.—That every night the light can be extinguished?

GUTIERRE (*aside*).—Extinguish *life!*

MENCIA.—And thou escape Don Gutierre?

GUTIERRE.—Oh, heavy day!

The vengeance of Don Gutierre is dark, silent, and deadly. He accumulates fresh proofs of the prince's identity, and intercepts a letter to his wife, which convinces him that, although she has been faithful to him in deed, her heart is Don Enrique's. He detects her writing a letter, and snatches it from her. She faints, and on recovering finds the following letter from her husband:—

'Love adores thee, but Honour condemns thee; the one dooms thee to death, the other warns thee of it. Thou hast only two hours to live. Thou art a Christian; save thy soul: as for thy life, thou canst not save it.'

Her terror, on receiving this, is extreme. She exclaims:—

'Jacinta! O God, what is this? . . . No one replies. . . . My horror increases. . . . The servants are absent. . . . The doors all fastened! O God, I am alone! alone! . . . The windows barred . . . . the doors bolted . . . . no escape. . . . Death in all its horrors approaches me. . . .'

She flies from her chamber. Don Gutierre returns with a surgeon, whom he has forced to accompany him with bandaged eyes.

DON GUTIERRE *to the Surgeon*.—You must enter that chamber. This dagger pierces your heart if you do not faithfully obey all my commands. Open that door, and say what you see there !

SURGEON.—An image of death ; a corpse stretched on a bed. Two torches burn at each side, and a crucifix is placed before it. I know not who it may be, as a veil covers the countenance.

GUTIERRE.—'Tis well. This living corpse you must put to death.

SURGEON.—What are your terrible commands ?

GUTIERRE.—That you bleed her to death. That you quit her not until she expires. No word ! It is useless to implore my pity. It is dead !

The surgeon obeys ; but, on leaving the house blindfolded, he marks the door with his finger, red with blood, to enable him to know the house again. He informs the king of all, who accompanies him to Gutierre's, and orders Don Gutierre to marry Leonora.

KING.—Give, then, thy hand to Leonora ; well she merits it.

GUTIERRE.—I give it freely, if Leonora dare accept it bathed in blood.

LEONORA.—I marvel not, nor fear.

GUTIERRE.—'Tis well, but I  
Have been my honour's own physician, nor  
Have yet forgot the science.

LEONORA.—Keep it, then,  
To end my life, if it be bad.

GUTIERRE.—Alone on this condition I now yield my hand



Evidently Gutierre is looked upon as a hero by the author and the audience. Let us hope that Leonora behaved nicely.

The next play of Calderon's we will refer to is the *Wonderful Magician*, which has been compared to Goethe's *Faust*. The scene of the piece opens near Antioch, where, 'with glorious festival and song' a temple is being consecrated to Jupiter. Cyprian, a young student, has withdrawn from the noise of the town to devote himself to quiet study. A slight noise disturbs him, and the Dæmon appears, dressed as a cavalier. They commence to argue: Cyprian points out the errors of polytheism, the Dæmon opposing him. We learn that Cyprian has been converted to monotheism, a step in the direction of Christianity; and this conversion is feebly combated by the Dæmon.

Cyprian is left alone in his study, but is soon interrupted by the quarrels of his two friends, Lelio and Floro, who are both in love with Justina, a recent convert to Christianity. Cyprian makes peace, and agrees to visit the lady in order to learn whom she prefers. On seeing Justina, Cyprian loves her. She rejects his love as she had that of Lelio and Floro. This coldness so enrages him that he exclaims:—

'So beautiful she was—and I,  
Between my love and jealousy,  
Am so convulsed with hope and fear,  
Unworthy as it may appear—  
So bitter is the life I live  
That, hear me, Hell!

I now would give  
 To thy most detested spirit  
 My soul for ever to inherit,  
 To suffer punishment and pine  
 So this woman may be mine.

Hear'st thou, Hell ?

Dost thou reject it ? My soul is offered.'

DÆMON (*unseen*).—I accept it.

*Tempest, with thunder and lightning. The storm rages—a ship goes down at sea ; and the DÆMON enters as a shipwrecked passenger.*

DÆMON (*aside*).—It was essential to my purposes  
 To make a tumult on the sapphire ocean,  
 That in this unknown form  
 I might at length  
 Wipe out the blot of the discomfiture  
 I sustained upon the mountain, and assail  
 With a new war the soul of Cyprian,  
 Forging the instruments of his destruction  
 Even from his love and from his wisdom.

Cyprian condoles with the stranger and offers him hospitality. Cyprian describes, in very flowery language, the charms of Justina, and declares that he is so enamoured of her as to have forsaken philosophy, and to be ready to give up his soul for her possession. The Dæmon accepts the offer, splits open a rock, and shows Justina reclining and asleep. Cyprian rushes towards her, but the rock closes again, and the Dæmon demands that the contract shall be signed with Cyprian's blood. This is done, and the Dæmon agrees to instruct him in magic, by

which, at the end of the year, he will be able to possess Justina.

After the year's probation is passed, Cyprian is eager for his reward. The Dæmon calls on the spirits of hell to call up impure thoughts in Justina's mind, so that she may incline her ear to Cyprian.

The following scene shows the agitation of the tempted girl. She is alone in her chamber :—

JUSTINA.—Thou, melancholy ! which in me  
Fluttering, risest, sad and sweet,  
When surrendered I to thee,  
Cease my languid heart to treat  
With such hateful tyranny !  
Tell me, what tumultuous power  
Wildly doth my being move—  
Kindling, lulling more and more ?  
And this glow that thrills my heart ?  
Say, what causest now the smart  
Of this anguish ?

CHORUS.—Love—oh, Love !

JUSTINA.—'Tis yon love-lorn nightingale  
That gives me the reply,  
Telling ever his soft tale,  
To the listeners in the vale,  
Of passion and of constancy ;  
Mourning still his gentle heat  
In melody—ah, me, how sweet !  
Whilst his mate, who, rapt and fond,  
Listening sits a bough beyond,  
Makes divine response meet.  
Cease, oh, cease, sweet Philomel !

That not by so deep a charm  
     Thoughts within my soul may swell,  
     Of what a manly heart would tell !  
 No, it was yon vine-tree's song  
     That, still longing, seeks and flies,  
 Till it doth, the flowers among,  
 All the grass, beloved throng,  
     And the green trunk vanquished lies.  
 Vine, no more with green embraces  
     Make me think on what thou lovest ;  
 For thy tendril interlaces  
     But to teach, I fear, thou sophist !  
 Arms will twine, too, nor dis sever ;  
     And, if not the tender vine  
 That still tries with fond endeavour  
     With the elm to intertwine,  
 'Tis yon bright sunflower that, ever  
     Charmed by the sun's decline,  
 Wanders after every glimmer  
     Of his countenance divine.  
 Sun-enamoured flow'r ! obscure  
     From mine eyes those beams that bend it ;  
 Dost thou ; insatiate, lure,  
 Cheek to cheek, thy paramour ?  
     Ever-moving, light-enchanted ;  
 Hide, O flower, the amorous glowing  
     Of thy beauty,—tranquil foe !  
 To my treacherous heart avowing,  
 If such tears from leaves are flowing,  
 How from eyes thy tears would flow !  
     Loose, O vine, thy wreathed bower !  
 Silence, songster of the grove !  
     Rest, thou light, inconstant flower !

Or tell me the poisonous power  
Of your magic.

CHORUS.—Love—oh, Love !

JUSTINA.—Love ! Ah ! when did I respect it ?  
Or, thou false one ! homage plan ?

Ever have I not neglected,  
With disdain and scorn rejected  
Lelio, Floro, Cyprian ?

*(Pauses at the name of CYPRIAN and seems troubled.)*

Lelio did not I disband,  
And refuse young Floro's hand ?  
Cyprian treated with such scorn,  
That, despairing and forlorn,

He for ever disappears ?  
But, alas ! I deem that now  
Is the occasion for these tears :  
Venture boldly to avow

What inspires me with those fears,  
Since to mine own soul apart  
I pronounced that, in that hour,  
Cyprian did for ever part,—  
Feel I (woe is me !) a power  
Raging in my burning heart.

Ah, it must be pity when  
Such a man, so high renowned,  
By the whole world's voices crowned,  
Noblest of all noblemen,  
From my heartless scorn hath drowned  
In oblivion his great mind.

But we're in compassion blind  
If the like had felt towards  
Lelio's or young Floro's mind,

Since in bonds both are confined,  
 For my sake, by tyrant guards.  
 Then, ye wandering fancies, cease !  
 Enough, without this subtlety,  
 'Tis that pity to increase.  
 Nor my soul to love compel ;  
 For I know not, woe is me !  
 Where to find him now, should I  
 Through the wide world to him fly.

(*The DÆMON enters.*)

DÆMON.—Come, oh come, and I will tell.

JUSTINA.—What art thou, who thus athwart  
 This my chamber find'st the way ?

When no bars asunder part ?

Say if you a phantom art,

Formed by terror and dismay ?

DÆMON.—No ; but one called by the thought  
 That now rules, with tyrant sway,

O'er thy fluttering heart—a man

Whom compassion hither brought,

That he might point out the way

Whither fled thy Cyprian.

JUSTINA.—And thou shalt fail. This storm  
 Which afflicts my frenzied soul

May imaginations form

To its own wish ; but ne'er shall warm

Reason to its mad control.

DÆMON.—If thou hast the thought permitted,  
 Nearly half the sin is done !

Wilt thou, since 'tis half committed,  
 Linger ere the joy be won ?

JUSTINA.—In our power abides not thought  
(Thought, alas! how vain to fly!)

But the deed is, and 'tis one  
That we sin in mind have sought,  
And another to have done ;  
I'll not move my foot to try.

DÆMON.—If a mortal power assail  
Justina with all its might,  
Say, will not the victory fail  
When thy wish will not avail,  
But inclines thee in despite ?

JUSTINA.—By opposing to thee now  
My free will and liberty.

DÆMON.—To my power they soon shall bow.  
Come, 'tis bliss that thou wilt prove.

JUSTINA.—Dearly would I gain it so.

DÆMON.—It is peace, and calm, and love.

*(Draws, but cannot move her.)*

JUSTINA.—It is misery, death, despair !

DÆMON.—Heavenly joy I offer thee.

JUSTINA.—'Tis bitter woe !

DÆMON.—Lost and shamed, forsaken one !  
Who in thy defence shall dare ?

JUSTINA.—My defence is God alone.

DÆMON.—Virgin, virgin, thou hast won !

As the foiled Dæmon is unable to give Cyprian the real Justina, he deceives him by giving him a false one.

A figure, wrapped in a cloak, appears, and beckons to Cyprian to follow. He enters on the scene with, he believes, the beloved Justina in his arms. Trans-

ported with joy, he removes the veil from her face, and discovers a skull; from this hideous object proceed these words: 'Such are the glories of this world.' Cyprian, mad with disappointment, calls upon the Dæmon to fulfil his promise. He confesses that he cannot force Justina, as she is under the protection of a superior power. Cyprian asks what this power is. The Dæmon at last admits that it is the God of the Christians. Cyprian avows his belief in that power. The Dæmon is furious, and demands Cyprian's soul. He contends that the Dæmon has not fulfilled his contract. Words run high: Cyprian draws his sword and stabs the Dæmon; of course with no effect. Then the Dæmon tries to drag him away; but Cyprian, like Justina, calls on God for help, and the baffled Dæmon flies. The Dæmon has a very bad time of it in this play.

Cyprian and Justina are burned at Antioch, martyrs to the Christian faith; and the play closes with the last appearance of the unfortunate Dæmon riding through the air on a fiery serpent. He addresses the spectators, and tells them that God has compelled him to declare the innocence of Justina, and the freedom of Cyprian from his rash engagement: both now repose in heaven. We must admit that the Dæmon is not amusing; but let us trust, with Burns, that there is hope of his amendment, especially as he has found his wickedness such a miserable failure.



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