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STUDIES IN LITERATURE

1789-1877.

BY

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PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN
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PREFACE.

In bringing these Essays together I carry out the intention with which they were originally written. Without forming a continuous study they circle around common thoughts and topics, and so in a measure belong to one another. The first three essays put in position some of the subjects and persons treated in detail in the later essays; there is therefore occasionally some repetition, the first essays saying in brief what others express more at large. I had intended to add to these introductory essays a fourth on the Mediæval Revival, but I found that this great movement could not be viewed as seemed to me right without a more comprehensive survey than was possible in the present volume; and such an introductory essay happened not to be necessary in order to place in position any of the subjects afterwards treated, for even Lamennais belongs (as Catholics will probably be glad to admit) more to the democratic movement than to the Catholic revival.

I have confined this volume to studies in English and French literature. It is my wish on a future occasion to follow up these essays with others treating of subjects from the literature and thought of Germany.

Upon the whole I have cared more to understand than to object; I have tried rather to interpret than to judge. The imperfection of these attempts at criticism I have felt in reading over my proof-sheets probably as vividly as any other person is likely to feel it. Still I have known that they are sincere records of the help which certain great writers have given me, and it has also been a happiness to me to be assured that in the case of some of the writers treated my attempt to interpret has gone —as far as it goes—at least on right lines.

For their courteous permission to reprint my contributions I thank the Editors of the "Fortnightly Review," the "Contemporary Review," the "Cornhill Magazine," the "Westminster Review," and the "Academy;" and Mr M'Gee, the publisher of "Afternoon Lectures, 1869."

CONTENTS.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND LITERATURE.

Close of last three centuries serve to mark epochs—1588, 1688, 1789 - Critical study of eighteenth century begun—Four chief tendencies in literature of this century—1. Revolutionary and democratic movement—2. Scientific movement—3. Mediæval Revival—4. Transcendental movement—Revolution at first destructive—The *Aufklärung*, the Revolution, the wars of Napoleon—The doctrine of Revolution, the emotions, the facts—Relations of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, to the Revolution not identical—William Blake and the Revolution—Moral exhaustion following the Revolution—Sénancour and the literature of despair—Chateaubriand—Byron, how representative of the Revolution—Shelley, how representative—Godwin's influence on Shelley—J. S. Mill and the Philosophical Radicals—Ebenezer Elliott—Tennyson and the dawn of a new poetry, ... Pages 1—43

THE TRANSCENDENTAL MOVEMENT AND LITERATURE.

Hostility of some great living teachers to contemporary tendencies—Its cause—Meaning of "transcendental"—Neglect of this side of truth in eighteenth century—Conception of God in eighteenth century—Conception of nature—Conception of man—Conception of history—From eighteenth century philosophy two modes of escape possible: 1. Appeal to authority; De Maistre, the Oxford Movement: 2. Appeal to a present Deity; Deity in man, the Reason; Deity in man and in external nature, Pantheism—Affinities between Transcendentalism and the Revolution—Glorification of humanity—Ardent and aspiring character of Revolution and of Transcendentalism—Keats—Shelley a revolutionary transcendentalist—His materialism and idealism—His relations to Christianity—Coleridge—Wordsworth's place among idealists—Relations of Coleridge and Wordsworth to Oxford movement—Transcendental and Catholic movements alike antagonistic to

Puritanism—F. D. Maurice—Militant transcendentalism—Carlyle—Transcendentalism in America, Emerson—Poetry of A. H. Clough—Mr Browning's place in recent literature, Pages 44—84

THE SCIENTIFIC MOVEMENT AND LITERATURE.

This essay only attempted hints—The poet a seeker for truth—Great artists love definite conceptions—Dante—Milton—Poetical truth, a truth to appearances of things—Ideal element in our perceptions—Illustrations from Tennyson and Wordsworth—Cosmical ideas as affecting the imagination—Idea of physical vastness—Idea of law—Idea of *Ensemble*—Idea of force—Inspiring ideas for literature from past history of our race—Idea of historical relativity—Idea of heredity—Idea of progress—Scientific and revolutionary ideas of progress distinguished—Shelley and Tennyson—Conservative spirit in George Eliot—Science in Ethics—Self-development replaces self-mortification—Self-surrender enjoined by social duty—Science modifies religious conceptions, . Pages 85—121

THE PROSE WORKS OF WORDSWORTH.

Influence of Wordsworth on a youthful disciple—Return to him in manhood—A poet's prose-writing—J. S. Mill and Wordsworth—Consentaneity of thought and feeling in his poetry—"Apology for the French Revolution"—Sternness of his early enthusiasm—Expression of republican faith in "Apology"—Wordsworth not in sympathy with the *Aufklärung*—How his faith in the Revolution decayed—His peculiar work that of a transcendental thinker—Shelley the banner-bearer of Revolution—Effects of Wordsworth's republican faith remain—Influence of his sister—His veneration for plain manhood—Theory of poetic diction—His loyalty to England as the champion of freedom—Pamphlet on the "Convention of Cintra"—The politics of a prophetic writer—Style of the pamphlet—Addresses to the Freeholders of Westmoreland—Wordsworth as a conservative, . . Pages 122—158

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

Two kinds of biographies—Biography of genius, and of labour—Forster's Life of Landor—His unsubdued force of passion and of will—Miss Martineau on Landor—Noble elements in his violence of feeling—His laughter and his rage—Like a man of the Italian Renaissance—His gentleness—His love of children, flowers, birds—Paradoxes of his character—Self-torment and studious avoidance of pain—His modes of work—Causes of unpopularity of his writings—His audience fit, though few—His classical qualities—His humour—His critical judgments—He does not interpret his age—Fails to understand French Revolution—Landor no transcendentalist—"A grand old Pagan"—His dramas—His "Hellenics"—Compared with André Chenier, . . Pages 159—190

MR TENNYSON AND MR BROWNING.

Tennyson and Browning as teachers are complementary—A poet's philosophy—Law the dominant conception with Tennyson—God and external nature—Tennyson not a mystic nor a transcendental thinker—Law in humanity—Idea of Progress—The golden age one of (1) Scientific knowledge, (2) Political organisation—Tennyson's love of freedom and order—His ideal of human character—The ideal government in harmony with the ideal man—Central point of Arthurian story—Evil of disorder—"Lucretius"—"In Memoriam." Browning feels the greatness and beauty of passions and enthusiasms—His interpretation of nature—His optimism—His interest centred in the individual—The dominant thought in his writings—His doctrines on art—Contempt for the connoisseur—Contrast of the connoisseur with the artist—His poems on love—Two groups of *dramatis personæ*—Virtue of moments of life—His sympathy with the enthusiast's love of freedom—His estimate of the worth of knowledge—"Paracelsus," "Sordello," "Easter Day"—Later poems—His intellectual casuistry—His moral ardour, Pages 191—239

GEORGE ELIOT.

Personal accent in George Eliot's writings—A great nature suffering and conquering—Dramatic truth of her writings—Her poems—She cannot sing—Completeness of her nature—Conscience, its foundation—Importance of the moral element in her novels—Her passionate sensibility kept under a check—Her manifold sympathies—Backgrounds of her pictures—Her love of definiteness—Her theoretic intellect—Her desire for positive truth—Her tenderness in dealing with religious belief—Her humour—Her nature harmonious after struggle—Capacity for joy, necessity of self-surrender—The higher rule—Renunciants and egoists in her novels—Relation of the individual to society—Heredity, the "Spanish Gypsy"—Her respect for human law—Sacredness of ties to the Past—"Brother and Sister"—Thoughts on Death—Survival in our influence after death—"Jubal," . . Pages 240—272

GEORGE ELIOT—II. "MIDDLEMARCH" AND "DANIEL DERONDA."

Two classes of great artists—Artists who unite breadth with height—George Eliot one of these—Ideality of "Daniel Deronda"—Peculiar demands on the reader made by it—It is a companion piece to "Middlemarch"—"Daniel Deronda" poetical and constructive, "Middlemarch" prosaic and critical—A history of failures—"Daniel Deronda" the counterpoise—What we mean by "ideal"—Deronda, his childhood and youth—His probation—George Eliot's use of scientific phraseology—A truth-seeker must listen to science—"Daniel Deronda" a homage to the emotions—Mordecai not a visionary unreality—The religious idea of "Daniel Deronda"—To transcend self is with Deronda a joy—The epic life—Why Deronda is a Jew—Mirah and Gwendolen—Grandcourt the absolute egoist—Gwendolen saved from egoism—Note of solemn triumph at the close, . . . Pages 273—310

LAMENNAIS.

Position of Lamennais in the Catholic reaction—His prophet-like character—His gentleness—Birth and childhood—Conflict of life begins—"Réflexions sur l'État de l'Église"—In England—Henry Moorman—"Essai sur l'Indifférence"—Its theory—Its reception—Lamennais suspected—Appeal to Rome—At Rome—Leo XII.—At La Chênaie—Conversion to democratic cause—A liberalised Catholicism—Judicial proceedings against him—His health fails—At Saint Sauveur—Émile Forgues—Returns to La Chênaie—"L'Avenir"—Second journey to Rome—His reception—Encyclical of Gregory XVI.—Poverty—His disciples—Maurice de Guérin—"Les Paroles d'un Croyant"—Final Breach with Rome—Imprisonment—In the Constituent Assembly—Changes in his religious faith—Translation of Dante—"Esquisse d'une Philosophie"—Last illness and death—Père la Chaise, Pages 311—356

EDGAR QUINET.

Quinet part of the conscience of France—His freedom from illusions—His autobiography—Birth and childhood—The Quinet household—Certines—His mother's influence—His respect for the tradition of French literature—A boy's Napoleon-worship—Early love-affairs—The Roman beauty—Study of Latin authors—Friendship with Michelet—Translates Herder—External incidents of Quinet's life—Magnitude of his Works—How he attempts to revive the Epic—The epopee of progress, humanity its hero—"Ahasuerus" —"Prometheus" "Merlin"—An ideal autobiography—"La Révolution"—A criticism of the Revolution by a believer in it—Quinet in Switzerland—Science and History—"La Création," Pages 357—391

ON SOME FRENCH WRITERS OF VERSE, 1830-1877.

Théophile Gautier on recent French Poetry—Characteristics of recent poets—Victor Hugo alone a master spirit—Romantic school of Germany—Romantic school of France—An expansive movement—The style of effusion—Reaction—The style of concentration—Théophile Gautier—His devotion to beauty—A hedonist asceticism—His counsel to M. Lafagette—Charles Baudelaire—Contrast with Musset—Baudelaire an intellectual artist—Love of the artificial—The style of decadence—Is Baudelaire one of the school of art for art?—Leconte de Lisle—Affinities of his work with science—His calmness—His Stoicism—His cosmopolitan tastes—His studies of nature and animal life—His prose—M. Catulle Mendès—M. Maurice Bouchor—Love and wine—M. Lafagette—Reaction against "art for art"—M. Sully Prudhomme—The Eclectic—His tenderness, . . . Pages 392—427

THE POETRY OF VICTOR HUGO.

Breadth and violence of Hugo's genius—Sweetness and tenderness—He is the imagination of France since her Revolution—His deficiency on the side of intellect—His method of truth discovery—He is instructed by the *Zeit-Geist*—His moral idealism—His teaching, that not of experience but of intuitions—His characterization, its excellence and defects—His moderation united with extravagance—His development a vital growth—How ideas influence him—Three periods of his career—A neo-Catholic Royalist poet—The "Odes"—Reform of French verse—"Les Orientales" and art for art—Second period, "Les Feuilles d'Automne"—Hesitation, "Les Chants du Crépuscule"—Democratic tendency—Songs of joy and high resolve—"Les Rayons et les Ombres"—Sorrow and exile—"Les Contemplations," a lyrical record of twenty-five years—Signs of stress and strain—"Les Châtiments"—Short democratic epics, "La Légende des Siècles"—Mirth prepense, "Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois"—The Year terrible—Poems of 1877, . . Pages 428—467

THE POETRY OF DEMOCRACY: WALT WHITMAN.

The naturalist school of criticism has not studied American literature—Its European character—Longfellow and Irving—Causes of absence of indigenous growths—Whitman a summons and a challenge—Meaning of a representative poet—Character of aristocratic art—Attention to form—Selectness—Indifference to the people—Noble ideals of heroic character—Love of the Past—Character of democratic art—Absence of canons—Appeals to a nation—Attitude toward the Past—Form of Whitman's writings—His wide sympathies—Principle of equality—His delight in man—His tolerance—His feeling toward science—His fear of spurious culture—No individual his hero—His catalogues explained—De Tocqueville on the poetry of democracy—Whitman's fears for America—His materialism and spirituality—His freedom from asceticism—His ideals of manly character—True culture—Womanly ideals—His love of comradeship—His interpretation of nature—His mystical tendency—His optimism—His feeling towards death—His influence to free and arouse—Conclusion,

Pages 468—523

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND LITERATURE.

In recent teaching of English History something has been done to promote the formation of a true feeling of the continuity of our national life by setting aside the arbitrary landmarks furnished by the accession of kings, and by an attempt to space out the history of the people into its larger natural divisions. The landmarks of closing and opening centuries may seem yet more arbitrary or accidental than those placed at the beginning and ending of the reigns of kings. It happens, however, that each of the last three centuries closed with an event, or a series of events, which may be looked upon as marking the commencement of an epoch,—an epoch in the spiritual life of England, if not in her external history, and which is perceived with special distinctness when viewed in relation to literature.

In 1588, the galleons of the Spanish Armada were pulled down by the sea-dogs of Drake, or rolled at the mercy of the Orkney wreckers. An immense consciousness of power thrilled the nation into quicker life and more daring achievement. Then upon the stage the audacities of Marlowe's genius seemed hardly too extravagant. A more robust and maturer force lived and acted in literature after Marlowe had been lost. The last decade of that century saw the publication of the "Faerie Queen," the "Ecclesiastical Polity," and the earliest Essays of Bacon; it closed with the trumpet note of Shakspere's "Henry V." still in the air. One hundred years later, 1688, William of Nassau landed at Torbay. Her dominion of the seas England may date from the battle of La Hogue; the temperate freedom, the security and order guaranteed by the Bill of Rights were as precious a possession, creating a new social and political life, and this again a new literature. It was not an age of ardour, enthusiasm, and ambitious power, but rather a constitutional period, loving compromise, moderation, and good sense, an age of clubs and coffee-houses, of wits and beaux, when poetry was not a prophecy but an accomplishment, when the minor moralities of hoop and furbelow claimed the reformer's attention, when philosophy came into the drawing-rooms, and conversed in irreproachable accent. Again a hundred years, 1789, and events long preparing in France were born into the light of day; the Deputies, with Mirabeau and Robespierre among them, were assembling at Versailles. Presently came Wordsworth, to gather a relic from the ruins of the Bastille. William Blake walked the streets of London, wearing the *bonnet rouge* as emblem of the arrived millennium. Burke announced the extinction of chivalry, and the advent of the age of sophisters, economists, and calculators. A little later, and England possessed a poetry for the first time not British so much as European. The Revolution still lightened and thundered through the days of the White Terror and the Holy Alliance, in the verse of Byron and Shelley.

Such a cataclysm as the French Revolution seems to interrupt the continuity of history, yet in fact, though such a crisis may mark a period, there is no interruption. The Revolution is but an incident in a movement much larger than itself. To some democratic spirits 1789 dates as the year One; before it lies the chaos of the great monarchies and of feudalism; then in a moment the demiurge, Revolution, said, "Let there be light," and there was light. By a different class of thinkers the entire eighteenth century, the *sæculum rationalisticum*, is represented as a page inserted by Satan in God's history of the human race; the divine Author, having completed his chapter, which contains the story of the witch-burnings and the dragonnades, of Madame de Montespan and of Nell Gwynn, nodded over the best of all possible histories, when the author of evil with malicious glee slipped in his chapter of profanity, illuminated with the mocking face of his Voltaire, and the obscene posturings of his Rousseau. The date of each of these theories with respect to the eighteenth century is assuredly gone by. There are symptoms that we have begun to trace our ancestry without any longer hewing out of its trunk a portion of our family tree. Mr Mark Pattison's essay on "Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688—1750," was one of the earliest studies of eighteenth century thought which can truly be called critical, and it has been fruitful of results. Mr Morley's "Burke," "Rousseau," "Voltaire," and "Diderot," M. Taine's "Les Origines de la France contemporaine," Mr Hunt's "History of Religious Thought in England," Mr Leslie Stephen's "English Thought in the Eighteenth Century," are evidences that the period of passionate hostility to the *sæculum rationalisticum* is at an end, and that the work of criticism is begun. We can venture to be just to what lies so far behind us across two generations of men. It is easy to foresee that the injustice to be feared for some time to come will be injustice to the reaction against the eighteenth century. To understand Coleridge is fast becoming more difficult than to understand Hume; what was the quickening air and light of philosophy to our fathers, changes for us into a theosophic mist, vaguely luminous; in the architecture of the Gothic revival, we are told, may be read "the decay and enfeeblement of reason;" even our furniture must rationalize itself, and remind us of the definiteness of design, the moderation and good sense of Chippendale.

Looking in a comprehensive way at the literature of the past eighty years, we may discern in its movement four chief tendencies. We must not define these too rigidly, or draw hard and fast lines; nor must we suppose that a human being can be explained and set aside by being classified and labelled. Still it is of use to observe and distinguish, as far as can be done in sincerity of disinterested criticism, the most powerful currents of the literature of our age. First, proceeding out of the last century, the revolutionary and democratic movement arrests our attention. Such names as those of Shelley, Byron, Victor Hugo, George Sand, Heine, Börne, remind us of its importance. Proceeding out of the last century also we perceive the scientific movement, not at first powerfully affecting literature proper, but of late years ever more and more tending to form a new intellectual stratum or bed from which art-products, appropriate to itself, may spring. It will be felt at once how profoundly the modern imagination is being influenced by the single idea of Evolution; and it may be noted as a significant incident that within the last year our chief imaginative creator in prose has had to bear the reproach of suffering her genius to undergo what has been styled a "scientific depravation." The scientific and the democratic movements both contribute to create the school of thought represented even before the Revolution by Bentham, and subsequently by his followers, the school of utilitarian ethics and philosophical radicalism. Again, in opposition to the eighteenth century we observe two movements:—1. The Mediæval Revival; 2. The Transcendental Movement.

We have here the large outlines of a map of nineteenth-century literature. In religion the Mediæval Revival became the Catholic reaction on the Continent, the Oxford movement in England; in art, it became Romanticism. But Romanticism is a name which covers many and various things. In Scott the interest in the middle ages is part of the aroused historical imagination of modern times; in Victor Hugo it is part of the reaction against the classical *fadeurs* of the last century, part of the modern demand for a richer life in art, more variety, keener sensations, greater freedom and animation; in Uhland it expresses the revival of national life in Germany; in others of the German romantic poets, it is a thin sentimentalism, united with an impotent desire to restore art by means of a fictive faith. The Transcendental Movement opposes the empirical philosophy of the eighteenth century, not like the Mediæval Revival by a return to a past age, or an appeal to authority, but by an appeal to something higher, more divine, in man, than the senses or the understanding; it opposes the mechanical deism of Paley and the mechanical atheism of La Mettrie by the discovery of God immanent and omnipresent in nature and in man. The German philosophical systems from Fichte to Hegel belong to this movement; it appears, modified by other elements, in the teaching of Wordsworth in his earlier years, of Coleridge, and of Carlyle; in the vague pantheism of Goethe; and in the lives and writings of that remarkable group of New England reformers, of whom Emerson and Theodore Parker have been the most widely known, and have indeed exercised an European influence.

It is important to note that as time went on, the spirit of the Revolution and the genius of transcendental philosophy approached, recognised each other as fellow-workers, or at least as fellow-enthusiasts on man's behalf, and joyously embraced. Even the Catholic reaction was for a time partially drawn into the great wave of democratic feeling; a strange composition of forces produced that eddy, from which Lamennais escaped to go forward in the pursuit of knowledge and of freedom, and from which others escaped to return to the calm of authority and the certitude of dogma.

In the Revolutionary movement and its development, we distinguish two degrees or stages. Although from the first the Revolution was rich in constructive forces, its earlier work was in the main destructive; the new ideals and enthusiasms embodied in the watchwords "liberty, equality, and fraternity," were sought to be realized in the spirit of metaphysical thinkers and theorists; and the rights of the individual were more considered than the duties of man as a member of society. The Revolutionary movement in its first stage, then, was destructive, metaphysical, individualistic. From about 1830, dates a series of attempts at a revolutionary reconstruction, which should be positive and socialistic in character. How ready a soil the imagination of the time furnished to the germs in the air appears from the remarkable power exerted by the ideas of Saint-Simon upon Heine and Young Germany, by those of Pierre Leroux upon the enthusiastic genius of George Sand, and by Fourier upon members of the Brook Farm Association.

The French Revolution, like every great national movement, both resumed the past and prophesied the future. We must beware of viewing it, in relation to literature, as an isolated phenomenon. There are at least three great influences succeeding one another, and closely connected—all earlier in date than 1830—which we must distinguish: first, the Critical movement, or *Aufklärung*, which passed in the latter half of the eighteenth century from England to France, and was in most active progress from 1760 to 1790; secondly, the Revolution 1790—1800; thirdly, the wars of the Consulate and Empire 1800—1815. The literature of the early years of the present century is sometimes treated as if it were dominated by the second of these great movements alone: in fact, it exhibits the active influence of all three, together with that of many lesser currents of tendency. It is well in considering the career of each important writer of the time, to note the date at which he reached early manhood. One born like William Godwin, in the commencement of the Seven Years' War, would have been exposed to the critical movement before the age of five-and-twenty, and would have advanced towards the Revolution together with that movement. In 1791, he had reached the midpoint of the Scriptural threescore years and ten, when in spite of public calamity which might befall the cause he cherished, he could (had his political idealism not sufficed to sustain him) still bear up and steer right onward, and was little likely to change his creed because some bright hopes became less bright. One born like Wordsworth, some fourteen years after Godwin, could hardly have drunk deep of the pre-Revolution philosophy, unless he were a youth of precocious intellectual power; he would not have come up out of the midst of the eighteenth century with the Revolutionary idea; but in the morning of life it would seem to him, when the splendours of the Revolution first appeared, that he moved in the great morning of the world. Faith in the immense promises of the time would be no mere product of the intellect, but a "pleasant exercise of hope and joy."

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven."

But could such a faith bear the stress which the stern years brought? It had been a part of the dawn, and as the sun darkened before the noon, Wordsworth's exercise of hope became a desperate hoping against hope, until at last he found abiding sources of light and strength elsewhere than in the European Revolution. One born like Byron, in the year before the meeting of the States-General, would be yet a child when Napoleon stilled the last struggles of Revolution under the sway of military despotism; he would have endured none of the trial and exhaustion which the early enthusiasts on behalf of democracy underwent, but he would be aware of a great void in the world surrounding him—of faiths that had fallen, of forces that had been spent. There is no environment more fraught with peril to a man framed with great capacities for joy than one which leaves him without a social faith, and throws him back upon his own craving heart and its unsatisfied passions.

We may describe the Revolution as consisting of three parts — the intellectual doctrine; the revolutionary emotions, hopes, hates, fears, ardours, aspirations; and, last, the actual facts of external history. These served as tests to exhibit the elements of which the natures of men exposed to their influence were constituted. If one's mind were nourished only by concrete fact informed by ideas, it might be difficult to view with tolerance a political doctrine which was still disembodied, still expecting to be incarnated in institutions; such was the case with Burke. If one's intellect were so purely theoretical that concrete facts were to it but illusions, and theories the only realities, then it might be possible to hold the revolutionary doctrine without a question or a doubt through all the failures of Constitutions, the fall of parties, and the ever-intensifying terror; such was the case with Godwin.* If one possessed an essentially lyrical nature, the basis and substance of which consisted of emotion, it might disclose itself in such a fine indiscretion as that of Burns, when he—a British exciseman—despatched his gift of four carronades to the French Convention, with an autograph letter. Real life, the step-mother of poets, reads hard lessons to her impulsive half-children, and Burns, whose carronades were captured at Dover, made piteous profession of his loyalty to the British Constitution, dearest to him of all things next after God, when he pictured to himself his wife and his little ones turned adrift into the world.

Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey are commonly spoken of together in reference to the Revolutionary movement, as if the relations to it of all three were identical in kind. But, in truth, the test applied by the Revolution detected the differences of their characters quite as much as it revealed the presence of a common element. There was a certain sternness and stoicism at the heart of Wordsworth's enthusiastic joy. His intellect and emotions acted with consentaneity as long as the concrete facts of French history permitted this; hence his faith was ardent, and his emotions were massive. When, by the pressure of facts, he was driven into alienation from France, his distress was proportionately great and prolonged. In London, Wordsworth heard the greatest philosophical orator of England launch forth his magnificent ridicule against all systems built on abstract rights,—

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* It should be observed, however, that violent revolutions were, upon principle, condemned by Godwin.

"The majesty proclaim
Of institutes and laws hallowed by time;
Declare the vital power of social ties
Endeared by custom, and with high disdain,
Exploding upstart Theory, insist
Upon the allegiance to which men are born."

Nor did Wordsworth see and hear Burke without inspiration and gratitude. But it was not any antagonist of the Revolution, it was the Revolution itself, which forced Wordsworth to examine the intellectual basis of his republican faith. As a concrete historical movement the Revolution could not justify itself to his conscience; all the more desperately for a time he clung to republican theories; but the intellect, divorced from imagination and the vital movements of admiration, hope, and love, served with Wordsworth but to make all faiths dubious, and he underwent in consequence that spiritual crisis, terminating happily in recovery, of which the history is told in "The Prelude." It may be questioned whether Wordsworth, after he had parted with his democratic convictions and earned the name of renegade, did not retain a truer democratic sense of the dignity of manhood than is possessed by writers who deal fluently in the platitudes of fervid Republicanism, and do lip-worship to Humanity, while they exhibit in their temper and their themes all that can render humanity the reverse of worshipful.

The great events in France affected Coleridge in a different manner. In the year 1800 he strenuously opposed, in the *Morning Post,* the adage fashionable in ministerial circles, "Once a Jacobin always a Jacobin;" but this he did with no private and personal motive.

He asserts, and the assertion was undoubtedly correct, that he had never been at any period of his life a convert to Jacobinical principles. It was in 1793, after the September massacres and the execution of the King, that Wordsworth wrote his "Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff," in which he haughtily maintains the cause of the Republic. "Before 1793," said Coleridge (and Coleridge was two years younger than Wordsworth), "I clearly saw, and often enough stated in public the horrid delusion, the vile mockery of the whole affair. When some one said in my brother James's presence that I was a Jacobin, he very well observed, 'No! Samuel is no Jacobin; he is a hot-headed Moravian!' Indeed, I was in the extreme opposite pole." His feelings and his imagination, Coleridge declares, did not remain unkindled in the general conflagration, "and I confess I should be more inclined to be ashamed than proud of myself if they had. I was a sharer in the general vortex, though my little world described the path of its revolution in an orbit of its own." Coleridge's passionate sympathy was given to France, and when England took up arms against the Republic, he, like Wordsworth, was smitten with grief and shame. It was through a haughty ideality of youth, to which mere pain and blood-shedding seemed worthy of slight regard, that Wordsworth for a time sustained his courage in presence of the dark facts of contemporary history. Coleridge was in possession of a philosophical doctrine, which enabled him to accept the same facts with a certain equanimity. In one of the addresses delivered at Bristol in 1795, and which formed his first prose work, the youthful apostle of the doctrine of philosophical necessity (a doctrine which he afterwards so earnestly repudiated) cautions his hearers against the danger of indulgence in the feelings even of virtuous indignation. Thinking patriots have accustomed themselves "to regard all affairs of man as a process; they never hurry, and they never pause." Vice is "the effect of error, and the offspring of surrounding circumstances; the object therefore of condolence, not of anger."

Coleridge, at the age of twenty-three, and while the exciting events in France were still in progress, speaks with that judicial tone, that grave benevolence, that apparent superiority to the illusions of passion, which often betoken the presence of ardent feelings resolving to justify themselves by a cultivated moderation of tone. And in truth, Coleridge lived and moved more among the abiding realities of thought, and less in the ebb and flow of the world, than at this time did Wordsworth. To Wordsworth the affairs of man did not seem a "process:"—

> "I revolved
> How much the destiny of man had hung
> Still upon single persons."

And in the inexperience of his youth it seemed to him, that possibly through himself, an insignificant stranger, yet "strong in hope, and trained to noble aspirations," with a spirit thoroughly faithful to itself, the needed direction and moving power might be found for distracted France; if this could not be, if failure were decreed against his hopes and efforts, he was prepared to accept, for the sake of France, life as a sacrifice or the sacrifice of death. Coleridge's dream of pantisocracy had just resolved itself into air, before he delivered his Bristol "Conciones ad Populum." Although in later years it may have been with a smile that he related his dream of a little society, which "in its second generation was to have combined the innocence of the patriarchal age with the knowledge and genuine refinements of European culture," at the time the designed experiment of human perfectibility was the object of earnest thought and hope. Wordsworth never regretted that his youth was one of enthusiastic ardour, of impassioned faith, although his faith and ardour subsequently took upon themselves a new and more spiritual body. And Coleridge did not find his early self worthy of that hard ridicule, which manhood too often bestows upon a youth which possesses the appropriate beauty and virtue of youth; if afterwards he smiled, the smile was like that of one who, sound and sweet in heart, sees from the calm elevation of later years the joys and fears of boy and girl lovers. "Strange fancies, and as vain as strange! yet to the intense interest and impassioned zeal, which called forth and strained every faculty of my intellect for the organization and defence of this scheme, I owe much of what I at present possess, my clearest insight into the nature of individual man, and my most comprehensive views of his social relations, of the true uses of trade and commerce, and how far wealth and relative power of nations promote and impede their welfare and inherent strength." That there was a real and deep continuity in the development of Coleridge's political and religious opinion may be denied by party spirit; by disinterested criticism it cannot fail to be recognized.

While Wordsworth, rendered grave by the September massacres, remained at Blois, and Coleridge perhaps was planning his College escapade, by which a train of gunpowder was to inscribe upon the singed grass of the lawns of St John's and Trinity the words Liberty and Equality, a singular conjunction took place between the most soaring spirit among the children of Revolution, and her earthiest and ugliest urchin,—William Blake became the saviour of Tom Paine. Mr Gilchrist has related how in the quaint upper room over bookseller Johnson's little shop, met the apostles and prophets of the eighteenth-century evangel,—Dr Price and Dr Priestley, William Godwin, whom Blake liked little, stoical Holcroft, Mary Wollstonecraft, and the irascible Fuseli, false prophet of high art. The practical good sense and tact of the visionary Blake saved Paine from an English prison, and sent that "rebellious needleman," elected representative by the Pas de Calais, to take his seat in the Convention. In Blake's enormous mythology the genius of Revolution was an honoured divinity. Its historical apparition, however, although Blake hailed that apparition with enthusiasm, was less to him than its eternal essence, its "spiritual form." From a rich feeling for concrete fact like that possessed by Burke, the mind of Blake was of course as remote as was that of Godwin; but while the Revolution gave visible shape for Godwin to intellectual formulæ, apparent through the crimes and evil passions of men, it was in Blake's conception a new-born joy, incarnating an eternal reality of the imagination. A joy, and also a terror, sprung from the marriage of heaven and hell, of reason and desire. Reason, self-restraint, law, duty, apart from energy and desire, were in Blake's eyes deadening impositions of Urizen, the evil god of prohibition, and they found their earthly representatives in prisons and in churches. The Lord, in "Faust," recognizes the need, for man's uses, of Mephistopheles, the spirit of negation. But with Blake the devil, as he is called by the adverse party, is as truly god as the other claimant of that name, or, in plain speech, impulse, desire, freedom, are as great and sacred as reason, law, restraint. Man, unparcelled into body and spirit, is all holy, and the supreme of things; the unpardonable sin is to denaturalize or extinguish desire, to slay a living joy.

In truth Blake went astray in only a single particular, —in being born on this earth. His right place was that of minister to the archangels of Goethe's Prologue in Heaven, to whom love is its own law, and who gather strength and beatitude from the sight of the Lord:

> "Das Werdende, das ewig wirkt und lebt,
> Umfass' euch mit der Liebe holden Schranken."

But precisely because Blake could not ever lose what he conceived to be the essence of the Revolution, which lived in him as part of his purest self, he could the more easily detach himself from the historical movement. Less able to endure the harshness of the evil days than was Wordsworth in his haughty ideality, Blake, after the September massacres, tore off his cockade, and wore his *bonnet rouge* no more. At a happier moment, in 1790, appeared at the end of "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," Blake's "Song of Liberty." Freedom is born from the womb of the "Eternal Female," the mother force of the spirit of man; it is a marvellous babe, a terror to the world with its fiery limbs and flaming hair; a prophetic thrill runs through the earth, "shadows of prophecy shiver along by the lakes and the rivers;" alarm and hatred and jealousy are roused to crush the new-born terror; the gloomy King who hates liberty leads his starry hosts through the wilderness, and promulgates his ten commands; but the son of fire in his eastern cloud "stamps the stony law to dust, . . . crying, 'Empire is no more! and now the lion and the wolf shall cease.'" The song closes with a chorus proclaiming the triumph of gratified desire: "For everything that lives is holy." To the end, as Mr Gilchrist tells us, Blake always avowed himself a "Liberty Boy." An antinomian tendency is a characteristic common to many mystics; it is rarely that the antinomianism is so pure and childlike, yet so impassioned, as it was in the case of Blake.

The eighteenth century closed with moral exhaustion, enthusiasms burnt to ashes, the melancholy of discovered illusions, and the remorse and yearning that follow upon a supreme work of destruction. To continue an ardent Republican during the experiences of the years from 1790 to 1800, a man must needs have been either singularly idealistic, or of a very stoical temper. "In long-continuing revolutions," wrote De Tocqueville, "men are morally ruined less by the faults and the crimes that they commit in the heat of passion or of their political convictions, than by the contempt that in the end they acquire for the very convictions and passions that moved them; when wearied, disenchanted, and undeceived, they turn against themselves, and consider their hopes as having been childish—their enthusiasm, and, above all, their devotion, absurd. None can conceive how often the mainspring of even the strongest minds is broken by such a catastrophe. . . . It is difficult to imagine . . the extreme fatigue, apathy, indifference, or, rather, contempt, for politics into which a long, terrible, and barren struggle had thrown men's minds." To escape from such fatigue and *ennui*, Paris for a time abandoned itself to reckless pleasure. "The amusements in Paris," says a contemporary, "are now not interrupted for a single instant, either by the terrible events that take place, or by the fear of future calamities. The theatres and public places were never so crowded. At Tivoli, you hear it said that things will soon be worse than ever: *on appelle la Patrie la Patraque*,* and through it all we dance." "I do not find in history," writes De Tocqueville again, "a single event that contributed more to the well-being of future generations, or more entirely demoralized the generation that brought it to pass." †

There was one spirit, however, who, pipe as they might, would not dance. In 1799, appeared the "Rêveries" of Sénancour, which preceded his "Obermann," and foretold a literature—some of it of a much more recent date—inspired by the sentiment of the void, the barren sadness, the sterility of life. The loss of faith within, the ruins of a world without, measureless desire awakened by the sense that the old boundaries were gone, and a new destiny was opening for the spirit of man, impotence to satisfy that desire, no wing to explore the new horizons —such was the malady of Obermann. And he sought healing beneath the glacier and the unchanging Alpine snows. To chill his too feverish heart, to calm the restless pulse, to numb the pain of being, was the demand of his nature. Not change, not the play and colour of life, not the song and the dance, but resignation, solitude, silence, the white field of snow, a permanency of accepted grief —

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* *Patraque*, an old worn-out machine.

† "France before the Consulate," in De Tocqueville's Memoir and Remains, vol. i. pp. 272—276. See also the close of Edgar Quinet's History of the Revolution.

"I turn thy leaves: I feel their breath
Once more upon me roll;
That air of languor, cold, and death
Which brooded o'er thy soul.

* * * *

"Though here a mountain murmur swells
Of many a dark-bough'd pine,
Though, as you read, you hear the bells
Of the high pasturing kine—

"Yet, through the hum of torrent lone,
And brooding mountain bee,
There sobs I know not what groundtone
Of human agony."

In this literature of despair two characteristics especially strike the reader—a conception of the greatness of ideal man, and of his boundless capacity for pleasure and for pain; and, with this, a sense of the pettiness and sterility of the actual life of man. Despair with the writers of the early part of the century is not, as with Schopenhauer and Hartmann, a theory or doctrine, with its metaphysic of pessimism, and its benevolent ethics of pessimism; it has no social purpose; it is an individual experience, while at the same time it is *la maladie du siècle.* It is negative and dissolving, whereas the pessimism of our own day aspires to be constructive, and to furnish a creed and a rule of life. In Obermann, to the common sadness of the time is added the suffering which arises from his individual feebleness. Even if the cup of life were brimming with joy, Obermann could hardly lift the cup to his lips. It was not until a second revolution had passed over France, and the muttering of renewed thunder was again in the air, that Sénancour found that deliverance from desire, that permanency of calm, which he had sought. He found them, not beneath the grey "cone of Jaman" and the "blue profound," but in the cemetery at Sèvres, where they engraved upon the tombstone words of his choice from his "Libres Méditations"—*Éternité, deviens mon asyle!*

Sainte-Beuve has named Obermann the genuine René. Some years before Coleridge planned his pantisocracy, and a little later than the time when William Blake was making his inquisition into the mystery of evil, in his "Marriage of Heaven and Hell," and was chanting his Song of Liberty, Chateaubriand set foot on the soil of the New World. For a while, remote from the civil strife, he wandered in the virginal solitudes, exhaling his soul in reverie, or making acquaintance with the noble savage,—not precisely the noble savage of Rousseau, but one who had appreciated the beauties of a sentimental Christianity, and united a kind of fictive innocency of nature with the emotional refinements and curiosities of civilization. Rousseau had found an eloquent pupil in the founder of nineteenth century literature in France, but in place of the intensity and diseased ardour of Rousseau, which made him an initiator, we find in Chateaubriand a dissolving spirit of reverie, a measureless sigh of regret, a background of melancholy horizons, washed in for their artistic effect. After the clear and hard thinking of the eighteenth century, came the day-dream of the sentimentalist; after the advance, a pause; after energy, lassitude; after hope, recollection. Were Catholicism and feudalism fallen, and in ruins? De Maistre, "the Catholic Hobbes of the Revolution," would come and rebuild the Bastille for the human spirit; Chateaubriand, "poet-laureate of Christianity," would come to sit upon the ruins and sing.

The faith of Chateaubriand, as far as he possessed a faith, was that of the eighteenth century,—he was a deist: but his sentiment belongs to the nineteenth century. A dying mother had grieved over his lack of Christian belief; the beauties of Christianity supplied charming themes for tender rhetoric; in fine, there was a vacancy for a laureate, and he would wear the poetic wreath. The historical sentiment for Christianity in Chateaubriand may, perhaps, indicate an advance from the school of evidential writers in England, who were so busily engaged for half a century in proving that the apostles were neither enthusiasts nor impostors; but Chateaubriand's historical sentiment is not robust,—a martyr interests him as a moonlight ruin might,—very charming things may be said about each of them. Nor did he possess a political any more than a religious faith;

what he really represents is the void left by the loss of faiths. "Je me suis toujours étonné," wrote Chateaubriand of his contemporary Chamfort, "qu'un homme qui avait tant de connaissance des hommes, eût pu épouser si chaudement une cause quelconque." The sadness of René is not a strenuous pain; it is vague and veiled, the romanticism of sorrow, a musical reverie with no definite theme, a grief not uniform, grey, monotonous, but one shot through with a play of shifting colours. Sentimentalism is the feminine of cynicism; the genius of Chateaubriand may be described as the feminine correlative of the genius of Byron.

Chateaubriand, in a passage inspired by characteristic vanity, draws a parallel between himself and Byron, each the founder of a new literature, each of noble rank, and he somewhat querulously complains that the English poet nowhere makes due acknowledgment of obligations to his French predecessor. But "Childe Harold" is in every way the offspring of a more masculine imagination than "René." Although its central figure has been taken for a representative of the English *jeunesse dorée*, few young English aristocrats, it may be suspected, could have felt with Childe Harold the largeness of European interests, in the past and in the present, in the material and in the moral orders. As we read the poem we assist at the rise and fall of empires, in the court, the camp, the council-chamber. Under the veil of superficial cynicism there appears in "Childe Harold" a robust enthusiasm for what is great, beautiful, and heroic in European history; in no way of mere sentimental reverie, but with a strong ardour of imagination, the glories of former ages live again in the verse of Byron, and connect themselves with the life of his own day. The monuments of old renown, the memorials of patriot, of warrior, of poet, — Dante, "the starry Galileo," Ariosto, Rousseau, Voltaire, the castles of the Rhine, the cathedrals of Italy, the Apollo, the Laocoon, are none of them forgotten or disregarded. The sated voluptuary displays a vigorous delight in the presence or the recollection of each of these. Byron's pleasure in nature, in art, in human character, in the memorials of history, has indeed nothing in it subtle or exquisite; but he sees the large features of things, reads off their obvious significance, and receives from them an ample though not an exquisite emotion. There is in "Childe Harold" a historical sense, not scientific, and applying itself only to an obtrusive class of facts, yet real and vital; and while the poem deals so much with the past, it is in spirit essentially modern.

If Childe Harold devours all the material of enjoyment which nature and society, the present and the past, afford, still his heart remains craving and unsatisfied. Obermann had withdrawn from the world, unable to sustain its tumults and agitations. René had spent his powers in a waste of imagination, in desire apart from action, in the luxury of self-observing tender emotion. Childe Harold flings himself on life, and when he falls back defeated of joy, gathers up his force, wave-like, to fling himself upon life again. The ethical ideal of the eighteenth century had represented as the most precious elements of human character a wise temperance, moderated desires, a cheerful resignation, a tolerant and pliant temper, good sense; for one who set before him such an ideal no great disenchantment or disillusion was possible.

> "Never elated while one man's oppress'd
> Never dejected while another's bless'd;"

such is the equable frame of mind that Pope commends. And when the ardour of religious desire seizes upon us what, according to Johnson, should be our prayer?

> "Yet when the sense of sacred presence fires,
> And strong devotion to the skies aspires,
> Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind,
> Obedient passions, and a will resign'd."

"Je sens en moi l'infini," exclaimed Napoleon, maker of our century's epics in the world of action, himself so great, so petty, the conqueror of the Pyramids, the captive of St. Helena. "Je sens en moi l'infini," exclaimed also Byron, and this infinite of egoism left him in the end like Napoleon, defeated and defrauded, narrowed into the bounds of a solitary, small, and sterile island in the great ocean of human existence—or would have left him so, had not Greece summoned him and Missolonghi set him free.

Byron has been spoken of as the representative poet of revolution, and the fact that in his hands English poetry became for the first time European poetry,—interesting in Weimar, in Florence, in Paris, hardly less than in London,—is evidence that Byron possesses more than a national significance. The positive dogmas, however, of the French Revolution occupy a small place in Byron's poetry. In its political results the Revolution seemed to him a huge failure; yet it impressed his imagination as so wonderful a phenomenon, a manifestation of popular power so striking and so new, that all promises for the future became through it credible. Only ruins indeed remained, ruins wherewith to build anew dungeons and thrones; yet such cannot be the order of things for ever:

> "But this will not endure nor be endured!
> Mankind have felt their strength, and made it felt."

And so Byron at once believed and doubted the gospel of Revolution. What he absolutely disbelieved was the gospel of the Holy Alliance. He profoundly expressed the feeling of the moral void, and the failure of all attempts to fill that void by the infinite of egoism, by pleasure, by passion, by the ambition of the imagination; and he illustrated through all changes of circumstances and temper, one thing constantly—a disdain of checks, a force of reckless individualism, which formed part of the revolutionary spirit. This it is which gives unity to the mixed and otherwise incoherent elements of which Byron was compounded. An English noble, proud of his rank, yet an enemy to caste; a fighter in the ranks of the children of light, yet not without a strong touch of the Philistine in him; corrupted by the evil days of the Regency and hating their corruption; a scoffer at orthodoxy, yet never delivered from a half-faith in the popular theology of England; a leader of the Romantic movement, yet a worshipper of the poetry of Pope; mean and generous, posing himself for admiration, yet possessing at bottom a sincerity of his own; an Apollo placed upon the limping limb of a Vulcan.

Care for his own moral being was not at any time that which could have given direction and coherence to the nature of Byron; had he been fortunate enough to come under the influence of some public or national cause, which would have engaged his deepest feelings, aroused his imagination, and given scope for the deploying of the forces of his will, then perhaps, no power of our century would have been comparable to Byron. But he found himself among spectral faiths, and the ghosts of heroic causes, while the coarse energies and vulgar enjoyments of the *jeunesse dorée*, the mohawks of the Regency, were at least real and living. And so his nature suffered, not indeed entire disintegration and death, but inward division; his nobler self protested and uttered defiance, his baser self answered with ironical laughter; at length in "Don Juan," the mocking voices envelop and almost reduce to silence the voice of the better spirit; then came the final protest and defiance of his higher nature:—

"The sword, the banner, and the field,
  Glory and Greece, around we see!
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,
  Was not more free;"

and then, the divine freedom of death. The fact that much of Byron's work was wrought from vulgar materials made it the more readily accepted in his own day. If jarring forces strove in Byron, they strove also in the world around him. One thing he constantly expresses—the individualism of the earlier Revolutionary epoch, and the emptiness and sterility of the life which is merely individual and not social.*

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* See, in Life and Writings of Mazzini, vol. vi., an essay on "Byron and Goethe," admirable in its treatment of Byron, and presenting with great earnestness a one-sided view of Goethe.

Mr Matthew Arnold, who recognizes the great productive power of Byron, inquires why the brilliant poetical movement of Byron's time did not sustain itself, and bore so little fruit; and his answer is, because it was not nourished by the best ideas; it did not know enough; no great critical movement lay behind it. Mr Arnold's view may be right, and yet it is possible to inquire too curiously into these things; the work of Byron could perhaps only be done in Byron's way. "I very much doubt," said Goethe's famulus, Eckermann, "whether a decided gain for pure human culture is to be derived from Byron's writings." Goethe replied, as Faust might have done to Wagner, "There I must contradict you; the audacity and grandeur of Byron must certainly tend towards culture. We should take care not to be always looking for it in the decidedly pure and moral." Nor, it may be added, in the decidedly intellectual and scientific. "Everything that is great," went on Goethe, "promotes cultivation as soon as we are aware of it." Byron did much to free, arouse, dilate the emotional life of the nineteenth century. This has been his chief work, and it is doubtful whether the work would have been accomplished more effectively had Byron emerged from a matrix of philosophy and criticism.

The Revolution, as it realized itself in France from 1789 to 1799, was in fact a series of revolutions. The Constituent, the Legislative, the Convention, the Directory, had each its season; Girondins, Dantonists, Robespierre and Saint-Just, the Thermidoriens, followed one another like fierce waves, revolution rolling in upon revolution. "In studying that portion of the European movement," writes Mr John Morley, "which burst forth into flame in France between the fall of the Bastille and those fatal days of Vendémiaire, Fructidor, Floréal, Brumaire, in which the explosion came convulsively to its end, we seem to see a microcosm of the Byronic epos. The succession of moods is identical. Overthrow, rage, material energy, crime, profound melancholy, half-cynical dejection. The Revolution was the battle of will against the social forces of a dozen centuries." It may be that, in accordance with this view, which has a completeness and definiteness attractive to the mind of a theoretic literary critic, Byron is the truest representative in our literature of the Revolution as a realized historical series of events. Certainly the representative of the Revolution in its pure ideal is not Byron but Shelley. No writer can have fewer affinities to the eighteenth century than Shelley, considered as an artist. Byron may have had some remote kinship with the classical school; his admiration for Pope may have been something more than a protest of his good sense against his passion and his pride, something more than an admission that he distrusted his own craving heart, felt weary of the pain of a spirit divided between enthusiasm and irony, and looked at times longingly towards the *via media* of moderated and justified desires, unambitious reason, and tranquil benevolence—qualities which, if Pope did not possess, he yet poetically recommends. Shelley assuredly derives nothing as an artist from the eighteenth century, except from such parts of it as run on and connect themselves with nineteenth century art—such, for example, as Rousseau's feeling for nature, his sentimental ardour, and the romantic horrors of Mrs Radcliffe. But the intellectual basis or background of Shelley's earlier poetry belongs, on the political side wholly, and in large part upon the metaphysical side, to the *Aufklärung,* the critical movement which preceded the Revolution.

Shelley came in a time of reaction; but his imaginative motives lay less in events than in ideas, and, unlike Byron, he remained in his inner spirit wholly unaffected for evil by the reaction. No Girondin in early Revolution days could possess a more unqualified faith in the Revolution than did the young English poet in the days of the Regency. He saw indeed an enormous antagonism of evil set over against good; but his white flame of devotion, to what seemed to him the sacred cause, was thereby only quickened and intensified. Whether it be an indication of intellectual narrowness and weakness, or rather of the martyr and saint-like strength, no touch of that cynicism which made so large a part of Byron's complex mode of feeling came to trouble the simplicity, or divide the energy of Shelley's soul. De Tocqueville wrote a chapter to show how the French Revolution, disregarding territorial boundaries, and viewing man as man, proceeded alone among political movements in the manner of religious revolutions, and extended itself by preaching and propagandism. This aspect of the Revolution in especial is apparent in both the writings of Shelley and his youthful apostleship, particularly during his mission to Ireland. Perhaps one may discover something more heroic in Byron's sacrifice of self on behalf of a people from whom he expected no miracle of virtue, and of patriots whom he half despised, than in Shelley's preparedness for surrender for the whole human race about to be suddenly enfranchised and transfigured ; and it is true that there is an absence of sanity and adult force in Shelley's revolutionary propagandism ; but Byron's sacrifice was not unmingled with motives of egoism, and the life he offered up was one worn with excess, and weary through satiety.

There is an intellectual relationship between Shelley and Godwin, closer and more important than their subsequent family connexion through Shelley's second marriage. Godwin, as Mr Leslie Stephen has noticed, "more than any English thinker, resembles those French theorists who represented the early revolutionary impulse." "His opinions were rooted too deeply in abstract speculations to be affected by any storms raging in the region of concrete phenomena. . . . He remained a Republican Abdiel throughout the long dark winter of reaction." It may safely be affirmed that every leading idea in Shelley's earlier writings, can be paralleled by a doctrine taught in Godwin's "Political Justice." Both Godwin and Shelley, in common with the century from which sprang their beliefs, were deficient in the historical sense. "I am determined to apply myself," Shelley writes, "to a study that is hateful and disgusting to my very soul. . . . I mean that record of crimes and miseries, history." And again, in a letter to Godwin, "I am unfortunately little skilled in English history, and the interest which it excites in me is so feeble, that I find it a duty to attain merely to that general knowledge of it which is indispensable." And again very beautifully and characteristically Shelley writes to another correspondent, "Facts are not what we want to know in poetry, in history, in the lives of individual men, in satire, or panegyric. They are the mere divisions, the arbitrary points on which we hang, and to which we refer those delicate and evanescent hues of mind, which language delights and instructs us in precise proportion as it expresses." Byron declares that from the moment he could read, his grand passion was *history*, and there will be found in his Life by Moore a remarkable extract from a memorandum book of 1807, in which Byron sets down a list of the historical writers whose works he had perused; the list occupies more than two pages, and includes histories of England, Scotland, Ireland, Rome, Greece, France, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, Russia, Sweden, Prussia, Germany, Italy, Hindostan, America.* "The greater part of these," Byron adds, "I perused before the age of fifteen." Shelley was about to reform the world, but empirical knowledge, experience, was not needed for the task; the gross stuff of society was to be penetrated by the purifying flame of an idea, and all its grossness was to be burnt away.

Godwin (again I quote from Mr Leslie Stephen) "represents the tendency of the revolutionary school towards the deification of the pure intellect; . . 'sound reasoning and truth, when adequately communicated, must alway be victorious over error; sound reasoning and truth are capable of being so communicated; truth is omnipotent; the vices and moral weaknesses of men are not invincible; man is perfectible, or in other words, susceptible of perpetual improvement.'" What is this but the Revolt of Islam put into intellectual formulæ? In Shelley's poem, indeed, written at a time when the Revolution seemed to have temporarily failed, and when the forces of reaction were strong, the power of error is more justly estimated; yet if evil should triumph, it can be but for a season; the moment must arrive, when before the breath of some pure prophet or prophetess, all the piled-up wrongs of the earth must go down and dissolve. In the "Prometheus" ages must pass away before the tyrant falls, and the deliverer is unbound; but the day of rejoicing is certain, even if it be far off, and in the end it will come with sudden glory. "The worst of criminals might be reformed by reasoning"—such was Godwin's happy conviction. Shelley differs only as a poet must differ from a philosopher—he assigns a larger share in such possible reformation to the emotions, and the action upon the heart of ideals of justice and charity. "To hate a murderer is as unreasonable as to hate his weapon"—so thought Godwin; and Shelley poetizes the doctrine when Laon bids the tyrant Othman go free. To account for the prevalence of error, Godwin "sets up a dark power of imposture which fights and has hitherto fought with singular success, against the power of truth. . . . Kings and priests represent the incarnation of evil." The Zeus by whose order Prometheus is chained to the rock is this dark Power of imposture, he is also named the Anarch Custom; it is he who has authorized the superstitions and the tyrannies of the world. "We can scarcely hesitate," wrote Godwin, "to conclude universally that law is an institution of the most pernicious tendency." And with Shelley law is everywhere at odds with love, and in a reign of love it must at last disappear. As to the marriage bond, Godwin is merely uncertain whether the future unions of the sexes will be by promiscuous intercourse, or alliances terminable at the pleasure of either party.* Shelley exhibits in his original "Laon and Cythna," and his "Rosalind and Helen," the beauty of free love, and the miseries and degrading slavery of unions where no love exists or which are protracted after love has ceased. All the illusions of the Revolution, many of them generous illusions,—perfectibility, disregard of tradition and inheritance, the contrast between a benevolent Nature and the selfishness of Society,†—are to be found in full vigour in Shelley. Also all that was admirable and noble, all that was of a constructive character in the Revolution is to be found—its enthusiasm of humanity, its passion for justice, its recognition of a moral element in politics, its sentiment of the brotherhood of men.

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* The "List of Books read by Shelley and Mary in 1817" (Shelley Memorials, end of chap. vii.) supplies materials for an interesting contrast.

It was an unfortunate circumstance that the movement party in England, and England's poets of progress, remained separated by a great gulf. The questioning spirit in English thought during the early part of the present century—Jeremy Bentham—was (perhaps not excepting Hobbes) the hardest-headed of all questioning spirits, and his followers cut off the right hand of sensibility and put out the right eye of imagination, if by any means they might enter into the heaven of Utilitarianism, and have share in the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Mr Mill described in his Autobiography the spirit which animated the first propagators of Philosophic Radicalism. On their banner was inscribed a strange device—the population principle of Malthus. In politics they were possessed by "an almost unbounded confidence in the efficacy of two things, representative government and complete freedom of discussion." Aristocratic rule was the object of their sternest disapprobation; "an established Church or corporation of priests, as being by position the great depravers of religion, and interested in opposing the progress of the human mind," was, next after aristocracy, the most detestable of things. "Some of us," Mr Mill goes on, "for a time really hoped and aspired to be a 'school.' The French *philosophes* of the eighteenth century were the examples we sought to imitate."

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* Leslie Stephen: English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, vol. ii. p. 275.

† On this point Shelley in later years learned to correct his error.

Here were several particulars offering points of connexion with such poetry as that of Shelley, and Mr Mill was himself endowed with a fine feeling for literature. But something was wanting. "My zeal," says Mr Mill, "was, as yet, little else, at that period of my life, than zeal for speculative opinions. It had not its root in genuine benevolence or sympathy with mankind, though these qualities held their due place in my ethical standard. Nor was it connected with any high enthusiasm for ideal nobleness. Yet of this feeling I was imaginatively very susceptible; but there was at that time an intermission of its natural aliment, poetical culture, while there was a superabundance of the discipline antagonistic to it, that of mere logic and analysis." All poetry had been pronounced by Bentham to be *misrepresentation.* Among the liberals of that time, it was the spiritual liberals, Maurice and Sterling, with others—disciples of Coleridge—who best appreciated the uses of the imagination and the "understanding heart." No one who has read Mr Mill's Autobiography can forget the remarkable chapter in which he describes the spiritual dryness and dejection in which his habit of analysis and his unqualified Benthamism for a time resulted, nor how, in large measure through the influence of poetry—the poetry of Wordsworth,—he recovered his sanity and his energy of will. Afterwards, while still highly estimating Wordsworth's poetry, he came to understand Shelley, and assigned to him an unique place among English poets, as possessor of the artistic temperament in its purest, typical form.

The European poetry of England began and ended with Byron and Shelley. While the Revolution of 1830 proved that the spirit of 1789 was still living and acting on the Continent of Europe, while that movement assisted in giving a new direction to the rising Romantic school in France, and was hailed by Heine with pyrotechnic display of delighted epigrams, England, the weary Titan, was considering her corn laws and her Reform Bill. In France, new government, new literatures, new religions, new political utopias, Saint-Simon, and "rehabilitation of the flesh" through socialism. In Germany, the school of *junge Deutschland,* with its literary utopias, and rehabilitation of the flesh through joyous art. In England, severed by her positive national character from the movement on the Continent, quite a different sustenance of the flesh interested men,—namely sustenance by corn. On all sides, however, after the reverie and vague idealizing of the early part of the century, a more positive and practical tendency showed itself. A new stadium in the advance of the revolutionary idea commenced, and other influences, which had been silently gathering strength, now, for the first time, came into vital relations with literature.

With many readers of poetry at the present day, the names of Enoch Wray and Miles Gordon stir no fibre of imaginative sensibility; yet they are names of poetic worth. It has been a disadvantage to Ebenezer Elliott as a poet—though he would, perhaps, himself have esteemed it his chief honour as a man—that he should be remembered as the Corn-Law Rhymer. At a time when poets love before all else to regard themselves as artists, and inscribe upon their quaint banner of discoloured say or silk the words "Art for art," the poet who uplifts a banner—big and boisterous—with the motto in plain English letters "Bread for the worker" must take his chance of being set down as unregenerate, a banner-bearer of the host of the Philistines. Much that Elliott wrote certainly has no portion in the calm eternity of art, is not enshrined in any temple of those islands

"Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold."

Worthy in its kind, it belongs rather to that part of literature which, having a temporary purpose, and having accomplished that purpose, can resolvedly accept oblivion. It serves its generation, and falls on sleep. Prose is perhaps a more appropriate vehicle than verse for work of this occasional kind, and whereas poetry which becomes rhetoric degrades from its true function, the impassioned argument of a poet who chooses prose as his means of expression has in it something of light shining through the veil from his face to whom God speaks "as a man speaketh unto his friend." It was through a wise instinct or a high resolve that Milton remained silent as a poet while he was pouring forth in rapid succession his terrible pamphlets in defence of ecclesiastical, civil, and domestic liberty. There is, indeed, a kind of art which is both for the moment and for all time, but then the moment must be one charged with some special, some infinite, significance. And if a song is to be at all a sword, it must be of finer temper than even the finest Sheffield cutlery; the sword must be a living thing, like the angelic sword of flame which turned every way. We may congratulate ourselves that corn-duties have ceased, and that the ten-pound householder obtained his vote, but Peterloo, and the Repeal, and the Reform Bill of 1832 are not among the divine Ideas.

Pure artist, as we at the present time are inclined to conceive the artist, Ebenezer Elliott never was. He could at no time be insensible to the pressure of practical, material needs around him; if he ever escaped into the presence of perfect beauty, it was as the artisan takes his Sunday ramble, to restore him for the toil of the laborious hours. He could be anything sooner than what one of our living poets professes himself, "the idle singer of an empty day." He would in his best moment have been indifferent to those aromatic stings and scents,

> "Corrompus, riches et triomphants,
> Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies,"

that mount to our brain and make it giddy as we lean over the exquisite little phials which recent French poets have filled for our seduction with strange and secret compounds. He would have failed to discern the aesthetic necessity of some of our cherished curiosities of style; it may be doubted whether the incantation of the most musical, most meaningless refrain would have lulled to sleep his open-eyed sense of common fact; he would frankly have preferred for imaginative study a vigorous tramp upon an English highway to the slenderest-bodied mediaeval maiden, possessing the tenderest mediaeval name, and seen in the subtlest of side-lights. Yet there was some pith and substance in Ebenezer Elliott; and it might be a fair question of debate with a modern disciple of the philosophy of Aristippus whether there were not obtainable a moment of excitement more exquisite from contemplating so remarkable a figure as that of Elliott's Peasant Patriarch than from self-abandonment to the glories of a tazza of Gubbio, or to the grace of a cabinet by Chippendale.

It is, also, perhaps unfortunate for Elliott's fame in the century of revolution that, as a poet dealing with politics, his Radicalism was of an essentially English type. He claimed for the people not an ideal Republic, not Equality, not even Liberty as a new divinity for universal worship, not anything supposed eternal or infinite; his demand was for something known, definite, tangible, material—a cheap loaf of bread. Had he exhaled his ardour in apostrophes to Freedom, and Revolution, and Humanity, he might still quicken our spirits with the wine of vague enthusiasm; as it is, his political poetry has only helped to fill the mouths of the hungry with food. Yet English working men honoured his English devotion to their cause, and, when they raised his statue in their city, Landor cast as it were in bronze a poem, medallion-like, which exhibits in a group with the Elliott of Gibraltar and the Eliot who prepared the Commonwealth, the third Elliott—also glorious—who helped to abolish the tax on bread.

Readers of Mr Matthew Arnold's *Essays in Criticism* will remember how the critic's scourge of small cords is laid with a light and sure hand on Mr Roebuck's shoulders as the reward for that vigorous statesman's talk to the Sheffield cutlers about "our unrivalled happiness." "I ask you," said Mr Roebuck, "whether the world over, or in past history, there is anything like it? Nothing. I pray that our unrivalled happiness may last." Writing at a date before the repeal of the Corn Laws, it is assuredly not our unrivalled happiness which finds reflection in the Sheffield singer's verse. Its spirit is rather that of courageous sadness; indignation made not a few of the verses—indignation which is that of a sweet, hearty nature hating to be perforce turned bitter. The side of Elliott's genius which is most remote from reality, which loved to be romantic, was his less true self, and in his romantic poems there is unquestionably a note of spuriousness. In his passionate studies of real life we find the real man—ardent, affectionate, earnest, courageous, tender, sad, and conquering sadness by virtue of inextinguishable hope.

When we have laid aside the two considerable volumes which contain his poetical works, and ask ourselves what remains with us, what shall we carry forward, and not part with, the answer is, Some figures taken from actual English life—figures of rare dignity or true pathetic power, and with these the atmosphere, the rugged earth, the voices of swift, wild streams, the freshness of fair, wild flowers, and all else that makes up the external nature of Elliott's district in the West Riding of Yorkshire. There is something to English eyes dearer in the prosaic ploughmen and carters of Bewick's woodcuts, or the ungainly little figures of sailors and washerwomen in Turner's English landscapes, than in the most romantic of Italian banditti. But the chief personages of Elliott's best poems have claims upon our regard of a higher kind—they are those figures of exceptional grandeur or pathetic beauty which humble life in English city and village now and then affords. Enoch Wray will not be forgotten by one who has set eyes upon him for a single time on high-way or hill-side—the massive frame, still unbowed after its hundred years, the sightless eyes, the wind-blown venerable hair, the heart bearing its memories of grief and wrong. All is plain heroic magnitude of actual life. No spiritual imaginative light is effused around him, like that from which, as from a background, stands out the solitary figure of Wordsworth's Leech-gatherer. Nor shall we forget the youthful preacher or ranter, who chooses the mountain-side for his pulpit, and has a better gospel, he thinks, to preach than that of Methodism grown respectable and rich; we love him, with his eager eye, his wistful expression, his hectic cheek, and pleading hands, as we love some pale sunbeam on a day of gloom, predestined to be quickly swallowed by the darkness.

And around these figures we see the streets, the houses, the hamlets, the veritable Yorkshire hedgerows, and hills, and streams, the majestic barrenness of the Yorkshire moors. The one spiritual presence which breathes through universal nature in the poetry of Wordsworth we are not aware of in like manner or degree in the poetry of Ebenezer Elliott. Nor have the objects of external nature dear to him received that mould of shapely beauty which water and vale in Wordsworth's lake country possess. But the air is pure and free; beautiful wild things lie around us in a kind of harmonised confusion; we hear the singing of birds and the voices of rivers, and everywhere are unluxurious, hardy, yet delicate flowers. The silence or vital sounds of the open country bring healing and refreshment to an ear that has been harassed by the din of machinery; the wide peaceful light is a benediction to the eye that has smarted in blear haze of the myriad-chimneyed city. We become familiar with recurrent names of hill and stream, until the least musical of them, with its sharp northern edge, acquires a pleasantness like the keen flavour of some rough-rinded fruit.

"Flowers peep, trees bud, boughs tremble, rivers run;
The redwing saith it is a glorious morn.
Blue are thy Heavens, thou Highest! and thy sun
Shines without cloud, all fire. How sweetly, borne
On wings of morning o'er the leafless thorn
The tiny wren's small twitter warbles near!

. . . .

Five rivers, like the fingers of a hand,
Flung from black mountains mingle and are one
Where sweetest valleys quit the wild and grand,
And eldest forests, o'er the silvan Don,
Bid their immortal brother journey on,
A stately pilgrim, watch'd by all the hills.
Say, shall we wander where, through warriors' graves,
The infant Yewden, mountain-cradled, trills
Her Doric notes? Or where the Locksley raves
Of broil and battle, and the rocks and caves
Dream yet of ancient days? Or where the sky
Darkens o'er Rivilin, the clear and cold,
That throws his blue length like a snake from high?
Or, where deep azure brightens into gold
O'er Sheaf, that mourns in Eden?"

This poetry of external nature has not the rich and soft feeling to which agricultural or pastoral life gives rise. Elliott sings no half-humorous, half-tender elegy to a Puir Mailie, like that in which the Scotch peasant laments his pet yowe. He does not, like that tender-souled lyrist of Revolution in France—Pierre Dupont—confess the deep comradeship which binds his life to

"Les grands bœufs blancs marqués de roux."

The wilderness, in Elliott's conception, belongs to God and to the poet; the wide enclosures of land are the property of the peer by day, and of the poacher by night.

At the time when "The Village Patriarch" was gaining the attention it deserved, English poetry had touched low-water mark after the spring-tide of the early part of the century. It was not Elliott's billowy incursion of song that foretold the turn of the tide. A little ripple of poetry, edged with silver spray, went quivering up the sand. Some few eyes noticed it, and Triton out to seaward blew his triumphant conch. Enoch Wray was stalwart and real. The Claribels, and Adelines, and Sea Fairies of Mr Tennyson's volume of 1830 seem a faint impalpable troop of poetic creatures; yet it was they and their successors who were destined to call back the singing-tide with insupportable advance upon our shores. Man does not live by bread alone. We are all conscious that we have received from Mr Tennyson something which is real, substantial, and correspondent to our needs. He is not a poet of the Revolution; his part has been to assert that freedom must be one with order, that highest liberty consists in obedience to law. The revolt against ancient wrongs had accomplished part of its work; now the temperate wisdom of England was to qualify the passionate hopes and energies which had been born in France; duties were to assert themselves by the side of rights; the liberal conservatism of Mr Tennyson was to exhibit order united with progress; the radical conservatism of Mr Carlyle was alike to initiate and to restrain.

1877.

THE TRANSCENDENTAL MOVEMENT AND LITERATURE.

THAT some of the finest and most generous spirits of our time should be driven into opposition, almost into isolation, and should now, as it were in the desert, prophesy against us who heed them not, is a significant, perhaps an alarming fact. A minority which consists of an *élite* is always a witness for some despised or neglected truths. Some among our elder writers, who were indeed spiritual masters, look with an estranged, sad gaze at what we call our progress, our "triumphs of civilization;" and where among our younger writers is there promise of any spiritual master to take their place, any prophetic soul? Is the hardy and aspiring school of Positivist thinkers to be succeeded by a pessimist school, and the reverence which gathers around the name of Comte to transfer itself to that of the great Buddhist of Frankfort? Is humanity to prove itself less capable of self-worship than of self-abhorrence? Meanwhile a few persons may look back to the days when spiritual faith and hope and love were the air which young souls breathed, days when a man would go to the seers to inquire of God, and when God Himself seemed to be not far from every one of us.

The admirable working man, who on the first day of each month hastens to expend his tenpence on the purchase of Mr Ruskin's *Fors Clavigera*, and meditates until the appearance of the succeeding number upon its melancholy vaticinations, must by this time be convinced that he has fallen on evil days. The democratic movement, inaugurated by the French Revolution, is the object of Mr Ruskin's bitterest hostility. From it have been derived our loss of reverence, our loose morals, our bad manners, our mammon-worship, our materialism, our spirit of pushing self-interest. The modern scientific movement appears to Mr Ruskin to be in great part a ludicrous imposture, a dull kind of learned ignorance, with which names take the place of things, diagrams the place of vision, and death the place of life. More robust spirits than Mr Ruskin will refuse to be thwarted or turned aside by what is ugly and repulsive in some aspects of our material civilization. They will refuse to expect that the crude years of an industrial epoch, in which everything acts upon so vast a scale, should exhibit the coherence, order, and grace of civilizations which were small in scale, which themselves took long to emerge from barbarism, and which are happily remembered not as they were in their totality, but through some highly favoured types and examples that have survived the oblivion which overtakes the chaff and draff of the time. It is enough if we can see within its rough envelope the living germ of future order.

Those who possess a moderated but steadfast confidence in the beneficent tendencies of the laws of the world, would not set forward on behalf of the present age its select and illustrious persons; they would not set an Abraham Lincoln over against a Saint Louis although the noble disinterestedness, the steadfastness of aim, the practical good sense, the pliability and tolerance in detail, the heroic achievement, of our modern Yankee crusader, might bear comparison with the chivalric virtues (among which certainly practical wisdom was not one) of the mediæval soldier-saint. Defenders of the present time would rather let the stress of their argument lie on the fact that if ever our democratic age be organized, the organization will be not for a class but for the entire society—for workman as well as capitalist, for peasant as well as proprietor, for woman as well as man; and such a complex organization cannot be the product of one day, nor of one century. We accept courageously the rudeness of our vast industrial civilization. The results of that other movement also, the scientific, which Mr Ruskin passionately reproaches or regards with smiling disdain, we accept with gratitude. And yet were these our sole sources of hope, to some of us the burden of life would seem to be hardly worth taking up. Accumulated materials, whether materials for food, fire, and clothing, or materials of knowledge to feed the intellect, do not satisfy the soul. Are we tempted to enter the fierce struggle for material success? Are we tempted to forfeit our highest powers in the mere collection and systematizing of knowledge? Let us pause; if our utmost ambition were gratified, how barren a failure would be such success! Nay, even in duties, in the items of a laborious morality, we may cease to possess that life which is also light and incommunicable peace. Surrounded with possessions of wealth, of state, of splendour, or of culture, of erudition, of knowledge, or even of the dutiful works of a servant who is not a son, the inmost self may be poor, shrunken, starved, miserable, dead. What shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

And what shall it profit an age, a generation of men, if it lose its own soul? We accept joyfully the facts of material progress. Tons of iron, tons of coal, corn and wine, cotton and hemp, firkins of the best butter, barrels of salted pork; let these have their praises, and be chanted in the hymns of our poets of democracy. Knowledge about the brains of an ape, knowledge about the coprolites of an extinct brute, the dust of stars, the spawn of frogs, the vibrations of a nerve; to such knowledge we cry hail, and give it joyous welcome. Then, none the less, we ask, "But the soul—what of it? What of the most divine portion of the life of a man, and of a society of men?"

The word *transcendental* may be used in both a definite and a vague sense; in a definite sense as opposed to the empirical way of thinking dominant during the eighteenth century, alike in France and in England. The empirical thinker derives all our ideas from experience, some members of the school asserting that it is through the senses alone that we obtain these ideas. The transcendental thinker believes that the mind contributes to its own stores ideas or forms of thought not derived from experience. As to a Divine Being, and man's relations with Him, the empirical thinker may be a theist, but he will ordinarily require an apparatus, a mechanism, to connect the Divine Spirit with the spirit of man; the transcendental thinker can with difficulty endure the notion of such a mechanism or apparatus; the natural and the supernatural seem to him to touch, embrace, or interpenetrate one another; in the external world and in his own soul the Divine Presence for ever haunts, startles, and waylays him. So far, the meaning of the word *transcendental* is definite enough. But a word, like a comet, has a tail as well as a head, or at least a coma as well as a nucleus, and much vague talk about the Infinite, the Immensities, the Eternal Verities, the Eternal Silences, and what-not, is properly a part of transcendentalism, that is, of its coma, or its yet fainter and more extended tail. We are bound to recognize this vague transcendentalism, even if we cannot accurately define it. Much has justly been said of fallacies which arise from not defining our words; it has not, perhaps, been sufficiently noted how fallacies arise from assuming that a formal definition of a word is equipollent to the word considered as a winged thing and acting with a vital power.

Now,—whether the fact please us, or the reverse,—the *soul* in the literature of our century, at least until comparatively recent years, has been of the kind which we have named transcendental: at first, a transcendentalism, serene or joyous, which was felt to be an enlargement and deliverance of the spirit of man; afterwards, as the scientific movement assumed larger proportions, and began to sap in upon conceptions believed to be at the base of religion and morality, a transcendentalism either militant, or wavering and self-distrustful. The transcendental tendencies in nineteenth century literature become apparent in connection with the imaginative feeling for external nature, and in connection with the view taken of man, whether of man as an individual, or the entire race of mankind and its history. Between the *sæculum rationalisticum* of the eighteenth century, and our own age, the *sæculum realisticum*, there lies an intervening period in which logical and mathematical methods of truth-discovery in the moral and social order were discredited, and the methods of the natural sciences, observation, and induction, were not yet vigorously applied, a period when contemplation, serene or impassioned, played a large part in the attempt to ascertain truth, and a present Deity seemed to be manifested to the gaze of imaginative faith in the life of the world around us, in the most august and imperial faculties of the human soul, and in the progress of the race. The few masters of that period of thought were succeeded by a generation of disciples who modified the original teaching by new elements; the generation of disciples is now passing away, and though they may have left an inheritance to the world, they are without immediate heirs.

It does not follow from what has been said that there is but one type, eternal, necessary, and immutable, of the spiritual in man. There have been times when an entirely human, and indeed a narrow Stoicism has been the spontaneous expression of what was highest in human nature. There have been times when the tender humanities of Catholicism — these rather than its imperious dogma—have best nourished the religious affections. The historical fact remains, that during at least the first half of our century, the spiritual life of man embodied itself in transcendental thought, and emotions in harmony with such thought.

And one cause of this is sufficiently obvious. The eighteenth century neglected this side of truth so persistently and almost wantonly, that a reaction became inevitable. The sturdy good sense of our ancestors who read Fielding is a possession we are half disposed to envy them. Reflect on the opinion which Mr Tom Jones would have formed of an admired modern personage, the Alastor of Shelley. How that vigorous and healthy human animal would have held too poor for scorn a youth nourished "by solemn vision and bright silver dream," instead of by British beef and beer, and who wandered on homeless stream and among mountain solitudes through nonsense prepense, when for aught that appears he might have been smoking his pipe of tobacco at his inn, and making love to the comely chamber-wench. As a part of the general temper of good sense, great regard was had in the eighteenth century to moderation, to restrained desires, to moral tranquillity. The wild genius of a Shakspere was not more remote from the spirit of the correct poets, than was the zeal of a Catholic saint or the enthusiasm of a mystic from the Christianity, purged of extravagance, which adorned the sermons of a Secker or a Sherlock. With this temper fell in aptly the theology of the age. The awful possibilities of election or of reprobation which haunted Cromwell's death-bed, and filled Bunyan's life with violences of joy and terror, were now set aside; the excited visions of the sectaries were at an end. If William Law communed with the Eternal One in solitude, he found his public in two female disciples. The God worshipped at Whitehall was the moral governor of the universe, benevolent but not excessively benevolent, intelligent but not an abyss of unsearchable wisdom, energetic but not interfering save in an entirely constitutional manner in the affairs of His subjects. All parties, deists and apologists, agreed that God existed; only it did not greatly matter to any one whether He existed or not. A kind of Whig oligarchy consisting of second causes and general laws could carry on the affairs of State very effectively by themselves; the awful divine King, of Puritan theology, had been reduced to something like the position of a Venetian doge.

With this conception of the relation of God to nature the descriptive poetry of the time corresponds. External nature is not a living Presence with which the spirit of man communes: it is a collection of objects which may be described in detail, and which are subject to certain general laws. To Shelley a flower is a thing of light and of love, bright with its yearning, pale with its passion. To Wordsworth a flower is a living partaker of the common spiritual life and joy of being, a joy which is at once calm and ecstatic. To Thomson a flower is an object which has a certain shape and colour; fair-handed Spring scatters them abroad—

> "Violet darkly blue,
> And polyanthus of unnumbered dyes;
> The yellow wall-flower stained with iron-brown,"

and as many others as the passage may require. When Thomson would be poetically devout, the Author of nature is discovered engaged in the elegant art of manufacturing flowers :

> "Soft roll your incense, herbs and fruits and flowers,
> In mingled clouds to Him whose sun exalts,
> Whose breath perfumes you, and whose pencil paints."

We are taught to "look through nature up to nature's God."

Nor is the divine presence, which is out of and above external nature, to be found in man. Mr Carlyle begins his studies on Hero-worship with a lecture on the Hero as Divinity ; the heroic in man—in whatever aspect it may manifest itself—is always the worshipful, the divine. "The true Shekinah is Man. . . . This body, these faculties, this life of ours, is it not all as a vesture for that Unnamed ? 'There is but one temple in the Universe,' says the devout Novalis, 'and that is the Body of Man. Nothing is holier than that high form. Bending before man is a reverence done to this Revelation in the Flesh. We touch Heaven when we lay our hand on a human body.'"* Here we are in full fervour of transcendentalism. But the eighteenth century recognized the wisdom of a benevolent Deity in His creating man a fool, and permitting him to be happy in his foolery—so skilfully does the Author of nature adapt means to ends.

> "In Folly's cup still laughs the bubble, joy ;
> One prospect lost, another still we gain,
> And not a vanity is given in vain ;
> Even mean Self-love becomes by force divine,
> The scale to measure other's wants by thine ;
> See! and confess one comfort still must rise ;
> 'Tis this—though man's a fool yet God is wise."

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* Lectures on Heroes, i.

But out-topping the ordinary man—the average fool—there are some enormous fools, monsters for whom God cannot be held responsible; these monsters, who cannot recognize their true position and submit, are precisely Mr Carlyle's heroes, "from Macedonia's madman to the Swede." The English moralist of the second half of the last century, with a genuine melancholy, far different from the complacent optimism of Pope, has still the same tale to tell:—

> "In life's last scene what prodigies surprise,—
> Tears of the brave, and follies of the wise!
> From Marlb'rough's eyes the streams of dotage flow,
> And Swift expires a driveller and a show."

But if the Divine was found by eighteenth-century writers neither in the average man nor in the most exalted members of the race—poets, prophets, philanthropists, lawgivers, rulers—neither did it become manifest through collective humanity. In our age a religious statesman writes his "God in History," expressly enriching his theistic doctrine with certain elements commonly called pantheistic, and tracing the continuously developing consciousness of God in the history of races. With Hegel history is conceived as the development of spirit, the realization of the idea. In the last century, although a dawning conception of the philosophy of history had appeared as early as Vico's "Scienza Nuova," we must not look (save in a brief but pregnant study by Turgot) for any clear conception of human progress, until we reach the decade preceding and including the French Revolution; then in rapid succession were put forth theories of a philosophy of history by Lessing, by Kant, and by Herder in Germany, and in France by Condorcet. But a short time previously the spiritual ruler of the age, Voltaire, had offered, as if they constituted a philosophy, views of the course of human affairs contemptibly trifling and superficial. If God is to be found in history, we shall assuredly look for him in vain in the history by Hume. Though as a philosopher Hume studied causes and effects of a subordinate kind which influence civilizations, as a historian he cared chiefly for whatever either lent itself readily to the purposes of the literary artist or happened to countenance his own political prejudices. The theocratic conception had played a vigorous and disturbing part in politics in the country of David Hume's birth, and it should now be dismissed from history as an old Covenanter's superstition. His highly agreeable piece of narrative is history written for an English gentleman. The other great historian of that age—Gibbon—was (as was Hume) a deist, but the magnificent panorama of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire unrolls before us as a mere spectacle, with no breathing of a divine presence anywhere to be felt, within man or above man; it is a painting of still life on a vast scale; a city of the dead. We move along a palace-court of more than Egyptian proportions; there are colossal figures to the right hand and the left; but the tenant, the regal soul of man, or the Spirit of God dwelling in man, is not here. Afflicted and borne down by the intolerable silence, and the lifelessness of these pomps of humanity, we would fain have the spell broken by some living voice, were its words in a dialect as old as that of the Hebrew singer; "In Judah is God known; His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle, and His dwelling-place in Zion."

From the deism of the eighteenth century, from its mechanical philosophy, from its view of things which severed the human and the divine, from its ethics of good sense, two modes of escape were possible. It was possible on the one hand to appeal to authority, to point to some single sacred depository of supernatural truth, to localize the divine in definite ecclesiastical persons, places, and acts. "Oh! holy Roman Church! as long as the power of speech remains to me, I shall employ it in celebrating thee. I bid thee hail! immortal parent of science and of sanctity! *Salve, Magna Parens!*" So De Maistre begins the concluding section of his "Du Pape," gazing with awe and admiration at the Church, sole pillar of fire in our night of life, which guides us through the desert of this world. And essentially the same escape from the doubts and difficulties of their time was made by the leaders of the Oxford Movement of 1830. "Yes," they said, "man cannot live without a divine Presence, and a Real Presence there is; take, eat, feed upon it, and live. The great events of man's career on earth, his entrance to the world, the dawn of conscious spiritual life, and wedlock, and death, shall be lifted out of the sphere of common existence, and shall be sanctified by religion. Certain spots of earth shall be redeemed and made sacred, certain objects shall be holy to the Lord. If no longer, as in Paradise, a mist goes up to water the garden of man's habitation, yet by certain channels and aqueducts the living water shall be brought down to men from the mountains of God."

To this effect Keble sang, and Newman preached from the pulpit of St Mary's. Over external nature, as represented in the "Christian Year," there is a diffused, pallid light, but this light concentrates itself into certain burning points and centres called sacraments, and all the rest tends in to these. The artificial symbolism which Keble read into external nature, thereby as he conceived discovering its divine purpose, is evidence of the comparative feebleness of his imaginative feeling for nature; such an artificial system of correspondences would have been detected to be merely fanciful, were it not that with Keble a pious fancy actually stood in the place of poetical imagination. To Newman the idea that "nature is a parable" had a higher and more mystical significance; for him the material universe possessed no existence as such. From the Alexandrian school he had derived a belief that the economy of the visible world is carried on by the ministration of angels. "Every breath of air and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect, is, as it were, the waving of the robes of those whose faces see God."* But the spot where God himself is in a special sense present is at the altar communicated in or with the Eucharist. A new-born babe is not indeed, as Puritanism had taught, a child of hell; but it waits the sprinkling of the sacred drops to become a member of Christ and, in the most intimate sense, a child of God. The Divine Being is ever present in the course of human affairs ; true, and most essentially so, because the Church is ever present, that Church which is a body descended from the Apostles through a line of duly consecrated bishops. Does such an arrangement seem to the children of the world exclusive ? "Most of the great appointments of divine goodness are marked by the very character of what men call exclusiveness." Does it appear formal and artificial ? "Forms are the very food of faith."*

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* See Apologia, chap. i.; Sermons, vol. II, xxi and vol. IV. xiii.

Such was one way of escape from the eighteenth century mode of thinking, the way of ecclesiasticism. The other way of escape was the transcendental. It was an appeal not to authority, but to an inner light, an appeal from one faculty of man to a faculty which claimed to be of higher validity, from the understanding to the "reason," as Coleridge called it, to "imaginative faith," as it was called by Wordsworth ; to the intuitions, or spiritual instincts, as others preferred to say. Whatever terms were chosen, a common result was arrived at —that not by miracle, or special grace or supernatural intervention, but in the natural order of things a divine Presence was within us and around us, immanent in the world, not specially manifesting itself through consecrated places, consecrated persons, consecrated food, books, rites, ceremonies, but breathing through the universal frame of things, yet declaring itself in a more august style in the spirit of man.†

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* Sermons, vol. III. xiv.

† Here it would be natural to notice the course of German philosophical speculation from Fichte onwards, but, in order to bring the consideration of the subject with reasonable limits, it has been found necessary to set aside the history of German thought, and its relations with that of England.

The idea of a society was present with De Maistre and in the High Church movement, of a Church as opposed in the one case to the individualism in religion of the Evangelical party, and in the other to the pulverizing of society by the revolutionary idea. The Revolution had indeed uttered the great word "Fraternity," but as yet this fraternity was no more than a sentiment, and did not attempt to realize itself in institutions. With the idea of a Christian Society, came the recognition of the need of organized system, the need of forms, of machinery. The transcendental thinkers in the early part of the century had, on the contrary, come out of the Revolution, and, although the Revolution is the culminating point in the history of certain eighteenth-century ideas and passions, while the transcendental movement opposes itself to much that is characteristic of the eighteenth-century, it is none the less true that there are deep affinities between the Revolution and transcendentalism. De Tocqueville has set down as one note of a democratic period "un dégoût presque invincible pour le surnaturel," an almost invincible aversion to the supernatural, and as another note of democracy, a passion for pantheistic ideas. "The idea of unity in democratic times is for ever present to the minds of men, until at length all differences disappear in a transcendental unity which permits of no division between God and the universe." Now transcendentalism, seeking the supernatural everywhere, loses sight of it as such; through a process of levelling up it is overtaken by and enveloped in the natural. Nevertheless nature is not conceived in the mechanical fashion of the *Aufklärung*, it is living and divine; in other words, the transcendental movement has its face turned in the direction of pantheism.

Further, the glorification, if not the divinization, of humanity is common to the Revolution and to transcendentalism; glorification of man in the political and social world, the world of action—this is inscribed on the revolutionary banner; apotheosis of man in the ideal, the spiritual world—this is inscribed upon the banner of transcendentalism. We find accordingly in our century many conspicuous examples of the transcendental humanitarian united in the same person with the enthusiast of Revolution. Finally, among the points of affinity between the transcendental and the revolutionary movement, must be noted the aspiring, self-dilating, passionate character of both. By Rousseau a breach had been made in the ethics of moderation proper to his century; over and through the dykes and dams of prudence and self-restraint, a turbulent flood of passion foamed; having met the torrent of Revolution, this flood went careering on, loaded now with wreck and ravage. Measureless passion, measureless desire, and in place of resignation, a measureless despair fill the imaginative literature of the early part of our century. The spirit of man craved for something perfect, infinite, absolute. Even Keats, whose life was associated with no great external movement of his time, and whose poetry possesses the aloofness of his own Grecian urn from the drums and tramplings of the century,—even Keats belongs to the movement connected with Rousseau and the Revolution by his passion for *some* absolute perfection —and with him it was the absolute of beauty; by this, and also by the immitigable hunger of human love which preyed upon him for a while, and was the ally of consumption, but which came too late to find adequate expression in his art; and from these two elements the passion for beauty, and one passionate love, the whole diminished life of Keats was framed. Now this craving for something which shall satisfy the soul, something absolute, perfect, infinite, is closely akin to the emotional side of the transcendental movement. The new Gospel of faith and hope of the century possessed something in common with the new scepticism and despair, *la maladie du siècle;* the bite of the serpent was to be cured by the serpent's blood.

It will not appear a mere accident, then, that some of the characteristics noted by De Tocqueville should show themselves in Wordsworth and Coleridge, the transcendental teachers of England, when taken in connection with the fact that they had nourished their feelings in ardent youth with the enthusiasm of the French democracy. Shelley, again, is nothing if he is not revolutionary and at the same time transcendental. If in Byron one side of the revolution displays itself with power, that which is more materialistic and more personal, the assertion of unbounded egoism and the rights of the individual, in Shelley appears the reverse side, that which is more ideal, more religious, its tendency to merge the personal life in a larger life which is impersonal, whether the life of humanity or of external nature, the pantheistic tendency as De Tocqueville named it.*

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* And so while Byron asserts liberty often for its own sake, Shelley ordinarily asserts liberty together with fraternity, or love. Godwin, in

With a theoretic mind, up to a certain point, precociously developed, though not mature, Shelley, in earlier as well as later years, sought after a creed; he could not steep himself in mere sensation, in a luxury of odours, and colours, and sounds; and at first, not having had time or faculty to develop out of experience and his deepest thoughts and feelings a genuine faith, he accepted one ready-made, lived in it and by it; and this creed,—that of the critical movement preceding the Revolution,—lies behind the colour, melody, and interwoven imagery of all his earlier verse.

The ethics of self-interest with which Shelley came in contact through the French *philosophes* had no attraction for him; but the science and metaphysics of the *Aufklärung* imposed themselves upon his intellect as if they were a discovery of new and sacred truth. The Revolution, however, had not been self-consistent in its metaphysics, nor was Shelley. The deism of Robespierre had appeared as ridiculous and childish to the materialists as it had appeared impious to the Catholics. Shelley, belonging as he did partly to the nineteenth century and to the transcendental movement, could not be satisfied by a barren deism, the worship of an Être Suprême, out of and above nature; but when he caught up the materialism of the French atheistic philosophy, he did not sufficiently calculate upon an element in his own nature which, though opposed to deism, was equally opposed to atheism. From first to

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his spirit of pure individualism, takes Shelley to task for desiring "the organization of a society whose institution shall serve as a bond to its members."—See "William Godwin," by C. Kegan Paul, vol. ii. p. 204.

last Shelley moved spirit-like in a world which was spiritual, and while strenuously denying the existence of anything immaterial, he attains what his feelings and imagination demanded by a system of levelling-up, by endowing matter with all the attributes of mind. It is impossible to reduce to entire consistency the statements made by Shelley at the time when "Queen Mab" was written. A creative God he constantly denies; but he will not deny the existence of a Spirit of the Universe; this Spirit, however, cannot be immaterial; its action is necessary, it is incapable of will and of moral qualities, it is equally the author of evil and of good; we can stand in no relation to it, and hence religion is impossible. Yet because the principle of the universe acts necessarily it acts righteously; all evil is but apparent, and it becomes possible to love and to adore.*

Shelley's faith was no dead accretion of dogma around his intellect; what he could not make his own fell away; what remained was a vital portion of his being, and with his growth it underwent vital processes of change. When Shelley wrote "Adonais" he had outgrown the creed of "Queen Mab;" his materialism had given place to idealism; he no longer had any hesitation in attributing moral qualities to the Universal God; he was even prepared to admit the existence of an Evil

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* Some additional light has been recently thrown upon the history of Shelley's opinions by his "Refutation of Deism," which it was my good fortune to recover in 1875. The copy obtained by me (from Mr Hookham) is now in the British Museum Library, and the little treatise has been reprinted from this copy, in the edition of Shelley's works published by Messrs Chatto & Windus.

Spirit of the world, in order that he might save the moral character of the Supreme Being.

Mr Browning, in his preface to the forged letters ascribed to Shelley, ventures to conjecture that, had he lived, Shelley would have come to accept the Christian faith. It may safely be affirmed that only in some transcendental sense, not in a historical sense, could Shelley ever have conceived the existence of a "Son of God." In his later years, Shelley distinguished between the doctrine of the founder of the Christian religion and the theology of historical Christianity. Shortly before his death he wrote: "I agree with Moore that the doctrines of the French and Material Philosophy are as false as they are pernicious; but still they are better than Christianity, inasmuch as anarchy is better than despotism: for this reason, that the former is for a season, and that the latter is eternal." While remaining hostile to historical Christianity, Shelley had come to look on Jesus as a pure and impassioned prophet, who held a faith not very different from his own in its later development. Jesus conceived the ruling Power of the universe as "mysteriously and illimitably pervading the frame of things," "an overruling Spirit of the collective energy of the moral and material world." This Spirit Jesus called by the venerable name of God, nor did Shelley refuse to use the same word. Whether anything analogous to what we call *Will* can be attributed to this Power is a question which Shelley declined to consider; the action of the Power upon our spirits he conceived to be of the kind which we somewhat vaguely term impersonal. How far Shelley had travelled from the doctrine set forth in the notes to "Queen Mab," will appear from the following passage of singular beauty which occurs in the unfinished "Essay on Christianity":—

> "We live and move and think; but we are not the creators of our own origin and existence. We are not the arbiters of every motion of our own complicated nature; we are not the masters of our own imaginations and moods of mental being. There is a Power by which we are surrounded, like the atmosphere in which some motionless lyre is suspended, which visits with its breath our silent chords at will. Our most imperial and stupendous qualities—those on which the majesty and the power of humanity is erected—are, relatively to the inferior portion of its mechanism, active and imperial; but they are the passive slaves of some higher and more omnipotent Power. This Power is God; and those who have seen God have, in the period of their purer and more perfect nature, been harmonized by their own will to so exquisite a consentaneity of power as to give forth divinest melody, when the breath of universal being sweeps over their frame."

This was the kind of faith which his own nature was, in its moments of highest light and ardour, fitted to yield to Shelley.

Coleridge in an early poem uses imagery similar to that employed by Shelley in the passage which I have quoted, the purpose of Coleridge being not to describe the rare and exquisite phenomena of the life of the saint, the poet, or the perfect lover, but to suggest a theory of the genesis of consciousness and thought throughout the entire universe:—

"And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic harps diversely framed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweep,
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each and God of all?"

From any tendency to remove the ground of division between God and man, or mind and the material world, Coleridge delivered himself, and we know painfully, upon the testimony of the now venerable sage of Chelsea, that the philosopher of Highgate, when his articulation had become more nasal than Mr Carlyle might have desired, knew to distinguish "om-mject" from "sum-mject." Yet there are secret points of contact between Coleridge's early pantheistic heresy reproved by the "serious eye" of his "pensive Sara" and his later doctrine of the Reason. The Reason is that which is highest in each individual man, yet no man can call it his own; he does not possess it, he partakes of it; the Reason is the present Deity in the soul. The primary truths of theology and of morals are witnessed to by their own light, which is the light of Reason; it is in us, or we are in it, but it is not ours, nor of us.

Wordsworth, if we are to believe the complaint of Shelley, did not possess imagination in the highest sense of that word. When things came within the belt of his own nature they melted into him, but he could not dart his contemplation from any point except that on which he actually stood. Wordsworth approached and communed with Nature—Shelley goes on to say—but he dared not pluck away her closest veil and consummate a perfect union. It is not difficult to put oneself at Shelley's point of view when he wrote these verses of his "Peter Bell," and it is true that Shelley was much more than Wordsworth like one of the brotherhood of the forces of nature, himself a kinsman of the wind and of the fire. Shelley's total being transforms itself into a single energy—now into the ecstatic clasping of the life of nature, now into an ardour of hope for man, now into keenest joy, now into some exquisite agony, now into love, now into horror or into hate. What gives to Wordsworth his characteristic place among idealists is that he was much more than an idealist; underneath the poet lay a north-country statesman; and instead of transforming his being, as did Shelley, into a single energy, all diverse energies blended in Wordsworth's nature into a harmonious whole. The senses were informed by the soul and became spiritual; passion was conjoined with reason and with conscience; knowledge was vivified by emotion; a calm passivity was united with a creative energy; peace and excitation were harmonized; and over all brooded the imagination. Wordsworth is never intense, for the very reason that he is spiritually massive. The state which results from such consentaneous action of diverse faculties is one not of pure passion, not of pure thought; it is one of impassioned contemplation. To those who are strangers to this state of impassioned contemplation, Wordsworth's poetry, or all that is highest in it, is as a sealed book. But one who is in any true sense his disciple must yield to Wordsworth, so long as he is a disciple, the deep consent of his total being. Now what appearance will the world present to senses which are informed with spirit? It will itself appear spiritual, and as the gazer still contemplates what is around and within him, and his tranquillity ascends into a calm ecstasy, he will become conscious of all things and himself among them, as in a state of vital interaction, God and man and nature communicating with one another, playing into and through one another:

> "And I have felt
> A presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean, and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
> A motion and a spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things."

Coleridge and Wordsworth are alike commended, or condemned, as having contributed to bring about the Oxford High Church movement. There is no doubt that Coleridge did help to summon to life things which had been dead or sleeping, and which even now seem to walk about wound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and bound about the face with a napkin. And Wordsworth in his later years lost, as he expresses it, *courage*, the spring-like hope and confidence which enables a man to advance joyously towards new discovery of truth. But the poet of "Tintern Abbey" and the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality" and the "Prelude" is Wordsworth in his period of highest energy and imaginative light; the writer of the "Ecclesiastical Sonnets" is Wordsworth declined into poetical ways of use and wont, when he had acquired a habit of writing at will in his characteristic manner, but without his characteristic inspiration. He valued, moreover, very deeply all permanent feelings, and he came to regard with reverent affection all objects with which permanent feelings have associated themselves. Then again the analytic processes of science, the worship of useful knowledge, the pushing materialism, the utilitarian philosophy of our century repelled him, and in the

Church he found faith in something spiritual, in God and immortality. Keble admired and honoured the venerable poet, and transfused into his "Christian Year" a certain quantity of dilute Wordsworthian sentiment, sanctified to purposes of religious edification. One of the writers of the Series of Lives of the Saints, originated by Dr Newman, reprints the "Stanzas suggested in a Steamboat off St. Bees' Head," with a comment on the affectionate reverence of the poet for the Catholic past, which presents an edifying contrast to the "half-irreverent sportiveness of Mr Southey's pen." Nevertheless it remains true, that the tendencies of Wordsworth as a master, when he was indeed a master, are essentially adverse to those of Anglo-Catholicism. The difference is that between the natural and the manufactured, the reign of spiritual law and the reign of ecclesiastical miracle. And the true representatives of Wordsworth among the younger minds of Oxford were precisely those who have contributed nothing towards the Catholic movement; but have rather acted in opposition to it,—such young men among others as Mr Shairp, Mr Matthew Arnold, and A. H. Clough.

As to Coleridge's relations with the High Church movement, it might have given pause to those who would exhibit him as an undeveloped Anglo-Catholic if they had remembered his enthusiastic admiration of Luther and of Milton.* Dr Newman, when claiming Coleridge as a philosophical initiator of High Church opinions, admits that he "indulged a liberty of speculation which no Christian can tolerate, and advocated conclusions which were often heathen rather than Christian." Perhaps if the matter were capable of being set at rest by authority, the highest authority adducible would be that of one who devoted, it may be sacrificed, a mind of high and original powers and of admirable culture to the study and elucidation of the great thinker's writings—Coleridge's learned daughter. "My own belief is," she wrote, "that although an unripe High Church theology is all that some readers have found or valued in my father's writings, it is by no means what is there: and that he who thinks he has gone a little way with Coleridge, and then proceeded with Romanizing teachers further still, has never gone with Coleridge at all."

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* Clough, writing from Oxford, 1838, says: "It is difficult here even to obtain assent to Milton's greatness as a poet. . . . Were it not for the happy notion that a man's poetry is not at all affected by his opinions, . . . I fear the 'Paradise Lost' would be utterly unsaleable, except for waste paper, in the university."

The Transcendental and the Catholic movements had, however, one important point in common—both were antagonistic to the Puritan religion of England, which laboured to effect an irreparable breach between the invisible and the visible, the internal and the external, between body and spirit. The sole ritual evolved from the religious consciousness of the preceding dominant party seems to have been the mysterious ceremony of praying into one's beaver hat. To Wordsworth the senses, themselves sacred, and hardly more to be named senses than soul, are ministers to what is highest in man, "subservient still to moral purposes, auxiliar to divine." There was for him an unceasing ritual of sensible forms appealing to the heart, the imagination, and the moral will—a grand function was in perpetual progress while seed-time and harvest and summer and winter endure. The High Church rector was not ill pleased to find that a philosophical view of religion authorized the gratification of an English gentleman's taste for mild æsthetic pleasures. The designs of the elder Pugin—attenuated in structure (perhaps symbolically) and successful in decorative elements—began to replace those grim Anglo-Grecian temples, so vividly described by Mr Eastlake in his "Gothic Revival," where the beauty of holiness was made visible through the pseudo-classic portico, the "jury-boxes in which the faithful were impanelled, the three-decker pulpit, and the patent warming-apparatus." To deliberate over a mural diaper, to compare the patterns for altar furniture, afforded a gentle stimulant in the midst of parochial dulness. The taste for melodrama and martyrdom was not at that early date developed.

To Coleridge a far more kindred spirit than that of any High Churchman was Mr F. D. Maurice. We can imagine the pain with which Mr Maurice would have heard himself styled "transcendental," but presently that most sympathetic of adversaries would doubtless have discovered that you were right, only in his sense, not your own; "transcendental," yes, because before all else needing some realities, some abiding facts, and not theories about facts; "transcendental," then, because above everything a realist. Mr Maurice's theology, as a recent critic, the Rev. James Martineau, has observed, is at once an effort to oppose the pantheistic tendency, and is itself reached and touched by that tendency. How to connect the human and the divine had been a question since the transition from eighteenth century thought had been effected. We have seen what was the answer of De Maistre, what was the answer of English ecclesiasticism. Mr Maurice answered that there is a divine life in the world, a kingdom of God in process of advancement, a divine centre and head of humanity; in the infinite, divine life each one of us participates; with the divine head of our race each one of us is vitally connected; "all the higher human relations are but faint echoes of relations already existing in an infinitely more perfect form in the divine mind;" the higher movements of society, the spiritual tides of passion and of thought, the cry in our century for freedom and for order, the search in our century for certitude, for light, all these are portions of that life of God in the world which manifests itself most conspicuously in the incarnation and life of a Son of Man who is also a Son of God. Mr Martineau writes:—

> "It may seem paradoxical, yet it is hardly hazardous, to say that the Maurice theology owes its power not less to its indulgence than to its correction of the pantheistic tendency of the age. It answers the demand of every ideal philosophy and every poetic soul for an indwelling Divine Presence, living and acting in all the beauty of the world and the good of human hearts. Its 'Incarnation' is not, as in other schemes, an historical prodigy, setting its period apart, as an *Annus Mirabilis*, in vehement contrast with the darkness of an otherwise unvisited world; but is rather a revelation, by a supreme instance, of the everlasting immanence of God, and His consecrating union with our humanity. . . . The new theologians translated Christianity out of time into eternity; they read in the life and death of Christ no scheme, no plot with astonishing catastrophe; but the symbol and sample of constant divine life with men, and of human sonship to God, disclosing relations which had for ever been and would for ever be; only adding now the glad surprise that the sigh for better life, the response of conscience to high appeals, the inward sympathy with all righteousness, are no

lonely visions, but the personal communion of the perfect with the imperfect mind." *

Mr Maurice never erred, as a less practically devout nature might have erred, by theorizing away the facts of the inner life; conscious of a conflict between right and wrong within himself, God was for him not an impersonal force but a Righteous Will to which his loyalty was due, and from any pantheistic tendency to efface the distinction between good and evil Mr Maurice was wholly free. A special gift of Mr Maurice indeed lay in his power of lifting up into consciousness, without murdering or dissecting them, the things of the spiritual life; he saw them in the round, and contemplated rather than analyzed them. We know what splendid theories the men of trenchant intellect can frame in defence of religion! with what magnificent energy they establish everything or nothing!—

"And thrice he routed all his foes, and thrice he slew the slain;"—

with what surpassing force they convince nobody! The spiritual life is with them a problem in mechanics to be illustrated by a diagram. Mr Maurice waves aside theory, and gazes at the concrete objects, while in a fashion of its own his intellect goes obscurely to work. Hence in part his power, which with those who have felt his influence has been of a prophetic kind. He more than other men, we feel, was one whose hands

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* Introductory Chapter by James Martineau to Tayler's Religious Life of England, p. 9. This section of Mr Martineau's chapter, and an admirable article in the *Spectator*, November 20, 1869, entitled "Mr Maurice—Theologian or Humanist?" present in brief spaces the most faithful interpretations of Mr Maurice's teaching with which I am acquainted.

have handled the Word of life. We do not go to him for clear views, but for living realities, and for a living presence breathing upon us and delivering us from the barren abstractions of our brains.

Coleridge had given an impulse in the direction which I have named transcendental to the intellect of his time; Wordsworth, to the imagination and to the contemplative habit of mind; Shelley, to the imagination and the passions. Mr Carlyle plays with his electrical battery upon the will. From about 1830 onwards, the practical tendencies of the *sæculum realisticum* on the one hand begin to affect the transcendental movement, and the scientific movement saps in upon it on the other. Transcendentalism, which had been serenely philosophical in the writings of Coleridge, or, if at times argumentative, calmly argumentative,—transcendentalism, which had been serenely, even if ecstatically, contemplative in the poetry of Wordsworth, now becomes militant; militant against a low utilitarian activity in Mr Carlyle's prophesying, militant against the conclusions and tendencies of modern science in the poetry of Mr Browning. Yet while Mr Carlyle opposes himself to a low utilitarianism, and to the hard, self-interested, positive tendencies of our century, he is himself distinguished by the homage which he pays to action, to labour, to the accomplishment of definite duties. The literature of unlimited passion, the literature of despair of the early part of this century, and part of the eighteenth century, the spirit born of Rousseau's "Nouvelle Héloïse," Wertherism, and Byronism had spent itself and was exhausted; it was so, if not in France, at least in England and in Germany. The wail of egoism, proclaiming its own misery, and incapable of announcing any way of deliverance from such unprofitable despair, had been heard sufficiently often. While on the one hand Mr Carlyle does battle, with more than Quixotic zeal, against logic-mills, the dismal science, the Gospel of Mammonism, the pig-philosophy, at the same time he deals an indignant blow at the egoism of *la maladie du siècle.* In Byron, Mr Carlyle sees only a doleful self-contemplator, confessing his private griefs in theatrical fashion, to whom we should do well to reply with the good doctor whose patient told him he had no appetite and could not eat—"My dear fellow, it isn't of the slightest consequence." His own Teufelsdröckh has spiritual trial enough; he dwells in Meshec, which signifies "prolonging," in Kedar, which signifies "blackness;" but Teufelsdröckh would grimly have held his peace were it not that he has some deliverance to tell of, some light born from amid the darkness.

It is not the intellect alone, or the imagination alone, which can become sensible of the highest virtue in the writings of Mr Carlyle. He is before all else a power with reference to conduct. He too cannot live without a divine presence. He finds in it the entire material universe, "the living garment of God." Teufelsdröckh among the Alps is first awakened from his stony sleep at the "Centre of Indifference" by the glory of the white mountains, the azure dome, the azure winds, the black tempest marching in anger through the distance. He finds the divine presence in the spirit of man, and in the heroic leaders of our race. But in duty,—in duty, not in happiness,—is found God's most intimate presence with the soul. "Let him who gropes painfully in darkness or uncertain light, and prays vehemently that the dawn may ripen into day, lay this . . . precept well to heart, *Do the Duty which lies nearest to thee.*" That this duty should not harden and shrivel into a mere round of mechanical observances, man must look up and admit into his heart the greatness and mystery that surround him, the Immensities, the Infinities, the Silence, the deep Eternity. Then once more he must return to the definite and the practicable. Mr Carlyle is a mystic in the service of what is nobly positive, and it is easy to see how his transcendental worship of humanity, together with his reverence for duty, might condense and materialize themselves for the needs of a generation adverse to transcendental ways of thought, into the ethical doctrines of Comte.

The mysterious awe with which Mr Carlyle regards force,—"Force, force, everywhere force; we ourselves a mysterious force in the centre of that. . . . Surely to the atheistic thinker, if such an one were possible, it must be a miracle too, this huge illimitable whirlwind of force which envelopes us here,"—this awed contemplation of force, coalescing with Mr Carlyle's veneration for man as the true Shekinah, visible revelation of God, leads directly to his hero-worship. A concentration in a human person of this force, which is divine, constitutes a hero, and becomes the highest and most definite presentation of whatever we had worshipped in the vague as immense, eternal, and infinite. Fortunately and unfortunately, Mr Carlyle does not require the heroic force to be invariably of a moral kind,—fortunately, for the poet and artist might otherwise as such possess no claim to his homage; unfortunately, because where the question of morality ought to be raised, Mr Carlyle does not always put the question. Mr Carlyle is so deeply impressed by the fact that truthfulness, virtue, rectitude of a certain kind, the faithful adaptation of means to ends, are needful in order to bring anything to effect, that where ends are successfully achieved, he assumes some of the virtuous force of the world to have been present. With this falls in his sense of the sacredness of fact; to recognize fact, to accept conditions, and thereby to conquer,—such is the part of the hero who would be a victor. Add to all this, the stoical temper, a sternness in Mr Carlyle's nature, which finds expression in his scorn for mere happiness, and we shall understand how his transcendentalism makes us acquainted with strange heroes. To suppress a Jamaica riot it will contribute if women be whipped with piano-wire; to perceive this sacred fact, to apply the piano-wire faithfully and effectively, as in the sight of all the Immensities and Eternities, to suppress the riot—how heroic, how divine! Behold, there is still among us in these days of cant and shoddy, a king, a can-ning, an able-man; let us fall down before him and adore in silence!

It is impossible even to glance at the remarkable transcendental movement in America, which took up and carried forward the banner at a time when in England the cause was beginning to be a little discredited by the extending action and influence of positive science. But it is worth while to notice that with the acknowledged leader of transcendentalism in the land of democracy the highest examples of our humanity are not kings, can-nings, able-men, to be obliged to obey whom is our noblest privilege; but they are, as Mr Emerson names them, "representative men." "Our climate," an American naturalist writes, "is more heady . . . . than the English; sharpens the wits, but dries up the fluids and the viscera; favours an irregular nervous energy, but exhausts the animal spirits." The transcendentalism of America seems to show traces of the action of such a climate. Mr Emerson is a transcendentalist whose nervous energy has been exalted, and whose viscera and animal spirits have been burnt away. His short sentences scintillate and snap like sparks from an electrical conductor, and each gives a separate tingle to the nerves. He loves light better than warmth, and lacks the strong humanity of Carlyle. His heroes do not concentrate and contain the divine force, they represent qualities; therefore they do not claim our worship or obedience; we retain the independence of our citizenship in the spiritual commonwealth. Or we obey and worship, but then go onward, since it is not permitted us to forfeit the indefeasible freedom of our advance. The hero points to a region beyond himself, "For a time our teachers serve us personally as meters or milestones of progress. Once they were angels of knowledge, and their figures touched the sky. Then we drew near, saw their means, culture, and limits; and they yielded their place to other geniuses. But at last we shall cease to look in men for completeness, and shall content ourselves with their social and delegated quality. . . . . We never come at the true and best benefit of any genius so long as we believe him an original force. In the moment when he ceases to help us as a cause, he begins to help us more as an effect. Then he appears as an exponent of a vaster mind and will. The opaque self becomes transparent with the light of the First Cause."*

The writings of one who came under the influence of Mr Carlyle, and who was a friend of Emerson, may serve here to illustrate the difficulties into which religious sentiment, theistic and pantheistic, was brought by doubts with reference to the basis of theology forced upon the intellects of men. That which gives to the poetry of Clough an interest almost unique is his susceptibility to ideas, impressions, and emotions which are antagonistic to one another, which he could not harmonize, yet none of which he would deny. Shelley, when he wrote, was always under the influence of a single intense feeling urging him to song. Clough wrote almost always with the consciousness of two or more conflicting feelings. If he is in the mood for an ideal flight, you may be sure the most prosaic of demons is at his elbow about to remind him that feet and not wings are the locomotive instruments of a human creature. When he is most devout he becomes the object of the most vigorous assaults of the tempter. Now in the friendliest spirit he approaches science, as she utters her oracles, and in a moment he is forced away to attend to the scarce-heard whisper of some inward monitor who may be very God.

This susceptibility to various cross and counter influences, which must have caused some of the sorrow of Clough's life as a man, is the source of the special virtue of his work as a poet. He will suppress no part of himself to the advantage of any other part. If he and his perceptions of truth are not a harmonious whole, he will not falsify things by forcing upon his nature a factitious unity. Standing towards modern science in a trustful and friendly attitude, he yet could not accept it as a complete account of facts so long as certain inner voices were audible, into accord with which scientific doctrine had not been brought. A pupil of Dr Arnold, he found some comfort in dealing with his doubts in the manner recommended by Teufelsdröckh, *Do the duty that lies nearest to thee:* but he remained aware that such a method for the solution of doubts is personal, not absolute. Clough's poetry may be said to be true, upon the whole, to the transcendental lobe of his brain; his prose, had he continued to write prose, would probably have given expression to his inquiring intellect, and to the generous practical tendencies which impelled him in the direction of the social world. There were times when the Mary in Clough's heart tried energetically to transform herself into a Martha, rose up, troubled herself about many things, and declared that it was well to do so; but always a moment came when she went back to sit at the Master's feet, and chose the good part:—

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* Representative Men, i.: Uses of Great Men.

> "O let me love my love unto myself alone,
> And know my knowledge to the world unknown;
> No witness to my vision call,
> Beholding, unbeheld of all;
> And worship Thee, with Thee withdrawn apart,
> Whoe'er, whate'er Thou art,
> Within the closest veil of mine own inmost heart."

Within Clough's nature contended the spiritual instincts and intuitions, an intellect compelled to sceptical doubts by the tendencies of his time, and a will bent upon disinterested practical activity. The low worldliness, cynicism, mammon-worship, ignoble prudence, and paltering with conscience of our age were all apparent to him, but could not touch and stain his soul. The Evil Spirit of his Faust-like poem, "Dipsychus," is this low worldliness, this ignoble prudence, this cynicism, the demon of a *sæculum realisticum*, who draws down men to hell.*

Two years after the appearance in *Fraser's Magazine* of "Sartor Resartus," another history of a soul became the theme of a young poet's first important work. In Mr Browning's "Paracelsus," a great aspirer after the absolute—the absolute of knowledge—fails in his quest, and yet does not wholly fail. He fails because he has tried to compel what is infinite to enter into the limits of this finite life; he does not fail because from the low room in which he lies dying he passes forth to follow the fountains of light and of love up toward God Himself. Two particulars in his work assign to Mr Browning his place in the literary history of our century. First, he attempts to re-establish a harmony between what is infinite and what is finite in man's nature. In the early years of the century, infinite passion, infinite desire had found unsatisfying all the materials provided for them by our earthly life, and a cry of despair had gone up from earth. Mr Browning, throughout the entire series of his writings, regards this world as a school or gymnasium, and also a place of test and trial for other lives to come. Therefore all the means of education in our school are precious—knowledge, beauty, passion, power—all are precious, not absolutely, but with reference to the higher existence for which they are to prepare us. In proportion to the ardour with which we pursue these, and finding them insufficient, pass through them and beyond them, have we made them yield to us their worthiest service. Hence infinite desire, infinite aspiration, is the glory and virtue of our manhood; and through art, through science, through human love, we ascend unsatisfied to God. If, on the other hand, we rest in any attainment of knowledge, or love, or creation of beauty by art, accepting it for its own sake and as final, we have forfeited our high distinction as men, we have become beasts which graze in the paddock and do not look up. Thus Mr Browning not counselling moderation, nor attempting to restrain the emotional ardour, the dilated passion of the early nineteenth-century literature of imagination, yet endeavours to convert this from a source of disease and despair into an educational instrument, a source of courage and hope, a pledge of futurity. Worldliness, a low content, a base prudence, the supine heart—these are the signs of fatal disaster to man's higher nature; to succeed perfectly on earth is to fail in heaven; to fail here, even as Paracelsus failed, is less piteous than to prosper and be at ease as Blougram prospered, extinguishing the light that was in him.

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* To illustrate what has been said of Clough, the reader may refer to his review of Newman's "The Soul," his poems "The New Sinai," "Qui Laborat Orat," and "Dipsychus."

Secondly, what determines Mr Browning's place in the history of our literature is that he represents militant transcendentalism, the transcendental movement at odds with the scientific. His acceptance of the Christian revelation, say rather his acceptance of the man Christ Jesus, lies at the very heart of Mr Browning's poetry; and in the mode of his accepting the Christ of history he approaches close to the spirit of Mr Maurice's theology. With an energy of intellect such as few poets have possessed he unites a spiritual ardour which if not associated on the one hand with an eager and combative intellect, on the other with strong human passions and affections, might have made Mr Browning a religious mystic; and he sets his intellect to defend the suggestions or intuitions of the spirit. In his "Caliban upon Setebos" the poet has, with singular and almost terrible force, represented what must be the natural theology of one who is merely an intellectual animal, devoid of spiritual cravings, sensibilities, and checks. It is these which discover to us not only the power of God but the love of God everywhere around us, and which enable us to perceive that there is a supreme instance or manifestation of God's love, which is very Christ.

But what of the historical Jesus of Nazareth? Is He not disappearing from the world, criticized away and dissolved into a Christ-myth?

> "We gazed our fill
> With upturned faces on as real a Face
> That, stooping from grave music and mild fire,
> Took in our homage, made a visible place
> Through many a depth of glory, gyre on gyre,
> For the dim human tribute. Was this true?"

And is that divine face receding out of reach of our prayers and praise into the darkness, until at last we shall lose it altogether? Mr Browning's answer implies some such creed as, if we were required to seek a label for it, we should name "Christian Pantheism." He looks at the spectacle of the world and life as it plays, ocean-like, around each of us, and shows itself all alive and spiritual. The fishermen of Galilee told of a love of God which eighteen hundred years ago became flesh and dwelt with men; and this becomes credible because here and now we behold the miracle of an omnipresent and eternal love of God:—

> "Why, where's the need of Temple when the walls
> O' the world are that? What use of swells and falls
> From Levites' choir, priests' cries and trumpet calls?
>
> "That one face, far from vanish rather grows,
> Or decomposes but to recompose,
> Become my universe that feels and knows!"

Since Mr Browning transcendentalism has fared ill in English literature. Poetry has been for a time Tannhäuser-like, in the cavern of Mount Hörsel, where the air is hot, and Dame Venus lies among shadows and heavy scents. It has tried to satiate its desire of pleasure with the play and colour of the flame of human passion, tending nowhither, but rising and falling and making a little centre of brightness and stir in the wide gloom and sadness of the world. Some of our poets talk of "art for art," and acquire dexterity in the handling of every implement of the jeweller's craft; only the jewels they cut and set are so tiny! Divorced from the spiritual world, and in the midst of a material world given up to low aims of self-interest and pushing industrialism, what sphere is left for poetry? Those terrible men of Ashdod, who sing hymns to Protoplasm, and kneel before the great God Evolution, "upward man and downward fish," have they, quitting themselves like men, taken the ark of God? If any child of the prophetic tribe be brought forth, with slender infantile cry, must we not name him Ichabod? Or can it be that a much-perplexed Israelite wandering at wheat-harvest in the way of Beth-Shemesh, shall some morning hear the lowing of the kine, and lift up his eyes, and see the ark return, and rejoice to see it?

Meanwhile for the present one great imaginative writer represents at their highest the tendencies of our time, and concentrating her vision upon this earth, and the life of men, has seen in these good and evil, joy and anguish, terrors and splendours, as wonderful as ever appeared to any poet of transcendentalism. That the inductions of science and the ethics of positivism transform but do not destroy what is spiritual in man, is demonstrated by the creations of "Romola" and "Daniel Deronda."

1877.

THE SCIENTIFIC MOVEMENT AND LITERATURE.

ANY inquiry at the present day into the relations of modern scientific thought with literature must in great part be guided by hints, signs, and presages. The time has not yet come when it may be possible to perceive in complete outline the significance of science for the imagination and the emotions of men, but that the significance is large and deep we cannot doubt. Literature proper, indeed, the literature of *power*, as De Quincey named it, in distinction from the literature of *knowledge*, may, from one point of view, be described as essentially non-scientific, and even anti-scientific. To ascertain and communicate facts is the object of science; to quicken our life into a higher consciousness through the feelings is the function of art. But though knowing and feeling are not identical, and a fact expressed in terms of feeling affects us as other than the same fact expressed in terms of knowing, yet our emotions rest on and are controlled by our knowledge. Whatever modifies our intellectual conceptions powerfully, in due time affects art powerfully. With its exquisite sensibilities, indifferent to nothing far off or near which can exalt a joy, or render pain more keen or prolonged, art is aroused by every discovery of new fact, every modification of old theory, which in open or occult ways can enter into connection with human emotion.

If, then, our views of external nature, of man, his past history, his possible future,—if our conceptions of God and His relation to the universe are being profoundly modified by science, it may be taken for certain that art must in due time put itself in harmony with the altered conceptions of the intellect. A great poet is great, and possesses a sway over the spirits of men, because he has perceived vividly some of the chief facts of the world and the main issues of life, and received powerful impressions from these. He is, therefore, deeply concerned about truth, and in his own fashion is a seeker for truth. When, in an age of incoherent systems and dissolving faiths, artists devote themselves, as they say, to art for art's sake, and their ideal of beauty ceases to be the emanation or irradiated form of justice, of charity, and of truth, it is because in such a period no great art is possible, and art works, as Comte has well said, only "to keep its own high order of faculties from atrophy and oblivion :"—

"There tiny pleasures occupy the place
Of glories and of duties, as the feet
Of fabled fairies, when the sun goes down,
Trip o'er the grass where wrestlers strove by day."*

Persons who are exclusively intellectual, and have no feeling for art, often seem to suppose that while science delights in what is clear and definite, poetry and art delight in what is vague and dim ; that these things, so agreeable to a class of gentle lunatics, are a certain preserved extract of moonshine and mist; and it is somewhat ludicrous to take note of the generous and condescending admissions in favour of a "refining" influence of poetry which are ordinarily made by such hard-headed persons. "I do not know what poetical is; is it honest in deed and word? is it a true thing?" So Audrey questions, and Touchstone answers with a twinkle of pleasure (being in luck to find such a chance of gracious fooling), "No truly, for the truest poetry is the most feigning." However this may be, whether we agree or not with Jeremy Bentham and Touchstone that "all poetry is misrepresentation," it is certain that the greatest poets love comprehensiveness, and definiteness in their conceptions. The measureless value set by every great artist upon execution favours this tendency. Intense vision renders precise and definite whatever is capable of becoming so, and leaves vague only that which is vague in its very nature. "The great and golden rule of art as well as of life," wrote William Blake, "is this—that the more distinct, sharp, and wiry the bounding-line, the more perfect the work of art; and the less keen and sharp the greater is the evidence of weak imitation, plagiarism, and bungling. Great inventors in all ages knew this. . . . . Raphael and Michael Angelo and Albert Dürer are known by this, and this alone."

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* Landor's lines, descriptive of the debasement of a land or time which freedom does not ennoble.

Apt illustrations of the artist's love of definite conceptions are afforded by the great epic of mediæval Catholicism, and by the great epic of the Puritan poet of England. There is not a rood of Dante's wonderful journey which we might not lay down as upon a map. The deepest anguish, the most mystical ecstasy of love, repose on a kind of geometry. Precisely in the centre of the universe abides the earth; precisely in the midst of the hemisphere of land is placed Jerusalem. Hell descends through its circles, with their rings and pits, to that point, exactly below Jerusalem, where Lucifer emerging from the ice grinds between his teeth the traitors against Christ and against the Emperor. As the precise antipodes to the inhabitants of Jerusalem climb from terrace to terrace the wayfarers upon the Purgatorial mount. Precisely above the mount, beyond the planetary heavens and the crystalline sphere, in the midpoint of the Rose of the Blessed, is the centre of the lake of the light of God; and yet higher, circled by the nine angelic orders, dwells God himself, the uncreated and infinite. Everything is conceived with perfect definiteness, and everything cosmical subserves the theology and ethics of the poem. God is not in immediate relation with our earth; there is a stupendous hierarchy through which the divine power is transmitted. Seraphim draw Godwards the cherubim, the cherubim draw the thrones, and each angelic order imparts its motion to the earth-encircling sphere which is correspondent to its influence. Such a poem could not have been written in an age when a divorce existed between the reason and the imagination. It is a harmony of philosophy, physics, and poetry. In it the mystical ardour of St Bonaventura, the sobriety and precision of St Thomas Aquinas, quicken, sustain, and regulate the flight of the great poet's imagination.

Milton was less fortunate than Dante. We are presented, in Milton's case, as his most recent editor notes, "with the interesting phenomenon of a mind apparently uncertain to the last which of the two systems, the Ptolemaic or the Copernican, was the true one, or perhaps beginning to be persuaded of the higher probability of the Copernican, but yet retaining the Ptolemaic for poetical purposes." Two passages—one a long passage, where the subject is discussed in detail by Adam and the affable archangel—were deliberately inserted by Milton "to relieve his own mind on the subject, and by way of caution to the reader that the scheme of the physical universe, actually adopted in the construction of the poem, needed not to be taken as more than a hypothesis for the imagination."* Milton's serious concern about scientific truth, and Milton's demand for imaginative distinctness and definiteness, are alike apparent. The Copernican astronomy was already possessing itself of the intellect of the time, but the imagination was as yet too little familiar with it to permit of Milton's accepting it as the foundation of his poetical scheme of things. He, like Dante, needed a strong framework for the wonder and beauty of his poem. Infinite space, bounded for the convenience of our imagination into a circle, is equally divided between heaven and chaos. Satan and his angelic followers rebel; the Messiah rides against them in His chariot; heaven's crystal wall rolls in, and the rebel spirits are driven down to that nether segment of chaos prepared for them, which is hell. Forthwith advances from heaven the Son of God, entering the wild of chaos on His creative errand. He marks with golden compasses the bounds of the world or starry universe, which hangs pendent

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* "Milton's Poetical Works," edited by David Masson, vol. i. pp. 92, 93.

> "in bigness like a star
> Of smallest magnitude close by the moon."

Over its dark outside sweep the blustering winds of chaos; within, wheels orb encircling orb, and in its midst the centre of the starry universe, our little earth, is fixed. In this scheme there is united an astronomical system, now obsolete, with conceptions which the poet made use of not as scientifically but as symbolically true.

These illustrations of the desire felt by great artists for imaginative clearness and definiteness have led us in the direction of one side of our more proper subject, and we might naturally now go on to ask, How have the alterations in our cosmical conceptions effected by science manifested themselves in literature? But a difficulty suggests itself which it may be worth while to consider. As regards external nature, the materials for the poet's and artist's use are given by the senses, and no scientific truth, no discovery of the intellect, can effect any alteration in the appearance of things, in which lies the truth for the senses. However the Copernican theory may have been verified, still to our eyes each morning the sun rises over the eastern hills, each evening our eyes behold him sinking down the west. So it has been from the first, so it must be to the end. No one of course will question that the appearances of things as presented by the senses—when once the senses are developed*—remain, if not absolutely yet for the most part constant, and are unaffected by the rectification by science of our mode of conceiving them. But from the first the mere visible presentation was associated with an ideal element. For the eye confers as well as receives, and the vision of the world to a man and to a monkey must differ, whether or not the structure of the crystalline lens and the optic nerve be identical in the two. There is an ideal element, an invisible element which unites itself to our perceptions, and while the element which may be called the material one remains constant, this ideal element is subject to continual variation and development. If our unrectified senses give seeming testimony to anything, it is to the fixity of the solid earth beneath our feet, and to the motion of the sun by day, and of stars by night, across the heavens. But the knowledge that the earth's motionlessness is only apparent leaves scope for the play of an ideal element derived from the conception of its ceaseless revolution, its stupendous whirl; and the imagination by its unifying power can bring together the two apparently antagonistic elements—the seeming testimony of the senses, and its correction by the intellect—and can make both subservient to the purposes of the heart.

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* The growth of the sense of colour, within a period of which we possess literary memorials, affords a striking example of the developing sensibility of the eye.

Let us take illustrations, slight and in small compass, yet sufficient to exemplify the process which has been described. Mr Tennyson imagines a lover on the eve of his marriage-day. It is a slow-waning evening of summer. All nature seems to share in his calm plenitude of joy. Yet the ultimate fruition is not attained; still a short way forward lies the culmination. Joy is like a wave which has one glassy ascent and blissful fall to make before it is perfected. What if that wave were suddenly frozen by some icy wind, and fixed in mockery just short of its be-all and end-all? The idea of advance, of motion calm and sustained, is demanded by the imagination, and this motion must be common to the individual human creature, and to the world of which he is a part. And the whole world *is* in effect calmly revolving into day:—

> "Move eastward, happy earth, and leave
> Yon orange sunset waning slow:
> From fringes of the faded eve,
> O happy planet, eastward go;
> Till over thy dark shoulder glow
> Thy silver sister-world, and rise
> To glass herself in dewy eyes
> That watch me from the glen below.
>
> "Ah, bear me with thee, smoothly borne,
> Dip forward under starry light,
> And move me to my marriage morn,
> And round again to happy night."

One more example of the perfect use by the imagination, for the service of the feelings, of a suggestion of science. Again it is the conception of the revolving earth, with its unceasing monotony of motion, which asserts a power to exalt and vivify human passion. But now instead of the mystery of life, and the calm of the climbing wave of joy, we are in presence of the imperious suspension of death, the obstruction and sterility of the grave. A spirit and a woman has become a clod. She who had been a motion and a breeze is one with the inert brute-matter of the globe, and as the earth whirls everlastingly, she too is whirled by a blind and passionless force:—

"A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears;
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

"No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks, and stones, and trees."

These are petty illustrations in comparison with the extent of the subject, but they suffice to show that the impression of the senses is capable of receiving modifications, or of being wholly replaced by an ideal conception. To a child in a railway carriage the trees appear to move rapidly past him; gradually the illusion submits to the correcting influence of ascertained fact; and at last it becomes difficult to enter again, even though an effort be made to do so, into the naïve error of the eye.*

But, beside the modification or replacement of the impressions of the senses by an ideal element, the cosmical ideas of modern science have in themselves an independent value for the imagination. Four particulars of these may be mentioned as especially important in their dealing with the imagination, which, when taken together, have as enlarging and renewing a power as probably any conception of things material can have with the spirit of man. First, the vastness of the universe, and of the agencies at work in it; secondly, the idea of law; thirdly, the idea of *ensemble;* last, the ultimate of known ultimates is *force.*

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* Some considerations of interest closely related with the foregoing, will be found in Oersted's "The Soul in Nature," under the headings, "The Comprehension of Nature by Thought and Imagination," and "The Relation between Natural Science and Poetry."

The idea of mere physical vastness may appear at first sight to be a very barren possession for the human soul; but in reality it is not barren. We are conscious of a liberating and dilating emotion when we pass from channels and narrow seas into the space and roll of the Atlantic, or when we leave our suburban paddock, with its neat walks and trim flower-beds, and wade in a sea of heather upon the hills. Mr Mill, looking back upon his visit in childhood to Ford Abbey in Devonshire, writes in his Autobiography, "This sojourn was, I think, an important circumstance in my education. Nothing contributes more to nourish elevation of sentiments in a people than the large and free character of their habitations." And assuredly, for one whose sanity of mind is not impaired, his habitation among these revolving worlds has a large and free character, and is fitted to nourish elevation of sentiments. The starry heaven, so deep and pure, beheld while the trivial incidents and accidents of our earth revealed by the daylight are absent, and the silence seems to expand over a vast space—this must always have been an object of awed contemplation. But a measure of the distance traversed by the human mind may be obtained by attempting once more really to submit the imagination to the Ptolemaic system of astronomy. Under Dante's planetary spheres we move with some discomfort, we have flown in thought so freely and so far. The universe as arranged by the mediæval poet is indeed skilfully contrived, but the whole thing looks somewhat like an ingenious toy. For vast massing of light and darkness "Paradise

Lost" can hardly be surpassed. While Milton's outward eye was active, it was charmed by the details of the sweet English landscape about Horton; when the drop serene had quenched his light, then the deep distances of the Empyrean, of eternal Night, and of Chaos opened before him. But it is for spirit that Milton reserves all that is greatest in the ideas of force and motion. He is still, in the main, mediæval in his conception of the material cosmos. It needed for masters a Galileo, a Kepler, a Newton, to liberate and sustain the imagination for such a flight, so pauseless, so passionate, as that of the revolters against Deity, in Byron's dramatic mystery, among the innumerable fair revolving worlds:—

> "O thou beautiful
> And unimaginable ether! and
> Ye multiplying masses of increased
> And still increasing lights! what are ye? What
> Is this blue wilderness of interminable
> Air, where ye roll along, as I have seen
> The leaves along the limpid streams of Eden?
> Is your course measured for ye? Or do ye
> Sweep on in your unbounded revelry
> Through an aërial universe of endless
> Expansion—at which my soul aches to think—
> Intoxicated with eternity?
> O God! O Gods! or whatsoe'er ye are!
> How beautiful ye are! how beautiful
> Your works, or accidents; or whatsoe'er
> They may be! Let me die as atoms die
> (If that they die), or know ye in your might
> And knowledge! My thoughts are not in this hour
> Unworthy what I see, though my dust is;
> Spirit, let me expire, or see them nearer!
> *Lucifer.* Art thou not nearer? look back to thine earth!
> *Cain.* Where is it? I see nothing save a mass
> Of most innumerable lights.

Lucifer. Look there !
Cain. I cannot see it.
Lucifer. Yet it sparkles still.
Cain. That !—yonder !
Lucifer. Yea.
Cain. And wilt thou tell me so ?
Why, I have seen the fire-flies and fire-worms
Sprinkle the dusky groves and the green banks
In the dim twilight, brighter than yon world
Which bears them."

The displacement of the earth from the centre of the universe, and its being launched into space as one of the least important of its brother wanderers around the sun, was followed by consequences for theology and morals as well as for poetry. The Church was right in her presentiment of a reformation, as alarming as that of Luther, about to be effected by science. The infallible authority of the Holy See was to be encountered by the infallible authority of the astronomer and his telescope ; a new order of prophets, suitable to the West as the old prophets had been to the East, was about to arise, prophets who would speak what was given to them by observation and valid inference. And they declared—and men of the Renaissance listened gladly—that the legend was false which represented our earth as the centre of the spheres, and as the criminal who had destroyed the harmony of the worlds. The earth had heretofore possessed a supremacy over the stars which were set in heaven above her for signs and for seasons, but that supremacy had become one of misery and of shame; the terrestrial was corruptible; the celestial was incorruptible; a day was not far distant when the doom brought upon creation by the great traitor would come upon it. Now it was found that the earth was no leader of the starry choir who had marred the music, but was indeed a singer in the glorious chant of energy and life; the heaven and the earth were fraternally united; terrestrial and celestial alike were subject to change; the whole universe was ever in process of *becoming.**

"The study of astrology," Mr Lecky has said, "may perhaps be regarded as one of the last struggles of human egotism against the depressing sense of insignificance which the immensity of the universe must produce. And certainly," he goes on, "it would be difficult to conceive any conception more calculated to exalt the dignity of man than one which represents the career of each individual as linked with the march of worlds, the focus towards which the most sublime of created things continually converge." It may be questioned whether man's dignity is not more exalted by conceiving him as part—a real though so small a part—of a great Cosmos, infinitely greater than he, than by placing him as king upon the throne of creation. For all creation dwarfs itself and becomes grotesque, as happens in the systems of astrology, to obey and flatter such a monarch. He who is born under Mars will be "Good to be a barboure and a blode letter, and to draw tethe." In the temple of the god in Chaucer's Knighte's Tale, the poet sees

> "The sowe freten the child right in the cradel;
> The cook i-skalded, for al his longe ladel."

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* See an interesting chapter on "L'Église Romaine et la Science," in Edgar Quinet's "L'Ultramontisme."

If man be made the measure of the universe, the universe becomes a parish in which all the occupants are interested in each petty scandal. Who would not choose to be citizen of a nobly-ordered commonwealth rather than to be lord of a petty clan?

Add to the conception of the vastness of the universe the idea of the unchanging uniformities, the regularity of sequence, the same consequents for ever following the same antecedents, the universal presence of law. Endless variety, infinite complexity, yet through all an order. To understand what appearance the world would present to the imagination of a people who gave law as small a place, and irregularity as large a place, as possible in their poetical conceptions of the universe we have but to turn to the "Arabian Nights." The God of Islam was wholly out of and above the world, and a belief in destiny was strangely united with the supposition of caprice, marvel, and surprise in nature. The presence of law is to be found in the "Arabian Nights" only in the perfect uniformity with which Shahrazád takes up her tale of marvel each night, and each night breaks it off in the midst. Whether a date-stone will produce a date, or will summon up a gigantic 'Efreet, whether a fish upon the frying-pan will submit to be fried, or will lift his head from the pan and address his cook, is entirely beyond the possibility of prediction. Nature is a kind of Alhambra, "a brilliant dream, a caprice of the genii, who have made their sport with the network of stone," with the fantastic arabesques, the fringes, the flying lines.

Neither variety without unity, nor unity without variety, can content the imagination which is at one with the reason. The sole poet of our Western civilization who possessed a true synthetic genius in science, together with the artistic genius in its highest form—Goethê—represents in a well-known passage the Spirit of the Earth plying with ceaseless energy, with infinite complexity of action, yet to one harmonious result, the shuttles which we call causes, to weave the web of what we call effects; this is the true vision of the world to modern eyes :—

"In life's full flood, and in action's storm,
Up and down I wave;
To and fro I sweep!
Birth and the Grave,
An eternal deep,
A tissue flowing,
A life all glowing,
So I weave at the rattling loom of the years
The garment of Life which the Godhead wears."

This conception of a reign of law, amid which and under which we live, affects the emotions in various ways: at times it may cause despondency, but again it will correct this despondency and sustain the heart; now the tragical aspect will impress us of human will and passion contending with the great ἀνάγκη of the order of things, and again we shall more and more find occasion for joy and triumph in the co-operancy of the energies of humanity with those of their giant kindred, light, and motion, and heat, and electricity, and chemical affinity. Nor is this all: higher than the physical, we recognise a moral order to which we belong, the recognition of which cannot but produce in any mind that dwells upon it an emotion which would be intense if it were not so massive, and of the nature of mysticism were it not in the highest degree inspired by reason.

But not only is nature everywhere constant, uniform, orderly in its operations; all its parts constitute a whole, an *ensemble*. Nothing is added: nothing can be lost. Our earth is no alien planet wandering nightwards to a destruction reserved for it alone. We look forth. "The moon approaches the earth by the same law that a stone falls to the ground. The spectrum of the sunbeam reveals the existence in the sun of the same metals and gases that we know on earth; nay, the distant fixed stars, the cloudy nebulæ, and the fleecy comet show the same. We watch the double stars, and find them circling round each other by the same law which regulates our solar planets. We are led irresistibly to conclude that the same consensus which we feel on earth reigns beyond the earth. . . . Everywhere throughout the universe—thus runs the speculation of science—organic or inorganic, lifeless or living, vegetable or animal, intellectual or moral, on earth or in the unknown and unimaginable life in the glittering worlds we gaze at with awe and delight, there is a consensus of action, an agreement, a oneness."* And what is the poet's confession? That the life of the least blossom in the most barren crevice is a portion of the great totality of being, that its roots are intertangled with the roots of humanity, that to give a full account of *it* would require a complete science of man, and a complete theology:—

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* A. J. Ellis: Speculation, a Discourse, p. 40.

"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies;—
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

But perhaps no poetry expresses the cosmical feeling for nature, incarnated by a myth of the imagination in the language of human passion, more wonderfully than the lyric dialogue which leads on to its close the last act of Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound." The poet does not here gaze with awe at the mystery of life in a tiny blossom, although that too opens into the infinite; it is the great lovers, the earth and his paramour the moon, who celebrate their joy. The Titan has been at last delivered from the chain and the winged hounds of Jupiter. The benefactor of mankind is free, and the day of the doom and death of tyranny is arrived. But it is not humanity alone which shall rejoice: the life of nature and the passion of man embrace with a genial vehemence:—

"*The Earth.* I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
Which points unto the heavens—dreaming delight,
Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep:
As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth keep

"*The Moon.* As, in the soft and sweet eclipse,
When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull;
So, when thy shadow falls on me,
Then am I mute and still, by thee
Covered; of thy love, Orb most beautiful,
Full, oh! too full!"

Such poetry as this is indeed what Wordsworth declared true poetry to be—the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge, the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science.*

All that can thus be gained by the imagination from true science, the imagination may appropriate and vivify for the heart of man, free from the fear that matter is about to encroach upon us on every quarter and engulf the soul. What is matter? and what is spirit? are questions which are alike unanswerable. Motion and thought, however they may be related as two sides or aspects of a single fact, must for ever remain incapable of identification with one another. When we have reduced to the simplest elements our conceptions of matter and of motion, we are at last brought back to force, the ultimate datum of consciousness; "And thus the force by which we ourselves produce changes, and which serves to symbolize the cause of changes, in general, is the final disclosure of analysis." The exclamation of Teufelsdröckh in his moment of mystic elevation, "Force, force, everywhere force; we ourselves a mysterious force in the centre of that," is but an anticipation of the last result of scientific thought. And when Teufelsdröckh in scorn of the pride of intellect which would banish mystery from the world and worship from the soul of man—when Teufelsdröckh declares, "The man who cannot wonder (and worship), were he President of innumerable Royal Societies, and carried the whole

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* Preface to the second edition of "Lyrical Ballads." For a stupendous example of the use made by poetry of the cosmical feeling for nature, see in Victor Hugo's new series of "La Légende des Siécles," the concluding poem, entitled "Abime."

Mécanique Céleste' and 'Hegel's Philosophy,' and the epitome of all laboratories and observatories with their results, in his single head, is but a pair of spectacles behind which there is no eye. Let those who have eyes look through him, then he may be useful;" what is this but an assertion, justified by the most careful analysis, that the highest truth of science and the highest truth of religion are one, and are both found in the confession of an inscrutable Power manifested to us through all external phenomena, and through our own intellect, affections, conscience, and will?

Such passages as have been quoted from Byron and Goethe and Shelley make clear to us what kind of scientific inquiry and scientific result is fruitful for the feelings and imaginations of men. Not the details of the specialist, but large *vues d'ensemble.* The former may help to produce such elaborated pseudo-poetry as part of Fletcher's "Purple Island" or Darwin's "Botanic Garden," in which the analytic intellect tricks itself out with spangles of supposed poetical imagery and diction, looking in the end as grotesque as a skeleton bedizened for a ball-room. But the large *vues d'ensemble* arouse and free, and pass rapidly from the intellect to the emotions, the moral nature, and the imagination.

If the bounds of space have receded, and our place has been assigned to us in the great commonwealth of which we are members, the bounds of time have receded also; we have found our deep bond of relationship with all the past, and a vista for hopes, sober but well-assured, has been opened in the future. To trace one's ancestry to Adam is to confess oneself a *parvenu;* our cousin the gorilla has a longer family tree to boast. Six thousand years!—why, a fox could hardly trim his tail and become a dog in so brief a period. We are like voyagers upon a stream of which we had read accurate accounts in our geographies; it rose, we were told, a short way above the last river bend; it is abruptly stopped just beyond the approaching bluff. But now we ascertain that the waters have come from some mysterious source among strange mountains a thousand leagues away, and we are well assured that they will descend a thousand miles before they hear the voice of that mysterious sea in which they must be lost. Shall we, upon the breast of the waters, not feel a solemn awe, a solemn hope, when we meditate on the mighty past and muse of the great future? Shall we not bend our ear to catch among the ripples each whisper of the former things? Shall we not gaze forward with wistful eyes to see the wonders of the widening shores? And do we not feel with quickening consciousness from hour to hour the stronger flow and weightier mass of the descending torrent?

The vaster geological periods have made the period of human existence on the globe—vast as that is—seem of short duration. What is remote becomes near. We do not now waste our hearts in regret for an imaginary age of gold; we find a genuine pathos in the hard, rude lives, the narrow bounds of knowledge, the primitive desires, the undeveloped awes and fears and shames, of our remote ancestors who, by their aspiring effort, shaped for us our fortunes. We almost join hands with them across the centuries. The ripples have hardly yet left the lake where some dweller upon piles dropped by chance his stone hatchet. The fire in the troglodyte's cave is not quite extinct. We hear the hiss in the milk-pail of some Aryan daughter, who may perhaps have had a curious likeness to our grandmother by Gainsborough. We still repeat the words of that perplexed progenitor who learned in dreams that his dead chieftain was not all extinct, nor have we yet satisfactorily solved his puzzle. When we sit in summer, in a glare that bewilders the brain, beside the bathing-machines, and watch the children in knickerbockers and tunics engaged with their primitive architecture, which the next tide will wash away, we fall into a half-dream, and wake in alarm lest a horde of lean and fierce-eyed men and women may suddenly rush shorewards for their gorge of shell-fish, and in their orgasm of hunger may but too gladly lick up and swallow our babies! Forlorn and much-tried progenitors, wild human scarecrows on our bleak northern shores, we are no undutiful sons; we acknowledge our kinship; in your craving for an unattainable oyster, we recognize our own passion for the ideal; and in your torpid sullenness, when only shells were found, our own keener *Welt-Schmerz* and philosophies of despair!

In the history of the past of our globe, and the remote history of the human race, what are the chief inspiring ideas for literature? One, which is perhaps the most important idea of the scientific movement, receives here a striking illustration—the idea of the relative as opposed to the absolute; secondly, we may note the idea of heredity; thirdly, the idea of human progress, itself subordinate to the more comprehensive doctrine of evolution.

The general conclusion that all human knowledge is relative may be deduced from the very nature of our intelligence. But beside the analytic proof that our cognitions never can be absolute, there is the subordinate historical evidence that as a fact they never have been such. Now, more than at any former time, we are impressed with a sense that the thought, the feeling, and the action of each period of history becomes intelligible only through a special reference to that period. Hence it is our primary object with regard to the past, not to oppose, not to defend, but to understand. Hence we shall look upon any factitious attempt to revive and restore the past as necessarily impotent, and of transitory significance. Hence we shall abstain from setting up absolute standards, and from pronouncing things good or evil in proportion as they approach or fall short of such standards. A new school of historians, a new school of critics, have applied in many and various directions this idea of historical relativity. Nor has it failed to exert an influence upon recent poetry. It has been remarked that the contempt for the past, characteristic of many eighteenth century thinkers, was a necessary stage in the progress of thought. When the breach with authority had taken place, it was at first natural that men should maintain their position of superiority by a vigorous denial of the claims of their predecessors. "Whatever was old was absurd, and 'Gothic,' an epithet applied to all mediæval art, philosophy, or social order, became a simple term of contempt. Though the sentiment may strike us as narrow-minded, it at least implied a distinct recognition of a difference between past and present. In simpler times, people imagined their forefathers to be made in their own likeness, and naïvely transferred the customs of chivalry to the classical or Hebrew histories. To realize the fact that the eighteenth century differed materially from the eighth, was a necessary step towards the modern theory of progressive development."* The spirit of antiquarian research revived in the second half of the last century. Uniting with the historical spirit and a masculine force of imagination, it produced the romanticism of Scott. Uniting with the sentimental movement in Germany, it produced the romanticism of Tieck, Novalis, and Fouqué. From contempt for the Middle Ages, men passed into an exaggerated, fantastic devotion to whatever was, or was supposed to be, mediæval. Now, at length, we would approach the past neither as iconoclasts nor idolaters, but as scientific observers; we are not eager to applaud or revile before we understand; we do not for a moment desert our own place in our own century, but we have trained our imagination to employ itself in the service of history.

Among critics of literature and art, M. Taine, without himself possessing a delicate and flexible intelligence, has come prominently forward as the exponent of the æsthetics of the relative, in opposition to absolute systems of æsthetics, which absolve or condemn in accordance with standards conceived as invariable for all places and all times. Since the appearance of M. Taine's lectures on art, we have begun to suffer from a kind of critical cant drawn from science, and replacing the critical cant drawn from transcendental philosophy. If we are not so largely afflicted by the Ideal, the Beautiful, the Sublime, we could be content, perhaps, to hear a little less about the "organism" and its "environment." It is not sufficiently remembered that if we cannot attain to absolute standards of beauty, yet we can approximate to a standard in harmony with what, in every race and clime in which man has attained his normal development, has been highest in man. M. Taine, indeed, himself essayed to establish a scientific theory of the ideal, and happily forgot his early impartiality. We may, by a generous effort of imaginative sympathy, come to appreciate the feelings which would rise in the bosom of a South African upon sight of the Hottentot Venus; but we must return to the abiding conviction that the Venus of Melos is in truer accord with the sense of beauty in man, although, upon testing our opinion by count of heads, we were to appear in a minority of one.

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* Leslie Stephen. "English Thought in the Eighteenth Century," vol. ii. p. 445.

In harmony with this feeling for the historically relative, and also with the idea of progress, allowing as it does a right in its own place to each portion of the past, a poetry has appeared which, while remaining truly poetry, partakes of the critical, we might almost say the scientific, spirit with reference to past developments of the race, remote civilizations, and extinct religious faiths. The romantic poetry, to which things mediæval were so interesting, has thus been taken in and enclosed by a poetry which thinks nothing alien that is human, and interests itself in every age and every land, constituting thus a kind of imaginative criticism of religions, races, and civilizations. This direction in contemporary art is represented by the poet, excepting Victor Hugo, of highest distinction in France—Leconte de Lisle. His poetry, for the most part strictly objective, is not simply and frankly objective like the poetry of Scott, but rather sets itself down before some chosen object to make a complete imaginative study of it. Such poetry as this is not indicative of a retreat or recoil from our own time, as was the poetry of sentimental mediævalism; it is animated by an essentially modern motive.

The idea of transmission or heredity, over and above its purely scientific significance, has a significance in connection with morals which is of greater importance than any immediate value it has for the imagination. And yet this idea has been made a leading motive in a dramatic poem by a living writer, who unites the passion of a seeker for truth with the creative genius of a great artist. The central thought of "The Spanish Gypsy" has been so faithfully expressed by Mr R. H. Hutton, in his admirable criticism of George Eliot, that we need not go beyond his words:—

> "If I may venture to interpret so great a writer's thought, I should say that 'The Spanish Gypsy' is written to illustrate not merely doubly and trebly, but from four or five distinct points of view, how the inheritance of the definite streams of impulse and tradition stored up in what we call race often puts a tragic veto upon any attempt of spontaneous individual emotion or volition to ignore or defy their control, and to emancipate itself from the tyranny of their disputable and apparently cruel rule. You can see the influence of the recent Darwinian doctrines, so far as they

are applicable at all to moral characteristics and causes, in almost every page of the poem. How the threads of hereditary capacity and hereditary sentiment control, as with invisible cords, the orbits of even the most powerful characters, how the fracture of those threads, so far as it can be accomplished by mere *will* may have even a greater effect in wrecking character than moral degeneracy would itself produce; how the man who trusts and uses the hereditary forces which natural descent has bestowed upon him becomes a might and a centre in the world, while the man, perhaps intrinsically the nobler, who dissipates his strength by trying to swim against the stream of his past is neutralized and paralyzed by the vain effort; again, how a divided past, a past not really homogeneous, may weaken this kind of power, instead of strengthening it by the command of a larger experience—all this George Eliot's poem paints with a tragical force that answers to Aristotle's definition of tragedy, that which 'purifies' by pity and by fear."*

But if the stream of tendency descends to us with imperious force from remote regions, it advances broadening into the future. The idea of human progress has been so generative an idea in science, in historical literature, in politics, in poetry, that to indicate its leading developments would need very ample space. It is true that we anticipate a time when this earth will roll blind and cold around the sun, and all life upon our globe will be extinct. And the thought can hardly be other than a mournful one, calling for some stoical courage, to those persons whose creed it is that we are without warrant for believing that anything higher than humanity exists. If it were ascertained that a century hence the British nation would be utterly destroyed by calamitous overthrow, we might still resolve to help our nation to live nobly and perish heroically; but the enthusiasm would be stern rather than joyous. In the face of death, joy may remain for the individual through sympathy with the advance of his fellows, and in the thought that his deeds will live when he is himself resolved into nothingness. But how if the advance of humanity lead only to a dark pit of annihilation, and for humanity itself annihilation be attended by oblivion, and not even a subjective immortality be possible? Is it a matter for rejoicing that every day brings us nearer to this, the goal of progress? Just when all has been attained, all is to be forfeited. We can train our tempers, if need be, to accept these things with equanimity; but can we celebrate with praise and joy this approaching consummation? Humanity flung into the grave, with no spices, no tender hands of mourners, no tears of loving remembrance, no friend nor even a foe, and never an Easter morning! Is such a vision of the future so incomparable a substitute for the tender myths of the past?

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* "Essays," vol. ii. pp. 348, 349. The idea of heredity has been made a motive in art, with closer reference to physiology, by the American poet and novelist, Dr O. W. Holmes.

The idea of human progress—itself subordinate to the conception of evolution—is the only one of scientific ideas of comparatively recent date which has been long enough in the air to become a portion of the life of societies, and hence it alone has become a great inspiring force with literature. To trace the sources and the early movements of a philosophy of history, to follow its subsequent career from Bossuet to Buckle, would be an enterprise full of interest and of utility; and as far as France and England are concerned, this has been ably accomplished by Professor Flint. The popular imagination was scarcely affected by the idea of progress until toward the close of the eighteenth century, when a new millennium seemed to be inaugurated by the French Revolution. In English poetry it did not manifest itself powerfully until it became the inspiration of the writings of Shelley. And in Shelley's poetry the idea of progress appears as a glorious apparition rather than as a substantial reality; it appears like the witch in "Manfred" beneath the sun-bow of the torrent, and here the torrent is the French Revolution. For the idea of progress with Shelley was the revolutionary, not the scientific idea. Among the chief democratic writers of Europe—with Victor Hugo, George Sand, Lamennais, Quinet, Michelet, Mazzini, and others—the idea has had something of the force of a new religion. And in some, at least, of these writers the passionate aspect of the revolutionary conception of progress associates itself with the sustaining and controlling power of the scientific idea.

By Shelley and the revolutionary spirits a breach is made with the past—the world is to start afresh from 1789, or some other Year One; before that date appear the monstrous forms of tyrannies and superstitions which "tare each other in their slime;" then of a sudden were born light and love, freedom and truth:—

> "This is the day which down the void abysm,
> At the Earth-born's spell, yawns for Heaven's despotism,
> And conquest is dragged captive through the deep,
> Love from its awful throne of patient power
> In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
> Of dread endurance, from the slippery steep,
> And narrow verge of crag-like agony springs,
> And folds over the world its healing wings."

Such is the revolutionary idea of progress. In English poetry the scientific idea hardly appears earlier than in

Mr Tennyson's writings, and certainly nowhere in English poetry does it obtain a more faithful and impressive rendering. Mr Tennyson has none of the passion which makes the political enthusiast, none of the winged spiritual ardour which is proper to the poet of transcendentalism. But his poetry exhibits a well-balanced moral nature, strong human affections, and, added to these, such imaginative sympathy as a poet who is not himself capable of scientific thought may have with science, a delight in all that is nobly ordered, and a profound reverence for law. When dark fears assail him, and it is science that inspires and urges on such fears, Mr Tennyson does not confront them, as Mr Browning might, armed with the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith, which that militant transcendental poet knows so well to put to use. Mr Tennyson flies for refuge to the citadel of the heart :—

> "A warmth within the breast would melt
> The freezing reason's colder part,
> And, like a man in wrath, the heart
> Stood up, and answered, 'I have felt.'"

And as Mr Tennyson does not oppose to the sad inductions of the understanding some assertion of truth transcendental, so in his hopes for the future he is not carried away by the divine *μανία* of the worshippers of Revolution.

The idea of progress, which occupies so large a place in Mr Tennyson's poetry, is more than non-revolutionary; it is even anti-revolutionary. His imagination dwells with a broad and tranquil pleasure upon whatever is justified by the intellect and the conscience, and continuously energetic within determined bounds. If

Mr Browning had written an epic of Arthur, we can hardly doubt that he would have found a centre for his poem in the Grail, which would never have been attained, not even by Galahad, but the very failure to attain which would have stimulated renewed effort and aspiration, and thus have proved the truest success. The quest for something perfect, divine, unattainable, or if attainable then unsatisfying, secures, in Mr Browning's view, the highest gain which this life can yield to man. Mr Tennyson brings into prominence the circumstance—found in his mediæval sources—that it is the rashly undertaken quest of the Grail that "unsolders the noblest fellowship of knights," and brings in the flood of disaster. Dutiful activity in the sphere of the practical appears to Mr Tennyson so much more needed by the world than to seek oversoon for a mystical vision of things divine. No true reformation was ever sudden; let us innovate like nature and like time. Men may rise to higher things, not on wings, but on "Stepping-stones of their dead selves." It is "from precedent to precedent" that freedom "slowly broadens down," not by extravagant outbursts of "the red fool-fury of the Seine." The growth of individual character, the growth of national well-being, the development of the entire human race from animality and primitive barbarism—each of these, if it be sound, cannot but be slow and gradual. It is our part to co-operate with the general progressive tendency of the race :—

"Arise and fly
The reeling faun, the sensual feast:
Move upward, working out the beast,
And let the ape and tiger die."

Great sorrows, like the storms which blew upon our globe while in process of cooling, are a portion of the divine order, and fulfil their part in the gradual course of our development; such is the truth found, through pain and through endurance, in the "In Memoriam." Let science grow from more to more; let political organizations be carefully amended and improved; let man advance in self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control, and so from decade to decade, from century to century, will draw nearer that "One far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves."

With faith in the future equal to that of Mr Tennyson, and a more loving attachment to the past, founded in part upon those tender, pathetic ties which make imperfection dear, George Eliot, in her conception of human progress, is also anti-revolutionary. We advance from out of the past, but we bear with us a precious heritage. To suppose, as Shelley supposed, that we can move in this world by the light of reason alone, is a delusion of the Revolution in its passionate scorn of foregone ages; we need the staff of tradition as well as the lamp of reason. What is our faith in the future but

> "the rushing and expanding stream
> Of thought, of feeling fed by all the past?"

What is our finest hope but finest memory? The conservative instincts of George Eliot as an artist have been nourished by the scientific doctrine with reference to the transmission of an inheritance accumulating through the generations of mankind. And for the very reason that she so profoundly reverences the past, she is inspired with a great presentiment of the future:—

> "Presentiment of better things on earth
> Sweeps in with every force that stirs our souls
> To admiration, self-renouncing love,
> Or thoughts, like light, that bind the world in one:
> Sweeps like the sense of vastness, when at night
> We hear the roll and dash of waves that break
> Nearer and nearer with the rushing tide,
> Which rises to the level of the cliff,
> Because the wide Atlantic rolls behind
> Throbbing respondent to the far-off orbs."

A Parisian coterie of literary artists, whose art possessed no social feeling, and who took for their *drapeau* the words, "L'art pour l'art," found progress a piece of the boredom of *bourgeois* enthusiasm. It was natural, for in themselves there was nothing to create the presentiment of a future of glories and of duties. A silkworm enclosed in the delicate cocoon it has spun is insensible to the winds of change, and probably has no very vivid anticipation of the little flutter of potential wings.

Mr Tennyson's words, "move upward, working out the beast," suggest the inquiry whether the scientific movement has modified, or is now modifying, our moral conceptions. If it be so, the altered point of view must be discoverable through the work of great artists, for there are few great artists who are not indirectly great ethical teachers, or, if not teachers, inspirers. And it is obvious that scientific habits of thought must dispose men to seek for a natural rather than a miraculous or traditional foundation for morality, to seek for natural rather than arbitrary standards of right and wrong, and to dwell chiefly on the natural sanctions attached to well-doing and evil-doing. The ancient law-givers received their authority and their code by special interposition, near secret stream, or on open mountain-top. We look for ours in the heart of man, and through the observation of social phenomena. Not less, but more than Dante, we know for certain that there are a Heaven and a Hell—a heaven in the presence of light and blessing when a good deed has been done; a hell in the debasement of self, in the dark heart able no longer *vivre au grand jour*, in the consciousness of treason against our fellows, in the sense that we have lowered the nobler tradition of humanity, in the knowledge that consequence pursues consequence with a deadly efficiency far beyond our power of restraining, or even reaching them. The assurance that we live under a reign of natural law enforces upon us with a solemn joy and an abiding fear the truth that what a man soweth, that shall he also reap; and if he sow for others (and who does not?), others must reap of his sowing, tares of tares, and wheat of wheat.

A recent critic concludes his studies of the Greek poets with a remarkable chapter which is an expansion of the thought that the true formula for the conduct of life in our modern world is no other than the old formula of Greek philosophy *ζῆν κατὰ φύσιν*, to live according to nature. The words might be accepted as our rule, if "nature" be understood to include the action of the higher part of our humanity in controlling or modifying the lower and grosser part. This does not imply any acceptance of the ascetic theory of self-mortification, it is a part of the scientific doctrine of self-development, since we must recognize as one element in natural self-development the moving upward of which Mr Tennyson speaks :—

> "Move upward, working out the beast,
> And let the ape and tiger die."

The ethics of self-development rightly interpreted must, under the influence of science, for ever replace the false ethics of self-mortification. A sane and vigorous human body, rich in the qualities which attract, and strongly feeling the attractions of the earth, and of human creatures upon the earth, will seem more sacred to us than the most attenuated limbs of the martyrs of early Christian art. Among our human instincts, passions, affections,—the æsthetic sensibilities, the intellect, the conscience, the religious emotions, an order and hierarchy are indeed indispensable ; but not one citizen in our little state of man shall be disfranchised or dishonoured. So shall men see (when fatherhood and motherhood have been duly considered beforehand) youth ardent, aspiring, joyous, free ; manhood, powerful, hardy, patient, vigilant, courageous ; and an old age of majesty and beauty. Nor will death, which has been in our globe ever since life was in it, appear the seal of human shame and sin, but the completion of a fulfilled course, the rest at the goal, perhaps the starting-point of a new career.*

All this has reference, however, to the ideal of the individual as pointed to by science, but science declares further and declares with ever-increasing emphasis, that duty is social. The law, under which we live, does not consist, as regards our duties to our neighbour, merely or chiefly of negations. "Thou shalt not," since the great Teacher of the mount interpreted the law, has given place to "Thou shalt"—shalt actively strengthen, sustain, co-operate. The ideal of co-operation has been well defined as "The voluntary, conscious participation of each intelligent, separate element of society in preparing, maintaining, and increasing the general well-being, material, intellectual, and emotional." Self-surrender is therefore at times sternly enjoined, and if the egoistic desires are brought into conflict with social duties, the individual life and joy within us, at whatever cost of personal suffering, must be sacrificed to the just claims of our fellows. But what has the idea of duty to do with literature—what especially has it to do with the literature of the imagination? Little indeed, if such literature be no more than a supply to the senses of delicate colours and perfumes; much, if such literature address itself, as all great literature does, to the total nature of man. And what in effect is this statement, justified by science, of the nature of duty, but a rendering into abstract formulæ of the throbbings of the heart which lives at the centre of such creations as "Romola," "Armgart," and "Middlemarch?"

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* What has been said above is said in better words in many passages of Whitman's writings. See "Democratic Vistas," p. 41 ; "Two Rivulets," p. 7. To spiritualize the democracy by asserting the power of a religion in harmony with modern science, has been the chief tendency of Whitman's later writings.

It is not possible here to consider how the modification by science of our conception, not of the world only, nor of man, but of the Supreme Power, must express itself, if it have not already expressed itself, in literature. That Power is no remote or capricious ruler; absolutely inscrutable, the Father of our spirits is yet manifested in the totality of things, and most highly manifested to such beings as ourselves in the divinest representatives of our race. Recognizing all our notions of this inscrutable Power as but symbolic, we may for purposes of edification accept an anthropomorphic conception, and yield to all that, in sincerity, and imposing no delusion upon ourselves, such an anthropomorphic conception may suggest, provided always that we keep it, in accordance with its purpose of edification, at the topmost level upon which our moral and spiritual nature can sustain an ideal, and bear in mind that it has no absolute validity. Nor will it be without an enlarging and liberating power with our spirit from time to time, when circumstances make it natural to do so, if we part with, dismiss or abolish the symbolic conception suggested by man, in favour of one which the life and beauty of this earth of ours, or of the sublime cosmos of which it is a member, may suggest to the devout imagination. Thus by all that can be seen, and known, and loved, the religious spirit will be fed, and around and beyond what is knowable will abide an encircling mystery, by virtue of which the universe becomes something more than a workshop, a gymnasium, or a banquet-chamber, by virtue of which it becomes even an oracle and a shrine. Out of that darkness has proceeded our light; and in proportion as our hearts are filled with that light, shall we possess wisdom and courage to draw high auguries of hope and fear from the mystery which lies around our life, and to wait resolvedly for whatever new shining of the day-spring, or whatever calm silence of night, the future years may yield. It is possible already to perceive in literature the influence of such religious conceptions as have been here suggested.

1877

THE PROSE WORKS OF WORDSWORTH.

THE Prose Works of Wordsworth form a gift for which all who have ever truly listened to Wordsworth, and learned from him, will be grateful with no common gratitude. To some men now in middle life the poetry of Wordsworth in its influence upon their early years has been somewhat like a lofty mountain,

> "An eminence, of these our hills
> The last that parleys with the setting sun,"

which rose as chief presence and power near the home of their boyhood, which was the resort of their solitary walks, which kindled their most ardent thoughts, which consecrated their highest resolves, which created moods of limitless aspiration, which strengthened and subdued, from which came forth clear yet mysterious echoes, against whose front the glories of dawns that were sacred had been manifested, and on whose edges stars, like kindling watchfires, had paused at night for a moment in their course. Not less than this Wordsworth's poetry was to them, as they can remember now. But for such men the *Wanderjahre*, the years of travel, needful and inevitable, came; they went hither and thither; they took gifts from this one and from that; they saw strange ways and strange faces of men; they parted, it may be, too cheaply with old things that had been dear; they looked, or seemed to look, at truth askance and strangely. And now if they are drawn back once more into the haunts of early years, they return not without dread and foreboding and tender remorse; to pass the barriers and re-enter the solitude seems as though it needed preparatory discipline and penance and absolution; having entered it, however, the consciousness of one's own personality and its altering state ceases; the fact which fills the mind is the permanence of that lofty, untroubled presence; "there it is," we say, "the same as ever," the same, though to us, who have ranged, it cannot continue quite the same, but seems now a little more abrupt and rigid in its outlines, and, it may be, seems a narrow tract of elevation in contrast with the broad bosom of common earth, the world of pasture-land and city and sea which we have traversed, and which we shall not henceforth forsake.

The contents of the three volumes of Wordsworth's Prose Works, miscellaneous as they are, fall into certain principal groups; first, the political writings, which represent three periods in the growth of Wordsworth's mind, that of his ardent, youthful republicanism (represented by the Apology for the French Revolution), that of the patriotic enthusiasm of his manhood (represented by his pamphlet on the Convention of Cintra,) and lastly, that of his uncourageous elder years.* Certain essays and letters upon education, together with a deepthoughted letter of Advice to the Young, reprinted from the Friend, lie nearest to the political writings, having indirect bearings upon politics, but being immediately, and in the first instance, ethical. The group entitled by Mr Grosart "Æsthetical and Literary" comprises the Letter to a Friend of Robert Burns, notable for its fine charity, and at the same time strength of moral judgment, the Essays upon Epitaphs, admirable pieces of philosophical criticism, and the several essays and prefaces which accompanied the editions of Wordsworth's poems. Hard by these is rightly placed Wordsworth's Guide through the District of the Lakes; this, besides being a singularly perfect piece of topographical description, is of unique interest as exhibiting Wordsworth's mind, in reference to external nature, at work not in the imaginative, but in the analytic manner. The letters on the Kendal and Windermere Railway belong to the same group of writings. In the third volume appear the notes to the poems, collected from many editions, and the whole of the precious and delightful memoranda, having reference chiefly to the occasions on which Wordsworth's poems were conceived or written, dictated by the poet to Miss Fenwick, and known to Wordsworth students as the I. F. MSS. Letters and extracts of letters follow, and the volume closes with various personal reminiscences of Wordsworth, among which must be distinguished for its deep sympathy with the character and genius of the poet, and the interest of its details, the notice contributed by a living poet, kindred in spirit to Wordsworth, Mr Aubrey de Vere. In the present study it will be possible only to gather up the suggestions which arise from one division of these various writings, the political division.

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* "Years have deprived me of *courage*, in the sense the word bears when applied by Chaucer to the animation of birds in spring time."—"Prose Works" vol. iii. p. 317.

When a poet on great occasions, and with a powerful motive, expresses himself in prose, it may be anticipated that his work will possess certain precious and peculiar qualities. While working in the foreign material, he does not divest himself of his fineness of nerve, of his emotional ardour and susceptibility, nor can he disregard the sustenance through beauty of his imagination; but the play of his faculties takes place under new conditions. The imagination, used as an instrument for the discovery of truth, will pierce through the accidental circumstances of the hour and the place in its effort to deliver from the incidents of time the divine reality which they conceal; occasional and local events will be looked on as of chief significance in reference to what is abiding and universal; and the poet's loyalty to certain ideals will probably take the form of a strenuous confidence in the future of nations or of mankind. Thus, if he essays to write a political pamphlet, it is probable that the pamphlet will come forth a prophecy. No prose writer knows better than the poet (writing in Milton's expressive words, "with his left hand"), the limits to which he has subjected himself; yet he cannot quite subdue the desire to push back the limits, and assert the full privileges of his nature. No poet, indeed, as far as I am aware, has written in that hybrid species, which is the form of ostentation dear to the vulgarly ambitious, unimaginative mind, and which calls itself prose-poetry. The poet who writes in prose has made a surrender, and is conscious of self-denial and a loss of power; but, to compensate this, some of the force and intensity which comes through sacrifice for a sufficient cause may add itself to his mood and to its outcome. There will be in such writing a quiver as of wings that have often winnowed the air; and mastering this, there will be a poise, a steadfast advance, and in the high places of contemplation or of joy a strong yet tranquil flight, a continued equilibration of passion and of thought.

Mr Mill in a celebrated essay, with the object of illustrating by typical examples the true nature of poetry, contrasted the poetry of Wordsworth with that of Shelley. The latter was described as the offspring of a nature essentially poetical, vivid emotion uttering itself directly in song, while the former, Wordsworth's poetry, was set down as the resultant of culture, and of a deliberate effort of the will, its primary factor being a thought, around which, at the command of the writer, or according to a habit which he had acquired, were grouped appropriate feelings and images. Any one who has been deeply penetrated by Wordsworth's poetry must perceive in a way which leaves no room for vague statement, that while Mr Mill received its influence up to a certain point, he yet remained outside the sphere of Wordsworth's essential power; and perhaps no piece of criticism, seeming to outsiders to possess so considerable a portion of truth, could be more entirely alien to the consciousness of those who have adequately felt the power of Wordsworth's poetry than that of Mr Mill. Each writer of high and peculiar genius, whose genius notwithstanding fails to be world-wide, or universal as the sun, may be said to exercise over his readers an election of grace—one is taken and another left; and that a person who has been thus elected, should speak with decision about the Master, implies no arrogance. As a man asserts confidently what has been clearly shown by the report of the senses, so one who has been admitted to the presence of a writer of such high and peculiar genius as Wordsworth, knows and declares that the fact is so, and not otherwise. There will be no dissent among those who have approached nearest to Wordsworth, when it is said that a most essential characteristic of Wordsworth's writing, when he wrote in his most characteristic manner, is precisely the reverse of what Mr Mill stated it to be.

In the poems of Wordsworth, which are the most distinctively Wordsworthian, there is an entire consentaneity of thought and feeling; no critical analysis can separate or distinguish the two, nor can we say with accuracy that either has preceded and initiated the movement of the other; thought lives in feeling, feeling lives in thought; in their dual unity neither "is afore or after other," neither "is greater or less than another." If ever, indeed, there appears a tendency to severance of these two elements of Wordsworth's poetry (it being assumed that Wordsworth is writing at his best), this occurs in those occasional trances of thought and mountings of the mind, when all intellection and all operancy of will seem to be suspended, and the whole being of the man to be transformed and transfused into silent rapture:—

> "In such access of mind, in such high hour
> Of visitation from the living God
> Thought was not, in enjoyment it expired."

And yet in such an hour thought rather lay hidden in "the light of thought" than had ceased to be. The forces of Wordsworth's nature, like the forces of the physical universe, were correlated by a marvellous law, according to which one could pass and be transformed into another, what was at this moment a sensuous affection becoming forthwith a spiritual presence, what was contemplation appearing presently as passion, or what was now a state of passive, brooding receptivity transforming itself into the rapturous advance, and controlling mastery of the imagination. "The excellence of writing, whether in prose or verse," Wordsworth has said, "consists in the conjunction of Reason and Passion." And as this may be noted as the excellence of Wordsworth's own poetry, the conjunction being no result of an act of the will, or of mere habit, but vital, primitive, immediate, and necessary—so it must be set down as the first distinguishing quality of whatever is highest and noblest in these his writings in prose.

The earliest in date of the more important prose writings of Wordsworth is an Apology for the French Revolution. Bishop Watson, who had been a conspicuous English sympathizer with the great movement in France during its earlier stages, deserted of a sudden the cause which to Wordsworth at that time appeared the cause of freedom and of the human race. An appendix to a sermon of the Bishop—a sermon that bore an odious title—had signalised his change of faith by an attack upon the principles and the conduct of the Revolution. Wordsworth's pamphlet is a reply to this appendix. In dexterous use of his weapons the Bishop is the more practised combatant; Wordsworth's style suffers in some degree from a sense of the conventional dignity of the political pamphlet as employed in the eighteenth century. A young writer can hardly afford to be quite direct and free in his movements, lest he should be violent and awkward. "Alluding to our natural existence, Addison, in a sublime allegory well known to your lordship, has represented us as crossing an immense bridge, from whose surface from a variety of causes we disappear one after another, and are seen no more." This simile of the opening paragraph, formed from the Vision of Mirza, with its appalling image of the Bishop of Llandaff falling "through one of the numerous trap-doors, into the tide of contempt, to be swept away into the ocean of oblivion," belongs to the manner of majestic scorn or indignation of the political letter-writer of the period. It is more important to observe that in all higher and stronger qualities of mind the advantage lies with Wordsworth. And very remarkable from a biographical point of view it is to ascertain, as we do from this pamphlet, that not only was Wordsworth's whole emotional nature aroused and quickened by the beauty of promise which the world in that hour of universal dawn seemed to wear, but that his intellect had so clearly comprehended and adopted with conviction so decided the principles of Republican government.

Wordsworth had reached the age of twenty-three. His character, naturally simple, stern, and ardent, had received at first no shock of either fear or joy from the events in France; they seemed only natural and right.

But when he entered into actual contact with the soil and people, he could not but become aware of the marvellous change and progress. On the eve of the day on which the king pledged his faith to the new constitution, Wordsworth saw with his own eyes the joy upon the faces of all men. "A homeless sound of joy was in the sky;" and to such primitive, unshaped sounds, whether from trees and mountain torrents, or the waves of the sea, or the tumultuous movement of the people, Wordsworth's imagination responded with peculiar energy. France was standing "on the top of golden hours;" in Paris the English wanderer had gathered from among the rubbish of the Bastille a fragment to be cherished as a relic; upon the banks of the Loire he had discussed with Beaupuis the end and wisest forms of civil government; he had listened to the speeches of the Girondins in the National Assembly. And now that his republican faith might seem to be tried and tested, perhaps somewhat strained, by the September massacres and the execution of Louis XVI., he still retains unshaken faith in France and in the Republic.

Until his twenty-second year external nature had possessed all Wordsworth's deeper sympathies, and been the inspirer of his most intimate hopes, and joys, and fears. This, therefore, was the season of the first love-making of his soul with human society. The easy-going sociability of his laxer hours at Cambridge had been felt to be a carelessness towards that higher self within him, which when he was alone asserted its authority and condemned his casual measures. But now for Wordsworth to unite himself with mankind was to widen the life and reinforce the energies of that higher self. He could not quickly or without a struggle renounce the new existence which had opened for him. Acts of violence had been perpetrated; but "a time of revolution," Wordsworth pleaded, "is not the season of true Liberty." "Alas," he goes on, "the obstinacy and perversion of man is such that Liberty is too often obliged to borrow the very arms of despotism to overthrow him, and in order to reign in peace must establish herself by violence. She deplores such stern necessity, but the safety of the people, her supreme law, is her consolation." A certain sternness and hardness in Wordsworth's temperament, his youthful happiness, and his freedom from tender, personal bonds, enabled him to look, without shrinking, upon some severe measures enforced by the leaders of the Revolution. Such tenderness as sheds tears over the fallen body of a king seemed to Wordsworth a specious sensibility. His sorrow was yielded to the violated majesty of public order; he lamented "that any combination of circumstances should have rendered it necessary or advisable to veil for a moment the statues of the laws, and that by such emergency the cause of twenty-five millions of people, I may say of the whole human race, should have been so materially injured. Any other sorrow for the death of Louis is irrational and weak." This is a young man's somewhat haughty devotion to a cause, untempered and uninformed as yet by concrete human sympathies, or the "humble cares and delicate fears" which come with adult life.

In this pamphlet Wordsworth's republican faith is distinctly formulated. A republic is the least oppressive form of government, because, as far as is possible, the governors and the governed become one. The property qualification of voters must be set aside; the mechanic and the peasant may claim their right to a share in the national legislation; the suffrage must be universal. It is indeed necessary to delegate power to representatives of the people; but by shortening the duration of the trust, and disqualifying the legislator for continuous re-election during a series of years, safe-guards against the abuse of this delegated authority may be provided. Arbitrary distinctions between man and man are to be abolished; hereditary nobility must cease, and with it those titles which are a standing insult to the dignity of plain manhood. Laws should be enacted rather in favour of the poor man than of the rich. The privileges of primogeniture must be abolished. And then upon the grounds of expediency, and of justice, and through force of arguments drawn from the nature of man, Wordsworth pleads against monarchy, and the aristocratical institutions which form its support. The Bishop of Llandaff had found it hard to understand what is meant by the equality of man in a state of civil society; Wordsworth directs his lordship for an explanation to one of the articles of the Rights of Man. "Equality, without which liberty cannot exist, is to be met with in perfection in that State in which no distinctions are to be admitted but such as have evidently for their object the general good."

There is a young man's bold and virtuous energy in the arguments of Wordsworth, if there be little of the deep moral pregnancy of his later writings. The chief interest of the pamphlet lies in its relation to the history of Wordsworth's mind. And it must be noted as assigning its true place to this piece of political reasoning, that the fact that Wordsworth was able to put forward his faith as a series of credenda, and was ready to give an argumentative reason for the hope that was in him, is evidence that at this time the most joyous period of Wordsworth's revolutionary fervour was already past. So long as the facts of the French Revolution were their own justification, so long as the movement manifested its sacred origin by a self-evidencing light, Wordsworth's faith was a joyous confusion of thought and emotion, a confluence of the mere gladness of living, the hope of youth, instincts and feelings which had existed since his childhood, and the readily accepted theories of the day. But when the facts of the Revolution no longer corresponded with his wishes or his hopes, Wordsworth threw himself, for temporary defence against the threatening danger of disbelief and profound disappointment, upon theory. As the real cause became increasingly desperate—which in 1793 it was far from having become—Wordsworth put upon his theory an increasing stress and strain, until at length opinions clung around his mind as if they were his life, "nay, more, the very being of the immortal soul." In the process of attempting to sustain his faith in the Revolution by means which to one of his constitution of mind, were against nature, his inmost being underwent a disruption and disintegration. The powers of his nature ceased to act with a healthy co-operation; until, finally, turning upon the opinions which tyrannized over him to test their validity by the intellect alone, "dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds, like culprits to the bar," Wordsworth escaped from them mournfully, through a period of perplexity and intellectual despair. In place of truth he found only a conflict of indecisive reasonings.

The declaration by England of war against France severed Wordsworth in feeling from the country of his birth and of the traditions of his heart. The aggressive action of the French Republic against Switzerland gave definite form to his latently growing alienation from the adopted country of his hopes, his theories, and his imaginings. The political part of him became thus a twofold exile; his sympathies, which had been so strong and glad, were thrown back upon himself, and turned into bitterness and perplexity. With Wordsworth political faith and ardour could not flourish apart from a soil in which to take root, and shoot upward and strike downward; his passion was not for ideas in themselves, but for ideas as part of the finer breath and expression of a nation's life. Though abundant in power of wing, and free in aërial singleness, like the skylark of his own poem, Wordsworth's faith needed a habitation upon the green, substantial earth; it could not live in perpetual flight, as Shelley's faith lived, a bird of paradise that feeds upon the colours of the sunset and sunrise, and if it sleeps at all, sleeps upon the smooth night-wind. It is easy for us at the present day, to whom the events of that passionate period come calmed and quelled, bounded in space and controlled by adjacent events, it is easy for us to declare that Wordsworth's loyalty to the ideas of his youth should have survived the test; it is easy for us to see that at no moment in the history of the French Revolution had the vast spiritual agents which brought it into being spent their force, or converted that force into a desperate rage of destruction; it is easy for us to discover that before the principles of the Revolution lay a long career. But precisely because the moral nature of Wordsworth, and of others along with him, was completely roused, and was sensitive in proportion to its vital energy, the shock of events was felt severely, and the pain of frustration and disappointment became a blinding pain. The failure of the Revolution was felt like the defection and dishonour of a friend, and when all was quieted by iron bonds of military rule, it struck with cold finality upon young hearts as though it were a death.

From the first there was a point at which Wordsworth's adhesion to the French historical movement failed or was imperfect, though of this fact and its import Wordsworth himself was at first probably not aware; sooner or later the flaw must have become a rift and gaped. Wordsworth's sympathy with the national passion of joy and hope in France was spontaneous and involuntary; but with the long intellectual movement which preceded the upheaval of society, and with the methods of thought pursued with enthusiasm in the eighteenth century, the mind of Wordsworth could at no period have been in harmony. During upwards of eighty years which have elapsed since 1789 the principles of the Revolution have approximated, touched, or united themselves to many various schools of thought, from that of a Christian democracy to that of Atheistic communism. But originally to have entered into a very close and complete relation to the movement, it would have been necessary to have come up with it out of the centre of the eighteenth century illumination or *Aufklärung.* Looked at from a comprehensive point of vision, the Convention appears but an incident in that great progressive movement, that flinging-forward, wavelike, of the human mind, of which the Encyclopædia is another incident. But how much of the Encyclopædia ever came home to the genius of the great transcendental poet of England, or was assimilated by it? Neither a dry, mechanical deism, nor a tender, sentimental deism was the theological conception towards which Wordsworth's religious feeling could naturally incline him; and Reason, even if Wordsworth had lost all faith in a "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe," would never have been the abstraction from the nature of man, to which he would have chosen to yield his homage.

With Rousseau it might be supposed that the mind of the English poet would find something in common; but the sentimental return to nature of Rousseau, his self-conscious simplicity, and his singular combination of brooding sensuality with a recoil from the enervating effects of luxury, differed as much as possible from the temper and genius of Wordsworth, on one side simple, hard-grained, veracious as that of a Westmoreland dalesman, on the other capable of entrance into a plane of idealizing thought and imagination, where for Rousseau to breathe would have been death. From the æsthetic point of view, the alleged return to nature of the revolutionary epoch did not show well; of what mingled elements it really consisted will appear from the paintings of David, and from the affectation of Roman manners in public life upon conspicuous occasions. The eighteenth century, speaking broadly, had pursued truth by methods of the intellect alone, apart from the suggestions of man's instincts, emotions, and imagination. By-and-by these last had leaped into life aggressively, and caught up as weapons of their warfare the conclusions which the intellect had forged. With the passionate, instinctive side of the great movement Wordsworth was sufficiently at one; but when the revolutionary passions and instincts, as yet untrained, and therefore violent and crude, were seduced from their true objects, when an apostolic mission to the nations announcing enfranchisement was exchanged for a war of vulgar conquest, then those who would retain their faith in the Revolution were driven back, and among them Wordsworth was driven back, to the abstractions of the revolutionary creed. Wordsworth, with the logical faculty alone, and pursuing the eighteenth-century method of truth-discovery—that of the pure intellect—endeavoured to verify his republican theories. The result with Wordsworth was that all truth for a time disappeared; certitude with respect to any and every class of beliefs became for a time unattainable.*

Two chief streams of intellectual and moral tendency are distinguishable in the period subsequent to the Revolution,—the period during which Wordsworth attained the full possession of his powers, and thence onward to our own days. One of these has endeavoured to sustain and develop the most beneficent influences of the eighteenth century; to it belong at the present hour modern science—including the science of political economy—and modern democracy. The other should have aimed at supplementing and enriching the best gifts of the preceding epoch with new methods, feelings, and ideas in accord with the changed condition of the human mind. Unfortunately for the cause of tranquil and enlarged human culture, the two movements, which ought to have been auxiliaries, and the men representing each, who ought to have been allies, appeared as rival and conflicting forces, each claiming supremacy over the individual mind and over the progress of human society. Hence have arisen on either side excesses and extravagances: on the one side Catholic reactions, a profound suspicion of modern science, systems of spurious metaphysics resorted to as an escape from the pressure of facts, in art an emasculated mediævalism; on the other, a materialistic temper hard and pushing, an unimaginative and unsympathetic school in politics, the dreary science drearily pursued, a profound suspicion of religion, and intolerance of religious ideas. It would have needed a greater mind than that of either Bentham or of Coleridge to effect a reconciliation, which should not be a compromise, between the two movements of the age.

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* The following reference, in the Apology for the French Revolution, to Priestley deserves to be quoted:—"At this time have we not daily the strongest proofs of the success with which, in what you call the best of all monarchical governments, the popular mind may be debauched? Left to the quiet exercise of their own judgment, do you think that the people would have thought it necessary to set fire to the house of the philosophic Priestley?"

As things were, it was needful to choose a side. The appropriate work of Wordsworth, and of his companion who worked more in the sphere of pure thought, was rather to supplement the deficiencies and correct the errors of the eighteenth century than to carry on and develop its most precious influences. But, in assuming their appropriate places as teachers, Coleridge and Wordsworth were at the same time condemned to an attitude of hostility with reference to one entire side of the culture and the progressive thought of their time. Receiving as we do from Wordsworth such a gift of high poetry, such an overflow of impassioned contemplation of the universe, we know not how we should regret that he entered so absolutely and so serenely into his own vision of truth. Had his certitude in beliefs transcendental been disturbed by doubts and questionings, he could not have displayed a skill of fence and thrust, nor have enjoyed the militant exercise, as in our own day Mr Browning does, who, if he would build the walls of our spiritual city, builds ever with one hand working in the work, and the other hand holding a weapon. Could we conceive the mind of Wordsworth producing poetry at all in a state of divided intellect and feeling,—for as a fact that rift would have made Wordsworth's music mute,—we are compelled to imagine the outcome of his mind as resembling the poetry of Clough, though possessing an ampler body of thought and feeling than Clough's,—a kind of self-revelation, not without curious interest or even peculiar uses in a distracted period, when the head and heart pay separate allegiance to rival authorities, but incapable of becoming in a high degree a power with individual minds, or the prophecy to a nation.

We cannot, therefore, regret, for the sake of Wordsworth himself and of his poetry, that his trust in his own faculties and their mode of operation was complete; for us, too, it is well that such high, serene, and yet impassioned faith as Wordsworth's should have found its adequate record in song; there are times when we are moved to place reliance in it upon the credit of our past selves, as in an intuition, which was once our own during a season of clear and solemn vision, and which cannot be ours again. But it is also true that Wordsworth's "imaginative faith" (such a name he himself bestows upon it) fails to come into *direct* contact with the intellect of the present time, and moves us by its prophet-like enouncement of truth transcendental less than such emotional controversy as Mr Browning's moves us. Unless we could carry on the conduct of our mental powers upon Wordsworth's method, we could not hold in living and immediate possession Wordsworth's conclusions; and the weight and pressure of scientific methods of thought at the present time render the conduct of the intellect in Wordsworth's manner possible only by miracle of grace, or by peculiar conformation of mind, or through a virginal seclusion of soul.

In the literature of England, and in the darkest hour of reaction, the Revolution found a banner-bearer, an embodied genius half formed from the spirit of swift, wild, and beautiful things in nature, and half from the keenest joys and anguish of humanity; one made to be a saint and a martyr of revolution, the delicate victim thrown to the lions of authorised opinion; a poet framed for intensities of faith, of charity, and of hope; for illuminated heights of rapture and of song. But Shelley, who, by virtue of his swift-weaving imagination, his artistic impulses, and the incantation of his verse, belongs to the nineteenth century, was by virtue of the intellectual background and basis of his poetry a child of the eighteenth century, a true volunteer against old tyrannies in the wars of enfranchisement of the Republic. In order that he should be a revolter it was not needful to Shelley that the Revolution should promise an immediate success. The abstractions created by the intellect and the passions of that age were to him the only realities, and he believed that their history would be long. Living as he did in the idea, concrete facts appeared to him but as shadows, ever varying and shifting, thrown from accidental objects which intervened between the world of men and the high, white light of the eternal world. For such poetry, which nourished itself upon abstractions, and existed independently of the accidents of the time, a career, even in a season of reaction, was open. Laon and Cythna may stand bound amid the flames; but in due time the martyrs will reach that radiant isle sanctified by the Temple of the Spirit. For countless ages Prometheus may hang nailed to the mountain-wall; but the day will dawn of his deliverance, when the whole sphere of earth must break into blossom and into song. For Shelley, whether France were enslaved or free, liberty remained. But such political passion as Wordsworth's united itself with an actual cause. It was roused by the presence of the elements of noble national life, not somewhere apart in the air, not in some remote political *primum mobile*, but in the veritable life of a nation. For such poetry of revolution after the régime of the Directory and the 18th Brumaire the career was closed.

Yet some fruits of his early republican faith remained with Wordsworth; and—what is more important—that in his own nature which at first made him a sympathizer with the Revolution, remained. When, after the time of trial, of intellectual perplexity, and moral confusion, there came by degrees light and calm, spiritual restoration and strength, it was not an altogether new self that Wordsworth found, but his former self changed from youth to manhood, as men have been changed by a bed of sickness from which they have arisen. At this period, as we find recorded in the "Prelude," the influence of his sister was peculiarly precious and sanative; but this influence of Wordsworth's sister was less like that of one active human spirit upon another than that of the tender, tranquillising, and yet ardent breathing of the life of external nature:—

> "Thy breath,
> Dear sister! was a kind of gentler spring
> That went before my footsteps."

She did not so much compel him to new lines of thought or habits of feeling, as restore him by an atmosphere of loving wisdom to his wiser and more gracious self. It is a remarkable and characteristic fact that Wordsworth, in the poetical autobiography which he has left with us, attributes no influence of primary importance upon the growth of his mind to any soul, whether kindred or antagonist, of man or woman. The sympathy and the intellectual action of Coleridge helped to foster and advance Wordsworth's instinctive tendencies of thought; but Coleridge did not contribute any dominant idea to Wordsworth's mind, nor move him apart or sideways from the track along which he was progressing. Wordsworth was never driven out of any position by force of argument, nor attracted into a new position by compelling sympathy with another mind. For Mary Hutchinson his love was a deep, tender, and enduring feeling; but it was not that kind of passion which lifts a man into a new and strange world of winged light, and swift winds of joy in rapturous self-abandonment. She was to him like a calm recess among the woods, sheltered from tempest and extremities of heat, with its refreshments of living water, and its little solitude, of greenest herbage.

Obstacles were removed from Wordsworth's way by other hands, flowers were planted in its rugged and bare spots; but he was not diverted from his path, or guided to points of vision which lay to the left or right. His sister led Wordsworth back to nature, and softened down the over-sternness of his earlier temper. In her sensitiveness he seemed to discern a finer kind of justice to which he had been blind, and thus he came to distrust, perhaps overmuch, the bold judgments which he had but lately passed upon events. Few things are more difficult than to receive an accession, even a slight accession, to a man's powers of moral discernment, without at the same time acquiring a suspicion of his past self either in kind or degree not wholly warranted by fact. With Wordsworth's aspiring force now co-existed a certain loving humbleness, meekness, or docility of senses, affections, and intellect. He was less sanguine than formerly; he cared less for theories of human progress, and less for the abstraction "man." Growing into a habit of estimating things somewhat like that of Burke, it seemed to Wordsworth now that there was a certain effeminacy in levelling down the truth to general notions, and so avoiding the difficulties and rough edges of truth, which are felt when we deal, not with abstractions, but with concrete details.

Such modifications of moral and intellectual temper had taken place, but Wordsworth's veneration for the stuff of common human nature, his democratic sense of the dignity of manhood, was not lost. What is most precious in our common human nature seemed to him to be whatever is most simple, primitive, and permanent. This he found among the hardy peasantry of his own North-Country district. And if "man" was less to Wordsworth than formerly, individual men and women became infinitely more. With his democratic feeling for what is best in human nature, corresponded his feeling for language considered as the instrument of his art. What is best in language, it seemed to Wordsworth, are those simple, strong, and living forms of speech, in which the permanent and primitive feelings of men utter themselves. Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction was perhaps not enounced with perfect clearness, and has certainly been gravely misunderstood, It was not the language of the peasant, as such, any more than the language of the courtier or the philosopher, as such, which seemed admirable to him; it was the permanent and passionate speech of *man*, wherever to be found, which he sought after; and in the speech of simple men Wordsworth believed that there was more of such stuff to retain, and less matter to be rejected as belonging to merely local or occasional uses, than in the speech of over-cultivated, artificial refinement. However Wordsworth may have failed to convey his precise meaning in his celebrated prose prefaces, it cannot truly be asserted that his practice and his theory were not in agreement. To us of the present day there are few characteristics of Wordsworth's poetry more refreshing, when we turn to it from contemporary writings, which represent, in dramatic fashion, characters and incidents of humble life, than its entire freedom from condescension. It neither studies the persons nor repeats the phrases of shepherd, of cottage matron, of peasant-patriarch, of village schoolmaster with an air of sentimental or of humorous superiority. Michael and Matthew, Ruth and Margaret, the Leech-gatherer and the Pedlar, are figures as great or graceful as those of Dion or Laodamia. Around the body of the Highland girl is effused a light which makes her, while so real and human, radiant as a spiritual vision; into the voice of the solitary Reaper gathers all the thrilling power of nature in her furthest and clearest solitudes,—a power which penetrates and persists,—with all the stored-up tradition of human sorrow that is deep and dim, and of human strife that is unavailing.*

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* It is worth noting that the personages of many of Wordsworth's poems are not literal portraits, but ideal studies from several individuals. Wordsworth says of Matthew, "Like the wanderer in the 'Excursion,' this schoolmaster was made up of several, both of his class, and men of other occupations."

"I should think," Wordsworth wrote to a friend in the year 1821, "that I had lived to little purpose, if my notions on the subject of government had undergone no modification: my youth must, in that case, have been without enthusiasm, and my manhood endued with small capability of profiting by reflection. If I were addressing those who have dealt so liberally with the words renegade, apostate, &c., I should retort the charge upon them, and say, *You* have been deluded by *places* and *persons*, while I have stuck to *principles*. *I* abandoned France and her rulers when *they* abandoned the struggle for liberty, gave themselves up to tyranny, and endeavoured to enslave the world."* This is not a mere piece of logical fence, but in large measure a faithful statement of what actually occurred. Wordsworth's sympathies attached themselves, not to words or abstract notions, but to an actual cause. When once again his gaze was passionately turned upon public events, England stood alone, defending from mortal assault the very life of virtue in mankind. The war, which at its commencement had made Wordsworth an alien in heart from the country of his birth, now bound him to that country which seemed to be the one land in which a passionate sense of justice still survived. Wordsworth poured his adult strength, in comparison with which his youthful enthusiasm seems a shallow excitement, into this channel. Indignation and pity, a lofty sense of right, deep sympathy with the spiritual life of suffering nations, a consciousness of his own maturity, and larger force of intellect and of feeling—all these conjoined to lift the whole being of the poet into a nobler mood than it had yet attained.

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* Prose Works, vol. iii. pp. 268, 269.

From 1802 to 1815 the shocks of great events followed one another rapidly, and kept a-glow Wordsworth's heart and imagination. In the summer of 1802, upon a July morning, before London was awake, Wordsworth left the great city, and from the roof of the Dover coach looked at the gliding river and the sleeping houses as he passed on his way to the Continent. During the brief peace he had an opportunity of contrasting the condition of France under the Consulate, when Calais looked sombre upon Buonaparte's birthday, with her state in the prouder season of his youth, when the very "senselessness of joy" was sublime. The calm which followed the Peace of Amiens was the thunderous calm that goes before a storm. In the autumn months the strength of Wordsworth's soul lay couchant and brooding; his spirit was gathering up its forces; when his eye turned outward, he saw little at that moment in which to rejoice; the pettiness of life, alike though not equally in England and in France, the absence of high aims, heroic manners, and far-reaching ideas, oppressed him. Yet he did not really despond; within him lay a forefeeling of the great destiny which was due to his nation. He sank inwards from thought to thought, with no sadness in the nerves, no disposition to tears, no unconquerable sighs, yet with a melancholy in the soul, a steady remonstrance, and a high resolve.*

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* I apply to Wordsworth at this time words which he used in another connection. "Advice to the Young," Prose Works, vol. i. pp. 319, 320.

The declaration of war, and the threatened invasion of 1803, roused him to a spirit of more active patriotism:—

"No parleying now! in Britain is one breath."

Three years later the conquest of North Germany, that deadly blow which left England to maintain the struggle almost or altogether single-handed, only exalted Wordsworth's spirit of resolution:—

"'Tis well! from this day forward we shall know
That in ourselves our safety must be sought."

In 1808 the treacherous policy of Napoleon consummated itself when Ferdinand was forced to resign the crown of Spain, and the French troops entered Madrid to proclaim Joseph Buonaparte a king. Until this moment the dominant motive that sustained the war was a stern sense of duty; the highest and best state of moral feeling to which the most noble-minded among Englishmen could attain—except in rare moments of exaltation—was "a deliberate and preparatory fortitude, a sedate and stern melancholy, which had no sunshine, and was exhilarated only by the lightnings of indignation." But the rising of the Spaniards as a people seemed of a sudden to change the entire face of things. Out of the depth of disappointment and the sense of frustration which followed, Wordsworth thus, in memorable words, describes the change which was effected:—

"But from the moment of the rising of the people of the Pyrenean peninsula, there was a mighty change; we were instantaneously animated; and, from that moment, the contest assumed the dignity, which it is not in the power of anything but hope to bestow; and if I may dare to transfer language, prompted by a revelation of the state of being that admits not of decay or change, to the concerns and interests of our transitory planet, from that moment 'this corruptible put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality.' This sudden elevation was on no account more welcome, was by nothing more endeared than by the returning sense which accompanied it of inward liberty and choice, which gratified our moral yearnings, inasmuch as it would give henceforward to our actions as a people, an origination and direction unquestionably moral—as it was free—as it was manifestly in sympathy with the species—as it admitted therefore of fluctuations of generous feeling—of approbation and of complacency. We were intellectualized also in proportion ; we looked backward upon the records of the human race with pride, and instead of being afraid, we delighted to look forward into futurity. It was imagined that this new-born spirit of resistance, rising from the most sacred feelings of the human heart, would diffuse itself through many countries ; and not merely for the distant future, but for the present, hopes were entertained as bold as they were disinterested and generous."

The pamphlet on the Convention of Cintra is Wordsworth's loftiest, most passionate, most prophet-like utterance as a prose-writer. Although an occasional piece, its interest and importance are of an enduring kind. It may be classed in the small group of writings dealing with occasional incidents and events in their relation to what is everlasting and universal, at the head of which stands Milton's prophetic pamphlet, the sublime "Areopagitica." Wordsworth's "Convention of Cintra" takes a place in this group not far below the speech of Milton ; and Wordsworth's pamphlet is depressed to that position chiefly because, in its discussion of the details of the French surrender, is retained a larger quantity of the perishable matter of history. Considering the event from a military point of view, we can hardly be warranted in doubting that the decision in favour of the Convention, confirmed and justified as it is by the great military historian of the Peninsular War, was a sound and prudent decision. Wordsworth, however, wrote neither as a soldier nor as a mere politician, but with "the antipathies and sympathies, the loves and hatreds of a citizen—of a human being." The military profession cultivates an almost exclusive attention to the external, the material and mechanical side of public events, and a disregard of moral interests, a faintness of sympathy with the best feelings, a dimness of apprehension of the chief truths relating to the happiness and dignity of man in society. The practical statesman, skilled in seeing into the motives and managing the selfish passions of his followers, acquires "a promptness in looking through the most superficial part of the characters of those men, and this he mistakes for a knowledge of human kind." Of the wisdom which includes a recognition of the deeper emotions, the instincts and ardours of a people, the energy to dare and to achieve—at times almost miraculously brought into being—the delicacy of moral honour—in a word, of all that is, as it were, the higher function of the living body of society—men of routine, who manage the machine of the State, are either unaware or contemptuously sceptical.

Wordsworth's school of political wisdom did not lie amid a host of petty and conflicting self-interests, nor among factions which force men astray against their will:—

> "Not there; but in dark wood, and rocky cave,
> And hollow vale which foaming torrents fill
> With omnipresent murmur as they rave
> Down their steep beds, that never will be still."

Among such enduring, free, and passionate presences of nature there were seclusion and a refuge from motives of petty expediency, and arguments of formal, professional pedantry. Here Wordsworth could look into the life of things; here he could submit himself to the vast impalpable motives of justice, and of the deep fraternity of nations; he could pursue those trains of reasoning which originate from, and are addressed to, the universal spirit of man. His purpose was not merely, with the energy of a widely-ranging intellect, to use truth as a powerful tool in the hand, but "to infuse truth as a vital fluid in the heart." It was not knowledge merely which he wished to convey; but knowledge animated by the breath and life of appropriate feeling; it was not wisdom alone as a possession, but wisdom as a power. Whether men would listen to him or not, did not in the first instance concern Wordsworth. When the singing-robe or the prophetic mantle is on, a man does not peer about anxiously for auditors. The writer felt that he had a work to do, and he was straitened until that work should be accomplished; he uttered his prophecy as the night wind sings to men who sleep or revel, or toil at the ledger, and do not hear; only one and another wakeful and apprehensive may attend to the dirge or the promise as it passes by; he that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Wordsworth's style in this pamphlet is singularly living and organic. With the mechanism of sentence-constructing he did not ever trouble himself to make acquaintance, although he had a full sense of the importance of right workmanship in verse. Each sentence here lives and grows before the reader; its development is like a vital process of nature, and the force from which it originates not is speedily expended. "Language," Wordsworth has said elsewhere, "if it do not uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation, or the air we breathe, is a counter-spirit unremittingly and noiselessly at work, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and to dissolve." Here the thought and feeling are not crystal-like with sharp, clear edges; rather they saturate the language which sustains them as a solvent, and which conveys them to us in such a way that they at once enter into the vital action of the mind. Passages of close inquiry into facts occur, but these are the least permanently interesting portions of the pamphlet. At times the progress of ideas seems to be slow, and the passion studiously deliberate; but the sweep of mind is wide and comprehensive, and the motion seems slow partly because it is high up, and uninterrupted by the recurring incidents which mark and measure the advance of thought or feeling upon a lower level; justice and indignation, sorrow and hope, bear the thought which soars through large spaces of the sky; the motion, when it seems least rapid, is like that of a broad-winged bird which sails far aloft, and only at long intervals utters a cry.

It is not necessary to retrace the arguments by which Wordsworth attempts to justify the popular indignation against the Convention and its authors. Whether a defeated French army should have been permitted to depart to France with its arms, its baggage, and its plunder, or not, is a question which we can be content to leave unanswered. What loses none of its importance and power is the noble conception of national well-being which this pamphlet displays, its comprehension of the spiritual life of a people, its recognition of the superior might of moral over material forces, its lofty and masculine devotion to justice, its sympathy, deep, tender, and impassioned, with the varying moods of hope, resolution, fortitude, rage, despair, of an afflicted land. One or two passages may be selected from the pamphlet, but the whole has an organic unity, and any passage severed from the rest, and thrust forward as a specimen, seems in a measure denaturalised, and deprived of its vital function.

Riddance of the French not the object of the war.—"From these impulses, then, our brethren of the Peninsula had risen; they could have risen from no other. By these energies, and by such others as (under judicious encouragement) would naturally grow out of and unite with these, the multitudes, who have risen, stand; and if they desert them, must fall. Riddance, mere riddance—safety, mere safety, are objects far too defined, too inert and passive in their own nature to have ability either to rouse or to sustain. They win not the mind by any attraction of grandeur or sublime delight, either in effort or in endurance; for the mind gains consciousness of its strength to undergo only by exercise among materials which admit the impression of its power; which grow under it, which bend under it, which resist, which change under its influence, which alter either through its might or in its presence, by it or before it. These, during times of tranquillity, are the objects with which, in the studious walks of sequestered life, genius most loves to hold intercourse; by which it is reared and supported; these are the qualities in action and in object, in image, in thought, and in feeling, from communion with which proceeds originally all that is creative in art or science, and all that is magnanimous in virtue. Despair thinks of *safety*, and hath no purpose; fear thinks of safety, despondency looks the same way; but these passions are far too selfish, and therefore too blind, to reach the thing at which they aim, even when there is in them sufficient dignity to have an aim. All courage is a projection from ourselves; however shortlived, it is a motion of hope. But these thoughts bind too closely to the present and to the past, that is, to the self which is or has been. Whereas the vigour of the human soul is from without and from futurity, in breaking down limit, and losing and forgetting herself in the sensation and image of Country and of the human race; and when she returns and is most restricted and confined, her dignity consists in the contemplation of a better and more exalted being, which, though proceeding from herself, she loves and is devoted to as to another."

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Vox Populi.—"For, when the people speaks loudly, it is from being strongly possessed either by the Godhead or the Demon; and he, who cannot discover the true spirit from the false, hath no ear for profitable communion. But in all that regarded the destinies of Spain, and her own as connected with them, the voice of Britain had the unquestionable sound of inspiration. If the gentle passions of pity, love, and gratitude be porches of the temple; if the sentiments of admiration and rivalry be pillars upon which the structure is sustained; if lastly, hatred and anger and vengeance, be steps, which, by a mystery of nature, lead to the House of Sanctity; then it was manifest to what power the edifice was consecrated; and that the voice within was of holiness and truth."

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Arts of Peace under a Despotism.—"Now commerce, manufactures, agriculture, and all the peaceful arts, are of the nature of virtues or intellectual powers: they cannot be given; they cannot be stuck in here and there; they must spring up; they must grow of themselves; they may be encouraged; they thrive better with encouragement and delight in it; but the obligation must have bounds nicely defined; for they are delicate, proud, and independent. But a tyrant has no joy in anything which is endued with such excellence; he sickens at the sight of it; he turns away from it as an insult to his own attributes."

Wordsworth's political writings, subsequent to the year 1815, are of inferior interest. A part of their effect is that of enabling us to stand away from Wordsworth, clear of his shadow, that we may receive his influence at an independent point of vision of our own. After the peace and the restoration of Louis XVIII., came the dreary age of politics, the time of the Holy Alliance and the Regency. Wordsworth's nature, which had been kept fervent by the impression of great events during the war with France, now inevitably in a certain measure cooled, and hardened as it cooled. It has been shown that his position as teacher of new spiritual truths condemned him to hostility towards the ideas inherited from the eighteenth century, among which may be found the chief factors of modern politics, as far as modern politics are other than stationary or retrogressive. Wordsworth's patriotic enthusiasm on behalf of England, and the English nation and polity, as soon as the ardour kindled and kept alive by the struggle with France had died out, left behind it in his nature a certain deposit of the grey ash of English conservatism. And a plea in favour of Wordsworth's conservatism, as that of a maintainer of things spiritual against the grosser interests of life, may be urged if we consider some of the hard and coarse aspects of the Whiggism of his time, if we reflect upon the exaggerated estimates formed of salvation by "useful knowledge," the pushing upward by strength and shift of the middle class for ascendancy, the apparent substitution in politics of interests in place of ideas, the general devotion to material comfort, the pride in mechanic arts, the hard and shallow criticism of literature uttered by the chief organ of Whiggism.

We have conspicuous instances in our own day of chivalrous and ardent natures, which, being bewildered by the yet unorganized civilisation of a democratic period, for want of the patience of faith and hope, the enduringness of nerve needed for sane and continuous action, fling themselves into a worship of the

Past, a worship blind to *its* vaster selfishness and materialisms, or waste their chivalry in schemes for the sudden attainment of a miniature Utopia. Such was not Wordsworth's case. It needs less of insight and imaginative ardour to discover the elements of noble spiritual life in the democracy than in the *bourgeoisie.* Henry Crabb Robinson has recorded that he once heard Wordsworth say, half in joke, half in earnest, "I have no respect whatever for Whigs, but I have a great deal of the Chartist in me." This is literally true. Wordsworth could at no time have become a Whig politician, whose creed must be written in useful prose, not in harmonious song; but had the period of Wordsworth's youth, when a spring-like courage and animation flooded his being, fallen in with the days of the Chartist movement, one can hardly doubt that he would have conceived it to be his special mission to organize the aspirations of the working classes around great ideas, and thus to spiritualise the democracy.

The descent from the pamphlet on the Convention of Cintra, to the Two Addresses to the Freeholders of Westmoreland (1818), is steep and sudden. The addresses were written to oppose the candidature of Brougham, and aid in securing the return to Parliament of a member of the House of Lowther. The long years of hostility to France and loyalty to England have manifestly told upon Wordsworth, and it would require a recession into very broad and abstract doctrines indeed to discover that his principles are now the same with those which he held in 1793. His sympathy with the earlier stages of the French Revolution, which survived until at least the date of the "Cintra" pamphlet, has now ceased to exist; his condemnation of the war of England against the Republic. also distinctly declared in 1808, has now changed into approval. The constitution which Bishop Watson has been reproved for admiring overmuch is now "the happy and glorious Constitution, in Church and State, which we have inherited from our Ancestors." The ideal to which his imagination renders tribute is not now the fierce and fair Republic, but "our inestimable Church Establishment." In 1793 Wordsworth wrote, "If you should lament the sad reverse by which the hero of the Necklace has been divested of about 1,300,000 livres of annual revenue, you may find some consolation, that a part of this prodigious mass of riches has gone to preserve from famine some thousands of curés, who were pining in villages unobserved by Courts." In 1818 he wrote, "Places, Pensions, and formidable things, if you like! but far better these, with our King and Constitution, with our quiet firesides and flourishing fields, than proscription and confiscation without them!" Wordsworth had indeed lost courage, as he confesses, when, in the prospect of each possible change, visions of proscription and confiscations rose before him.

The axioms of faith, of hope, of sacred daring, had been set forth in his earlier writings, and formed the points of departure in his trains of impassioned reasoning; now their place is taken by axioms of prudence, of caution, of distrust. In Wordsworth's new creed there was much that was noble, for, like Burke, he was always an extraordinary, not an ordinary Conservative in politics; but one thing that creed necessarily wanted—the power of impulsion, the power of initiating and supporting a steadfast and generous advance. And, as might be anticipated, from this period onward a decline is observable also in the poetry of Wordsworth. He entered into no novel states of feeling; he was not precisely exhausting an earlier accumulation of power, but he was with feebler energy and insight repeating processes which had at one time been so admirably productive. According to the Wordsworthian method in poetry, a certain emanation, partly given by the object, partly by the poet's mind, a *tertium quid* which is neither mind nor object, but an aspect or an influence partaking of both, becomes the subject of song. Wordsworth had now acquired a power of applying this method at will to any topic, and the application of this contemplative method had grown into a habit, only at irregular times inspired by new and vivid emotion, or fed by a fresh, quick outwelling of thought. Thus one is compelled to state the main fact. But it is also true that in Wordsworth's poetry his earlier self, though encumbered by the growth of his later personality, was not extinct. To one who does not wholly fail in sympathy with Wordsworth's genius, while the fading of spiritual light from his poetry is manifest, a mild and equable splendour remains as in the western sky at sunset; places still alive and instinct with intense glory may be discerned, and there are mysterious flushings and brightenings at times; therefore we are unable to withdraw our eyes, though momently we may note how quiescence comes, and the repose which will be long.

1875.

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

THERE are two kinds of written lives of men which deserve to remain amongst us as enduring and faithful monuments. There is the rare and fortunate work of genius; this in its origin is related to imagination and creative power as closely as to judgment and observation; we can hardly pronounce whether it be the child of Memory, or of her daughters, the Muses, for it is at once a perfect work of art and an infallible piece of history. It portrays the man in few lines or many, but in lines each one indispensable and each characteristic; it may seem to tell little, yet in fact it tells all; from such a biographer no secrets are withholden, nor does he need many diaries, letters, and reminiscences of friends; he knows as much about the man he undertakes to speak of as Shakspere knew about Hamlet, or Titian about his magnificoes—that is, everything. Mr Carlyle's Life of Sterling was perhaps the last volume placed on the narrow shelf containing the biographies in all languages which belong to this class.

But there is also what we could ill lose, the work of knowledge, and labour, and patience, and zeal, and studious discrimination, and enforced impartiality. In such a portrait the lines *must* be many, and the more numerous they are (provided that they are not entirely insignificant), the better the portrait grows: but some characteristic lines may come in by chance, and even in the end we can scarcely be quite sure that some are not forgotten. As we read the book we gradually form such an acquaintance with the man as we should were we introduced to his familiar circle in real life, seeing him in various circumstances, in various attitudes, in various moods of mind; distracted and perhaps misled by some things that are accidental and superficial, and little related to character, but discovering much that is permanent and structural, until at last we speak of the man as an old acquaintance, and declare that we know him well. It is true it may happen that we never know him perfectly.

To this second class of Biographies belongs the life which we possess of Landor. The information supplied by Forster's work is full, precise, and trustworthy; great pains were taken to make the presentation of character complete; there is no approach to tampering with facts through an unwise zeal of friendship; the biographer, allowance being made for some necessary reserves, before all else endeavoured to be truthful, and because entirely just, he felt that in treating of such a man as Landor generosity is a part of justice. At the same time it must be confessed that the work to which we must turn for information about the events of Landor's life is far from being one of the rare and fortunate works of genius.

The character of Landor is one which, in consequence of the prominent and disproportioned development of some of its elements, appears from a distance and at first sight simple and easy to comprehend, but which as we approach it and contemplate it for a longer time grows in complexity, growing, also, not a little in interest. The first thing we are tempted to say of him (and with some explanatory clauses added, we say it to the last) is, that he was emphatically an *uncivilized* man. If, as Hobbes believed, the state of nature is a state of warfare, then Landor all his life through was not far from the perfect state of nature. Certainly, whatever we may think of the theory of Hobbes, we cannot doubt that it is the work of every part of our organised social and political life to give lessons—lessons often enforced with a bitter rod—to the passions and will of the individual, and to reclaim them from disorders into which they may happen to run. The child quickly discovers that cries, kicks, and plunges (at least under certain circumstances) are opposed by laws which declare them treasonable to society—laws enforced by formidable sanctions—and in due time he ceases to plunge, and kick, and cry. A similar training goes on through later years until from the brute will a beautiful and intelligent force is fashioned. But Landor's will, impelled as it often was by generous instincts and high passions, was yet uncultivated, unreclaimed, and, indeed, irreclaimable. Any one who upon the model of Burton's book on Melancholy should undertake to write the Anatomy of Irascibility, would find illustrations of quarrels in almost every relation of human life in the biography of Landor.

It is surely a paradox deserving to be signalised, that a supreme artist—one, therefore, bound to the habitual service of Joy—should at the same time be an insensate waster and destroyer of the happiness of men—his own happiness and that of others. But the cruel lot of such a man as Landor in our modern time is that society proves too strong for him, contracts within narrow bounds the sphere of his turbulent impetuosity, and commonly introduces some formal or vulgar elements into his action—attorneys' letters, legal delays, considerations of shillings and pence, and such like, which spoil its splendour even for his own imagination. If Hyperion, or any most beautiful Titan, were to pick a quarrel with some of the petty human race in Fleet Street or Cheapside, the metropolitan police would in the end get him on the ground, and he would present a sorry appearance on his way to Bridewell, with grim disfigured feature, between Policeman A and Policeman X. And such is the appearance which Landor too often presents. In every instance where the effects of his violent temper extended beyond the domestic circle, the world proved too strong for him—the crowd of little people closed around the one Titanic man, and threw him; rage and mortification followed, and lesson after lesson of experience was wasted upon his intractable will. These contests, which embittered so many days of youth, manhood, and old age, were for the most part quite unheroic, and borrow any interest they possess from the disproportioned amount of passion and energy which Landor threw into them; they resulted in suffering to himself which was sheer torture, incapable of transmutation into virtue or into song. When De Quincey, moving in his dim, rich border-land between rhetoric and poetry, speaks with reference to Landor of "the fiery radiations of a human spirit, built by nature to animate a leader in storms, a martyr, a national reformer, an arch-rebel, as circumstances might dictate," he seizes finely on the possibilities of greatness which lay in nearly all Landor's outbreaks of temper both in his books and in his life; but too often the "fiery radiations" in his life had much of their brightness, and all their beauty, blurred by their transit through a gross medium of circumstances.

An acute observer, Miss Martineau, expressed her opinion that the contempt and bitterness of spirit by which Landor was best known to the multitude, were qualities of *style* rather than of soul—meaning by this, not literary style only, but style of expression by life and act as well as by the pen. But in life as in art, is not style the true rendering of soul into form, and related to the mind of the man, as it is to that of the artist, in other and far closer ways than is the brute matter which he fashions with his hands? Style is definable as the outcome of the habitual formative tendencies, and these in a great creative nature are always very numerous. The truth which underlies Miss Martineau's remark seems to be that contempt and bitterness, as far as they are the characteristics of Landor's deeds and words, are the products of many causes, and that, as primitive or isolated characteristics of soul, they had no place in him. There was nothing malignant—no sharp corrosiveness, no flavour of acrid weeds, and no heavy, poisonous sweetness in the fountains of Landor's thought and passions; but the waters were impetuous, and when they seemed to sleep in happiest quiet, ran swiftly, ready to fling themselves over rock or precipice, should such be near;

they never could follow the channels prepared for less wilful streams to irrigate the pasture-lands and turn the mill-wheels of complacent men, and their wayward bounty was sudden, splendid, and profuse.

The strifes in which so much of Landor's life took form, were then the result of no definite pernicious tendencies of his nature, but of many qualities of soul, of which none were malignant, and some were altogether noble. Altogether noble was the constitutional sensitiveness of his passions, though it would have been a gain if he could have learnt to protect himself at times against the consequences of this sensitiveness. Noble too in its capacity for high uses, if inevitably subject to frequent abuse, was the amplifying power by which a hint of love or of insult assumed gigantic proportions in his imagination—

> "Minds that have nothing to confer
> Find little to perceive,"

and often this amplifying power fulfils the function of that wiser insight which discovers below the poor appearances of things their hidden greatness, beauty, and terror. There was something excellent also in the susceptibility of Landor's nature to the potency of a single idea or emotion paramount for the time. We read in a letter written to his sister when he was over fifty years of age, "Arnold [Landor's son] had had a fever a few days before [I left Florence], and I would not go until his physician told me he was convalescent. Not receiving any letter at Naples, I was almost mad, for I fancied his illness had returned. I hesitated between drowning myself and going post back." No one whose smile is not a wrinkle of the face, signifying emptiness of soul, will smile at this, for he will know that susceptibility to such frenzy of love and anxiety, co-existing with high intellectual powers, belongs only to natures greatly endowed with rich and dangerous faculties.

These various attributes of mind, it will be perceived, left Landor a prey to circumstances. If the occasion of his burst of passion was something luckily seen in a glance of second thoughts to be trivial or unrelated to his pride, his affections, or his strenuous sense of justice, he would lead the merriment against himself by that long loud laugh which his friends so well remember, "hardly less," says Forster, "than leonine, higher and higher would peal go after peal, in continuous and increasing volleys until regions of sound were reached very far beyond ordinary human lungs." But often his pride came to give permanence to the results of his sensitiveness. Then a warfare was entered upon, in which Landor lavished a stately scorn upon his opponent, and underwent his predestined defeat. Add to these sources of trouble the absolute submergence of his judgment when his passions were in storm. He had then abundant justice of the heart, and in fact very often had the balance of right upon his side, but of justice of the intellect he had none. With a feminine eagerness for extremes he arrayed angels of light upon one side of the cause in which he was engaged—his own or his friends' side—against fiends of darkness on the other, and masculine pride fortified his understanding against any chance incursion of common sense.

The truth is, Landor was born three centuries too late. He ought to have been a man of the Italian Renaissance —a contemporary of Cellini, whom in some points he strikingly resembles. Landor, indeed, in other particulars was notably and nobly unlike Cellini. He had no jealousy of rival artists; there was nothing savage in his temperament; antiquity was nursing mother of his intellect as well as of his imagination, and therefore his intellect was free from the taint of superstition which Catholicism carried into Cellini's blood, and his imagination itself was controlled to truer grace and beauty. On the other hand, Cellini's nature, reared in a ruder moral climate, was more robust in action and in suffering than Landor's; he had the privilege of possessing a mode for the relief of overcharged feelings—easy, sudden, and faultless—in the dagger and the sword; and his life was rich in varied and splendid circumstance both of pleasure and of pain. But Landor and Cellini resembled one another in the sensitiveness of their emotions; in the sudden possession of their whole being by a predominant feeling or thought; in their boundless self-confidence, and readiness to give that self-confidence expression; in the energy, passion, and extreme desire with which they worked as artists; and, while accomplishing small works of art perfectly, both had daring to achieve things great and faulty. A medal or vase of Cellini's is not more fairly designed and more truly wrought than a "Hellenic" by Landor, and over against the "Perseus" we set "Count Julian."

But Landor is distinguished from Cellini, and such men as surrounded Cellini, especially by the gracious sweetness of his disposition and manners when causes of irritation, real and imaginary, were absent. A marked peculiarity of his genius, was the union with its strength of a most uncommon gentleness, and in the personal ways of the man this was equally manifest. Leigh Hunt, after having seen Landor in Italy, "endeavoured to convey the impression produced by so much vehemence of nature, joined to such extraordinary delicacy of imagination, by likening him to a stormy mountain pine that should produce lilies." "I never saw anything but the greatest gentleness and courtesy in him," records Mr Kirkup, "especially to women. He was chivalresque of the old school." Emerson had inferred from Landor's books, or magnified from some anecdotes, an impression of Achillean wrath—an untamable petulance. He found him "noble and courteous," "the most patient and gentle of hosts." In extreme old age, and with much in the recent past to make his temper bitter or morose, he visited at Siena the American sculptor, Mr Story; "Landor," wrote Mr Browning, who, by the generous and prompt service rendered about this time to the distressed old man, has added much to the debt all Englishmen owe him, "Landor has to-day completed a three weeks' stay with the Storys. They declare most emphatically that a more considerate, gentle, easily satisfied guest never entered their house. They declare his visit has been an unalloyed delight to them."

It has seemed worth while to adduce testimony, proving (what those who knew him personally do not require to have proved) that, ordinarily, Landor was other than he seemed when an access of indignation or scorn possessed his heart and brain. This gentler side of his character shows itself in many little things which signify much—his love of flowers, and birds, and dumb creatures of every kind, and of children, who all loved him. "My heart is tender. I am fond of children, and of talking childishly. I hate to travel even two stages. Never without a pang do I leave the house where I was born. Even a short stay attaches me to any place." And in reply to "Arnold's first letter," found treasured among the old man's papers after his death,—a letter hoping after the manner of little boys in roundhand that his dearest papa is quite well, sending ten thousand kisses, and wishing him to come back again with all his heart,—the father's letter closes with the following: "Tell my sweet Julia that, if I see twenty little girls, I will not romp with any of them before I romp with her; and kiss your two dear brothers for me. You must always love them as much as I love you, and you must teach them how to be good boys, which I cannot do as well as you can. God preserve and bless you, my own Arnold. My heart beats as if it would fly to you, my own fierce creature. We shall very soon meet."

Birds and flowers were a dear delight to him; but at first (for afterwards, in his Italian garden, it was otherwise) he seems to have loved them, not with that individualising affection to which each flower and haunt of flowers is known and cherished, and with which there are preferences, peculiar regards, and chosen types, as it were, of floral character; rather, he surveyed as an aristocrat in the world of ideas and of beauty this humble democracy of the fields in the mass and multitude—loving them as a prince might love his people, yet recognising in them what is recognisable also in the people, something of divine. The following, written from his recently-purchased property in Wales to Southey, will not consent to remain unquoted, and its close is surely worthy of a place in that beautiful Imaginary Conversation (Landor's favourite of all the conversations) between Epicurus and his fair disciples: "I have made a discovery, which is that there are both nightingales and glow-worms in my valley. I would give two or three thousand pounds less for a place that was without them. I hardly know one flower from another, but it appears to me that here is an infinite variety. The ground is of so various a nature and of such different elevations that this might be expected. I love these beautiful and peaceful tribes, and wish I was better acquainted with them. They always meet one in the same place, at the same season; and years have no more effect on their placid countenances than on so many of the most favoured gods." This advocate of tyrannicide, this fire-eater, who could hardly be restrained from sending a challenge to Lord John Russell on the occasion of some fancied slight to a *possible* kinsman of three centuries since, this exile of Rugby, and Oxford, and England, records at the age of fifty-five that he had never in his life taken a bird's nest, though he had found many, and trembles lest any gluttonous Italian should deprive him of his cuckoo. He had more sympathy with St. Francis, who called birds and quadrupeds his brothers and sisters, than with lovers of field sports. "It is hard to take away what we cannot give; and life is a pleasant thing, at least to birds. No doubt the young ones say tender things one to another, and even the old ones do not dream of death."

This union of gentleness with impetuosity, vehemence, and explosive wrath, was only one of the many paradoxes in the character of Landor. Some of these indeed are very superficial paradoxes. Thus when Landor, again and again, with laboured variety of image and epithet, expressed his contempt of the public distributors of literary praise and his indifference to their awards, we are well aware that real indifference and contempt do not so earnestly concern themselves to prove their own existence. We know that the opinions of his critics *did* interest his feelings, if not his intellect, and that no more than truth was acknowledged when he wrote to Southey, "I confess to you if even foolish men had read 'Gebir' I should have continued to write poetry. There is something of summer in the hum of insects." Less on the surface, but still easy to understand, was the co-existence in Landor of unbounded self-confidence, announced to his critics in absurd challenges to write anything as good as his *worst* dialogues or poems, and a kind of bashful self-distrust. It was not distrust of his merits, but of his power of making men perceive and acknowledge them. At Rugby and Oxford, where, if wilful, he was studious and an excellent Latin scholar, he entered into no competition with his fellows. When he had completed some important work, for which he felt assured of immortality, he would transfer it with a nervous bashfulness to a friend to bring before the public. "No author, living or dead," he said, "kept himself so deeply in the shade through every season of life;" and in a certain sense there was truth in this.

Paradoxical, too, was the union of extreme sensibility and a faculty for ingenious self-torment with the power of resolutely turning away from pain, or eluding it when it was in pursuit of him. After periods of distressing excitement in real life he filled up the tempestuous vacancy of the soul with occupations of the inner life and duties to the children of his imagination; from harsh experience he turned to Art, and found her "a solitude, a refuge, a delight." Times when other men would be incapacitated by tremulous hand or throbbing brow for pure and free imagining and delicate manipulation, were precisely the productive periods with Landor. Not that he transmuted his dross of life into gold of art, or taught in song what he had learnt in suffering; rather, he would listen to no lessons of suffering, but escaped from them into the arms of joy. Among these apparent inconsistencies of Landor's character that one is especially noteworthy which is indicated by the presence of so much disorder and disproportion in his conduct of life (if conduct it can be called), and in the opinions and sentiments expressed in not a little of what he wrote, and the presence of so much order, proportion, and harmony in the form of his artistic products —so much austere strength in some, so much beauty in others, which would be recognised as severe if it were not so absolutely beautiful. And to add one other paradox—notwithstanding all the unhappy contests in which he was engaged, and his confession (far from the truth of the case) that his temper was the worst beyond comparison that ever man was cursed with, there can be little doubt he believed himself a man of peace, considered that warfare had always been forced upon him by outrages to himself or to others, which he was bound to repel, and applied with sincerity to himself his noble quatrain which serves as motto to "Last Fruits off an Old Tree:"—

> "I strove with none, for none was worth my strife;
> Nature I loved, and, next to Nature, Art;
> I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
> It sinks, and I am ready to depart."

Landor's periods of productive energy being identical with periods of painful pressure of events in actual life from which he sought relief, it was natural that he should surrender himself unconditionally to the pleasurable excitement of his imagination. This, however, was but the least cause of the complete possession in which the creatures of his brain held him, while they were yet unabandoned to the world, and had no other lover than himself on whom to bestow their sweetness and their strength. In his passionate power of imaginative vision, which at once embraced the whole and its details, in the unrestrained sensibility excited by these children of his dreams, and his pride—a disinterested pride—in their beauty and grace and vigour Landor strikingly resembled some of the great men of the Renaissance. The ardour with which he worked carried him rapidly over difficulties. His earliest poems reiterate the music of Pope; the couplets are upborne on wings which move in regular and even libration, as if by clockwork. But in a surprisingly short time he had delivered himself from the influence of Pope, received the teaching of the Greek tragic poets, discovered and admired in Pindar his "proud complacency and scornful strength," studied profoundly under Milton the secrets of poetical counterpoint, and formed a style of his own, thoroughly original, and distinguished by its restrained power and vigorous purity. Thus in his twentieth year "Gebir" was written. It is only ardour that achieves such rapid conquests.

Once engaged by a subject, he wrote with speed. In forty hours a thousand lines of "Count Julian" were produced, and Southey observed truly that Landor's manner involved so much thought (excess of meaning being its fault), that the same number of lines must have cost thrice as much expense of passion and of the reasoning faculty to him as they would to Southey himself. "Andrea of Hungary" was conceived, planned, and executed in thirteen days; it was followed in a fortnight by "Giovanna of Naples," and this was the work of a man over sixty years of age. "The worst of it is," he writes, "in anything dramatic, such is the rapidity of passion, the words escape before they can be taken down. If you lose one, you lose the tone of the person, and never can recover it. Desperation! And the act is gone too." After long walks, during which he brought before himself the various characters of his greatest drama, the very tones of their voices, their forms and complexions and steps, he would write for four or five hours. "In the daytime I laboured, and at night unburdened my soul, shedding many tears." "I shed a great many tears as often as I attempted the 'Tiberius'" (one of the "Imaginary Conversations"); and of the same Dialogue he writes:—"It is here, among the rocks of the torrent Emo, that I found my Vipsania on the 5th of October. The hand that conducted her to Tiberius felt itself as strong almost as that which led Alcestis to her husband. It has, however, so shaken me at last that the least thing affects me violently, my ear particularly."

How his friend Southey could write two poems at a time was inconceivable to Landor; he himself was unable to divide his passions and affections. "When I write a poem, my heart and all my feelings are upon it. I never commit adultery with another, and high poems will not admit flirtation." With some of his characters he had lived for two or three years before he published the poem which contained them. "Count Julian" was left off twice because the Count and his daughter each had said things which other personages might say. The visible result in the case of Landor's work, moreover, represents very inadequately the cost of production. Of what was actually written in many cases, the published poem is hardly more than half. "What loads I carted off from 'Gebir,'" he exclaimed, "in order to give it proportion, yet nearly all would have liked it better with incorrectness;" and of "Andrea of Hungary" he wrote, "I have weeded out and weeded out, and have rejected as much as would furnish any friend for another piece—as good as this."

Having brought his work to its close with unusual rapidity, which alone with Landor ensured excellence, he was then fated to undergo in its keenest form the happy persecution of words and phrases, paragraphs and lines which demanded correction. A few lines apparently unimportant in "Count Julian" it cost him a day each on an average to alter. "All bad poets," Landor has said, "admire all that they write. A true one never suspects a passage of his own to be imperfect without cause. His suspicions are of the nature of conscience." A few touches, suggested by some casual observations in a letter from Southey, were introduced as an after-thought into the noble dialogue between the Ciceros: "I should have passed many sleepless nights," wrote Landor, "at the faultiness of my work if I had omitted them." Sleepless nights, when engaged late in life with the republication of a volume of Latin poems and inscriptions, he did actually pass, tortured by a Satanic suggestion (unquestionably it came from the father of lies) that he had been guilty of a false quantity in treating as short the first vowel of the word *flagrans*; one night had gone by in the exciting hopes and disappointments of various emendations; on the second night he lay again with open eyes until as the clock struck four he sprang out of bed repeating a line of Virgil's first "Georgic," which, with its final "ille flăgranti," brought the much-desired relief: there and then in the winter morning (Landor at this time was upwards of seventy) he hurried to write a communication of his satisfactory solution of the difficulty to Forster, who was seeing the volume through the press. "He might as well have waited till daybreak," continues the biographer, "for he gained nothing by so sacrificing rest; but it was his old impetuous way."

It remains to be added, with respect to the manner in which Landor's works were produced, that, like Wordsworth's, much of his poetry came into being in the open air, though, unlike Wordsworth, Landor could not remember his own verses, and found it necessary to transcribe them from his brain at once. So also he was accustomed to assemble and arrange the thoughts and sentences of his prose Dialogues, uttering them aloud, while wandering amongst the hills at Fiesole. There is reason to believe that this method of open-air creation is favourable to the soundness and ripeness of form in the structure alike of prose and verse. Sentences which, threatening to come to the birth, are delivered with the easy maieutic aids of pen and paper are too often seven-months' children which no after nursing or doctoring can make other than puny and frail. A thought or period of verse or prose which as yet has not acquired the self-resumed sharpness of individuality given by external existence, is subject to the brooding power of mind, and secretly grows and is enriched in ways we know not of. What has gone before, held by strong retention in the plastic imagination, draws towards it what comes after, and a true community of sentences or verses (far removed from the formal pen-and-ink junctions and transitions which affect chiefly the eye or the surface of the tympanum) is naturally brought about.

Of Landor's works there is an obvious first thing to say, namely, that they belong to that class of writings which are not popular, and hardly can become so, while at the same time they captivate or compel to admiration many of the highest minds: the people reject them, but an aristocracy of genius and of intelligence record suffrages in their favour. Landor certainly, in the world of letters as in the world of politics, was with deliberate purpose no democrat. He detested the most democratical nation of Europe—the French. He detested the democracy of America. His ideal of government closely resembled that of the man, whom perhaps of all others he reverenced most profoundly—Milton; it was a republic, but a republic ruled by an oligarchy comprising the highest wisdom, virtue, and genius of the nation.

Passionately Landor desired liberty for the peoples; sacred wrath seized him at the sight of their oppressors and betrayers; in religion all his sympathies went with the movements which were essentially popular; the gentle and virtuous Wesley,* and the temperance preacher, Father Mathew, seemed to him like the earlier apostles re-arisen, working marvels in the hearts of multitudes. But the liberty he desired was a strenuous enforcement of the highest powers and means of society to the highest ends, no indulged wallowing-in-the-mire of a loose, unwieldy, and bewildered democracy. He loved the people and sympathised with every bright enthusiastic aspiration towards freedom. Garibaldi, Mazzini, Kossuth were amongst his heroes; but it can hardly be doubted that, dominated by his antique political ideal, he really failed to comprehend or live in harmony with the tendencies of the modern world. Landor loved the people, but for the most part he loved them as he did the peaceful tribes of flowers, as one inevitably above them, who yet found something infinitely attaching and pathetic in the simplicity of their wiser joys, and in the sacredness of their human sorrows. Opas, Metropolitan of Seville, pleads with Count Julian against his resolution to bring the miseries of war upon his country :—

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* So conceived by Landor; described by Mr Leslie Stephen as "a human game-cock."

> "If only warlike spirits were evoked
> By the war-demon, I would not complain,
> Or dissolute and discontented men ;
> But wherefore hurry down into the square
> The neighbourly, saluting, warm-clad race,
> Who would not injure us, and cannot serve ;
> Who, from their short and measured slumber risen,
> In the faint sunshine of their balconies,
> With a half-legend of a martyrdom
> And some weak wine and withered grapes before them,
> Note by their foot the wheel of melody
> That catches and rolls on the Sabbath dance.
> To drag the steady prop from failing age,
> Break the young stem that fondness twines around,
> Widen the solitude of lonely sighs,
> And scatter to the broad bleak wastes of day
> The ruins and the phantoms that replied,
> Ne'er be it thine."

Landor, then, if he belonged to the republic of letters, never, as has been said, wished that republic to become a democracy. If the number of those who know his works as they ought to be known might easily be counted, and if few know anything of his noble dramatic trilogy, still Landor cannot be accounted unfortunate in his readers. Shelley, from his college days to the close of his life, was a passionate admirer of "Gebir," and at times was possessed by it in a way from which there was no rescue or escape. Wordsworth confessed that Landor was the poet who had written verses "of which he would rather have been the author, than of any produced in our time." Lamb (Crabb Robinson relates) was always turning to "Gebir" for things that haunted him, and declared that only two men could have been author of the "Examination of Shakspeare,"—he who wrote it, and the man it was written on. Julius Hare stated of the Collected Works that they seemed to him to contain more and more various beauty than any collection of the writings of any English author since Shakspeare. Of the "Pentameron" Mrs Browning said that, if it were not for the necessity of getting through a book, some of the pages are too delicious to turn over; and of "Pericles and Aspasia," that, if he had written only this, it would have shown him to be "of all living writers the most unconventional in thought and word, the most classical because the freest from mere classicalism, the most Greek because pre-eminently and purely English." Mr Carlyle, speaking of a Dialogue which appeared in *Fraser's Magazine* in Landor's eighty-first year, asks characteristically, "Do you think the grand old Pagan wrote that piece just now? The sound of it is like the ring of Roman swords on the helmets of barbarians. An unsubduable old Roman!" The "Imaginary Conversations" were for twenty years the companion of Emerson, and when he visited Europe, hoping to see the faces of three or four writers, one of the three or four was its author. It will not perhaps seem much to men of this generation, though Landor highly esteemed the honour, that to him Southey dedicated his "Kehama," and James his "Attila:" two other dedications will now be supposed to have conferred a higher distinction,—that in which the author of

"Luria" inscribed to him his noblest drama, and that which Mr Swinburne prefixed to "Atalanta in Calydon;" nor may we forget the further homage the young singer of England paid to the venerable man not long before his death :—

> "I came as one whose thoughts half linger,
> Half run before ;
> The youngest to the oldest singer
> That England bore.
>
> I found him whom I shall not find
> 'Till all grief end,
> In holiest age our mightiest mind,
> Father and friend."

With such readers Landor might well be content, and he did not expect to be read by a multitude. "I have no reason to complain, and never did. I found my company in a hot-house warmed with steam, and conducted them to my dining-room through a cold corridor, with nothing but a few old statues in it from one end to the other, and they could not read the Greek names on the plinth, which made them hate the features above it." This is admirable, but it only approaches, and does not accurately put the finger on the causes of Landor's want of popularity. It was not merely or chiefly because the substance or subject of so much of what he wrote was classical that the people would not read his writings; it was rather because he was essentially classical in his feeling with respect to form, and also because he was essentially classical in the sphere through which his thoughts and feelings expatiated, and in the limitations of his mind.

Landor himself might have objected to being styled *classical;* he disliked these divisions of poets into schools, and held that there is only one school, the universe, and one only school-mistress, Nature. And truly, after fifty years' ringing of changes on the words "classical" and "romantic," criticism begins to find their reiterated tinkle somewhat of a sleep-compelling sound. Yet the distinction is an obviously just and important one. Nature is indeed the teacher of all true poets, but, like a wise teacher, she does not put all scholars through the same course of study, and her instruction accordingly in different scholars bears different, yet in each case appropriate fruits; in some, exuberance, variety, splendour, self-surrender to powerful but confused masses of thought and feeling, with small care to define or comprehend them; in others, order, proportion, correct perception, resulting from careful practice, regular and logical progression of ideas and feelings, that succeed one another in a clearly intelligible train. The strength of our great English authors has seldom resided in order, proportion, correct perception, according to which all the parts of a complex whole are seen in due subordination one to the other. The House of Fame to which the eagle bore our English Geffray, was a piece of poetical architecture thoroughly Gothic in design. The Fairyland in which our Spenser lived was an universe where everything incongruous in the actual world resided side by side, in perfect romantic, not classical, harmony—knights and satyrs, nymphs and nuns, Renaissance sensuousness and Christian saintliness, Aristotelian virtues and evangelical graces, Dame Cœlia and Dame Venus, and its ever-expanding, luminous, and sweet horizons are far removed from the clearly-defined and shapely outlines of an Attic landscape. Our Elizabethan dramatists, thoroughly English as they are, in a pre-eminent degree are unclassical, and even anti-classical; and the attempts made at various times to bend our literature to classicism were not of native origin, and may certainly be pronounced failures.

Landor, on the other hand, with respect to artistic form, was essentially Greek. The feeling for order, proportion, harmony, simplicity, was with him paramount. He never *phrygianized* (to borrow his own word) an obvious and natural thought with "such biting and hot curling-irons that it rolls itself up impenetrably." He never allowed a great idea or beautiful image, or felicitous expression to appear in his writings until he had found a place for it; hence his good things when presented in the way of extracts, seem wronged and insulted, as if the old statues one meets in wandering about some nobly-ordered garden were all brought together and stationed in rank and file upon the terrace. When Landor wanted to say a clever thing, he knew what to do with it, and wrote an epigram; in his more serious writings he never does say clever things; he felt that it is "as intolerable to keep reading over perpetual sharpnesses as to keep walking over them." And when he is elevated he is not so in a way to take away one's breath; he conducts one to his altitude of passion, or mount of speculation along much lower ground, and by a gradual ascent; otherwise for him no height is attainable. He is never blown away with ruffled wings in a wind of desire; his alacrity is a calm alacrity, like the descending or ascending movement of Mercury on a divine errand. Moderation and composure (of course form alone is here spoken of) are never lost. "Whoever has the power of creating," says Boccaccio, in the "Pentameron," "has likewise the inferior power of keeping his creation in order. The best poets are the most impressive, because their steps are regular, for without regularity there is neither strength nor state." In humour there seems to be naturally and almost necessarily some disturbance of balance and some shifting refraction of objects in the rippled waters of laughter. But Landor's humour at its best, when truest to his genius, appears a gayer part of the perfect order of things; he shows himself at times as great a master as Addison of concinnity in the playful. It would not be easy to find anything in the "Sir Roger de Coverley" papers more gracefully humorous than the narrative of Messer Francesco Petrarca's ride to hear mass on the Lord's day in the parish church at Certaldo. It is so graceful, because it is severe with no appearance of severity.

This passion for order, proportion, beauty of form, naturally influenced deeply Landor's critical judgments. Spenser never was a favourite with him ("me he mostly sent to bed"), but in the case of Spenser, his classical spirit was offended less by the poet's indifference to unity and shapeliness, than by the allegory, a species of art in which the idea and the form, the soul and the body stand over one against the other, and do not exist in vital union and interpenetration, a species of art fostered from the earliest times by Christianity, and which had few attractions for Landor. In the highest Greek art form and idea exist in absolute and inseparable identity. The Elizabethan dramatists were placed absolutely without the range of Landor's enjoying faculty by their disregard of proportion and order, by their "vast exaggeration and insane display." Webster, Ford, Jonson, Beaumont, Fletcher, Massinger, Chapman, and the rest, are "the mushrooms that sprang up in a ring under the great oak of Arden"—certainly good-sized mushrooms, of the height of ordinary oaks, or thereabouts.* And the head of Wordsworth's artistic offending lay for Landor in his supposed want of vigilant superintendence of form, in the unsuccinct zone of his Muse, in the "determination to hold you in one spot until you have heard him through, the reluctance that anything should be lost." This vice lay in the constitution of Wordsworth, according to his critic, and was unalterable. What Landor has thus charged against Wordsworth is indeed partially true, and it is also true that the vice lay in his constitution; but, in as far as it did, it lies—or at least the tendency towards it—in the constitution of every poet who is also and primarily a prophet, every poet who has to deliver a message to his age. Milton himself in his zeal to justify the ways of God to man, has not left his work in this respect absolutely without reproach.

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* There is so much of Landor, and so much that is just in his criticism of the Elizabethan drama, put into the mouth of Southey addressing Porson, that it may stand here in a note:—"I find the over-crammed curiosity shop, with its incommodious appendages, some grotesquely rich, all disorderly and disconnected. Rather would I find, as you would, the well-proportioned hall, with its pillars of right dimensions, at right distances; with its figures some in high relief and some in lower; with its statues and its busts of glorious men and women, whom I recognise at first sight; and its tables of the rarest marbles, and richest gems, inlaid in glowing porphyry, and supported by imperishable bronze. Without a pure simplicity of design, without a just subordination of characters, without a select choice of such personages as either have interested us or must by the power of association, without appropriate ornaments laid on solid materials, no admirable poetry of the first order can exist."

And here we come upon what must for ever fix the place of Landor, on the whole (in some particular qualities of workmanship he is unsurpassed and unsurpassable), far below that of his contemporaries, Wordsworth and Shelley, and very far below that of Goethe, whom on a quite inadequate acquaintance Landor and Wordsworth alike rejected. Apart from his political creed, which was that of Plutarch's men, as remote from that of the democratic nations of the present century as Athens is from New York, or Walt Whitman's Chants from the tragedies of Sophocles, yet which contained truths of much importance for his own day—apart from this Landor had no great authentic word of the Lord to utter. He did not understand the most striking characteristics of his age; he did not comprehend its hopes, nor carry its sorrows; he could, therefore, bring no healing promise or threatening—no "Comfort ye," and no "Woe unto you." He had many great thoughts, and many ardent passions, but the thoughts were not of first-rate importance with reference to his time, the passions were sometimes out of place, and often, instead of clearing and strengthening his intellectual eyes (as passion clears and strengthens the eyes of the prophetic spirits) they drew a film across them which dimmed and distorted. He neither, like Homer, and Dante, and Shakspere, resumed in himself a whole civilization, a whole epoch in the history of the human mind and human life; nor did he, as pre-eminently Goethe did, and, with less accuracy and fulness, Wordsworth and Shelley did each in his own way, receive divine oracles to deliver to the men of his time.

The French nation, with a true instinct, has associated much of the higher life of our new world with the year 1789. Then the critical and constructive philosophy of the eighteenth century (for it was both critical and constructive*) had overshadowed society and begotten the genius of revolution, and the political ardours and aspirations had gathered force to declare themselves. In the critical philosophy upon its positive and negative sides, often disguised in the form of reactions, and operating in the creation of systems antagonistic to itself, yet still the critical philosophy—in this existing in living union with the passions, hopes, fears and immense fatigues, produced by the French Revolution, lies a chief part of the history of literature for the first thirty years of the nineteenth century. Goethe, notwithstanding the Olympian calmness with which he viewed political and military movements apart from the culture they might create or destroy, was a child of the critical and constructive philosophy strangely uniting itself with a vague pantheism, and of the emotional ardour, part of which flowed through Rousseau onward to the French Revolution. "Faust" (not what English readers call "Faust," that is, its first and unintelligible half, but the whole poem) is more nearly than anything else of the time the deliverance in words of

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* And eminently spiritual in its faith that ideas and moral feelings were stronger than material forces, and that thought, justice, and charity would revolutionize the world.

> "The soul
> Of the wide world dreaming on things to come."

And it is singular how closely the concluding scenes of the poem resemble in their ethical significance what Comte laboured to express in another way. Faust engaged in his draining operations, which led to such splendid results, and, having wholly forsaken metaphysics, is a Comtist of the master's first period. His philanthropy and utilitarianism are, however, still of a somewhat hard type; he grasps the good of the majority with too slight a concern for the individual—witness the burning of the obnoxious cottage; he is not quite delivered from Mephistopheles; he is deficient in love. Faust ascending to the celestials, subject to ever more and more sacred influences of love, finding in his pardoned and accepted Margaret a more human and more divine Beatrice, and aspiring eternally to the heart of the *Ewig-Weibliche,* is a Comtist of the master's second period, and, of course, an excellent Catholic.

Wordsworth and Shelley, as well as Goethe, have intimate relations in one way or another with both the preceding philosophical movement and the French Revolution. They also understood and were possessed by the tendencies of their time; however, to a shallow observer the reverse may appear true of Wordsworth; they had something of the first, or, at least, of the second importance to tell their age about itself. But Landor never partially understood either the critical philosophy or the French Revolution. His supreme

Hellenism rendered that impossible. Goethe has, how often! been styled the great Pagan. He never was Pagan, any more than Faust was when wedded to Helena, and hence his most classical production, "Iphigenie," is by no means so much in the antique spirit as some people suppose; and, indeed, as Schiller proved, and Goethe himself acknowledged, is romantic through the predominance of sentiment. But Landor, with a true perception and sound judgment, finding late in life in one of his "Hellenics" a trace of romantic sentiment, struck out the lines. He, indeed, was what Mr Carlyle named him, "a grand old Pagan," though he was, as every one must be with eighteen centuries of Christian life behind him, much more than a Pagan. But Pagan enough he was to find the atmosphere of Faust's study not capable of being breathed, and no one who cannot remain awhile in that study is a man of the present century. The following sentences, from Landor's letter to Emerson, are decisive on this point: "Neither in my youthful days, nor in any other, have I thrown upon the world such trash as 'Werter' and 'Wilhelm Meister' nor flavoured my poetry with the corrugated spicery of metaphysics. . . Fifty pages of Shelley contain more of pure poetry than a hundred of Goethe, *who spent the better part of his time in contriving a puzzle, and in spinning out a yarn for a labyrinth.*" For one and the same reason Landor was incapable of doing justice to Plato, Goethe, Wordsworth, and, in part, Dante. These men could move in a world of ideas and feelings to which he could find no entrance, and he even declared with assurance that no entrance existed.

It remains to observe, in connection with this subject, that Landor, when he wrote dramatic poetry, in some remarkable particulars ceased to be classical. Form, order, proportion are of course inevitably observed. But in his dramas it is not the treatment of an action which he undertakes, but the display and development of a character. And his female characters are as originally conceived and as exquisitely delineated as his men. Here indeed is one of Landor's strongest claims upon our admiration, and one which could hardly fail to obtain general recognition if other causes, sufficiently dwelt upon already, did not deter readers from entering upon his works. How few hands since Shakespeare could have drawn so difficult and delicate a portrait as that of Giovanna! And a whole choir of gracious forms haunts our imaginations after we have closed the "Imaginary Conversations." Certainly—Electra, Antigone, and Alcestis notwithstanding—the delineation of female character of all types, and under every circumstance, has been one of the high peculiar glories of the Christian drama.

More has here been said of Landor's poetical than of his prose works, because inadequate as the general appreciation is of both, the disproportion between their merits and the favour they commonly receive is greater in the case of those than of these. A reader entirely unacquainted with Landor's writings, and prepared by appropriate culture for enjoying pure classical workmanship, might well begin with the "Hellenics." The dramas may at any time be read. "Gebir" should be reserved till late; it keeps the inner eyes too intensely and too constantly on the strain ; its severity is not concealed, but over-apparent ; its constricted style produces occasional obscurity. Nothing quite comparable to the "Hellenics" has been produced in recent times, unless they be some poems of André Chénier. Chénier is the more lyrical, and although he imitated directly from classical authors (being yet thoroughly original), and Landor did not, is in some respects the more modern of the two ; and accordingly the French singer is a near kinsman of the romantic poets of 1830, and bequeathed to them a rich legacy. Chénier is thoroughly French as well as thoroughly Greek. There is more of radiancy, more of the sense of pleasure, more of youth and freshness in him than in Landor ; the spring is in his verses, and their sadness is the tender sadness of an April evening. The form is perfect with both. There is more self-restraint with Landor ; more seeming happy facility with Chénier. The "Hellenics" are like the designs upon Greek urns ; The "Poésies Antiques" like paintings upon Pompeian walls, but nobler. But as Chénier's sweet, sad, diminished life is seen like a narrow ripple beside the resounding and strong wave of Landor's life, so its accomplishment seems little beside the great verse and prose of Landor. Only what Chénier did was all faultless—Landor's works have abundant faults in the matter of them, which, however, we shall not care to remember against a writer, who, more than any Englishman, "wrote as others wrote on Sunium's height."

1869.

MR TENNYSON AND MR BROWNING.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY.

I.

Among the Literary Portraits of Sainte-Beuve are two placed side by side, and distinguished by more than a common portion of that critical artist's pureness of colour, and graceful animation of outline. The portraits are those of Mathurin Regnier and André Chénier. They are brought together, not to suggest a series of skilful antitheses, not to form the subject of a parallel of the academic kind, but because the comparison rests on an essentially logical basis, the two poets being admirable types of two poetical spirits, or systems of thought and feeling, the one of which, as soon as it is thoroughly possessed, demands the other and forms its complement.

For a similar reason, two names may be brought together, which it is our good fortune to meet with often and almost inevitably side by side at the present day—the names of Mr Tennyson and Mr Browning. As Regnier and Chénier, separated by a long interval of time, stood over against one another, according to the view taken by their critic, the types of two poetical spirits or tendencies, so in some important respects do our own contemporary poets. Each presents a type of character which is the counterpart of the other. Each reminds us of truths, which, if we listened to the other alone, we should be not indisposed to forget.

Criticism commonly occupies itself, when surveying an artist's works, with a study of his special powers, instincts and aptitudes ; or a study of the subjects, towards which, by blind attraction or deliberate choice, he turns ; or a study of that fine effluence of the whole artistic nature which can hardly be analysed and which we term *style.* The method pursued by Sainte-Beuve in his comparative study of Mathurin Regnier and André Chénier is somewhat different from each and all of these. "Taking successively the four or five elementary themes of all poetry—God, nature, genius, art, love, human life—let us see how they revealed themselves to the two men we are now considering, and under what aspects they endeavoured to reproduce them." Such was the method of Sainte-Beuve; he did not simply record personal impressions of delight; he did not attempt to express in terms of the intellect those characteristics of form which refuse to incarnate themselves in so pure a work of thought as the language of criticism ; his method surprised and laid hold of certain portions of the artist's work which escape the other methods. It is that which I purpose to adopt in the following study ; but before attempting to apply it, an explanation is necessary.

We are about to enquire into what we may term the philosophy of a poet, we are about to consider the poet as a thinker ; but let it be observed, as a thinker who is before all else an artist. Now the conclusions of all men on those subjects which chiefly occupy the artist—

on God, and nature, and our relations to them, on human character and life and the struggle of will with circumstances, are the outcome of much beside pure logic. The very materials of thought which this or that man possesses on such subjects are dependent, in a great degree, on his moral temperament and emotional tendencies. And the processes by which these materials are dealt with, and shaped, and turned out by the intellect, depend in no less a measure on the character of the individual, and his habitual currents of feeling It is true of every man that his nature is a living organism, each function of which is affected by all the others. But this is true in a special degree of the artist. The conclusions of the speculative intellect hardly become available for artistic purposes till they have ceased to be conclusions, till they have dropped out of the intellect into the moral nature, and there become vital and obscure. For obscure all great art is,—not with the perplexity of subtle speculation, but with the mystery of vital movement. How complex soever the character of some *dramatis persona*, for instance, may be, if it has been elaborated in the intellect, another intellect can make it out. How simple soever it be, if the writer has made it his own by a complete sympathy, it is real and therefore inexhaustibly full of meaning. It seems very easy to understand Shakspere's "Miranda" or Goethe's "Clärchen," they appear quite simple conceptions ; yet we never entirely comprehend them, any more than we do the simplest real human being, and so we return to them again and again ever finding something new. They are as clear as the sea, which tempts us to look down and down into its unresisting depths, but like the sea they live and move, and their pure abysses baffle the eye.

Hence it is that the artistic product,—the work of art,—is far richer than any intellectual gift the artist or even the philosopher can offer. It rests not so much on any view of life (all views of life are unfortunately one-sided) as on a profound sympathy with life in certain individual forms; and in proportion as the whole nature of the artist is lost in his work,—his perceptive powers, his sensuous impulses, his reason, his imagination, his emotions, his will,—the conscious activity and unconscious energy interpenetrating one another — his work comes forth full, not of speculation, but what is so much better, of life, the open secret of art.

Are we then justified in speaking of the philosophy of a poet? Yes, certainly. In the first place the poet is a seeker for truth, though not of the speculative kind. He has his own vision of life; but we shall discover this in his work not in views and opinions, so much as in the forms and colours and movement of life itself. Into "Faust" entered the quintessence of fifty years' experience and meditation of the most wide-ranging modern mind; "Wilhelm Meister" is fuller of profound suggestion than most of the treatises on ethics, but the suggestion is of that unbroken, that deep and pregnant kind, which real action and suffering whisper to him who has ears to hear. Again, it is a strange mistake to regard the philosopher as a mere intellectual machine for the manufacture of systems. In the deep region of active and moral tendencies lie the profoundest differences between the masters of the schools. Here we have a right to compare speculative and artistic natures, and to separate the two into corresponding groups. There is a Zeno hidden behind one poet, there is an Epicurus hidden behind another; one artist is born an optimist, another is born a pessimist; one cried as a baby for the moon, and all of life darkened because it was unattainable; another needed nothing for his happiness but the rudiments of an idealistic philosophy contained in his own infantile crowings.

II.

Let us start in our study,—a partial study made from a single point of view,—with what may be an assumption for the present, but an assumption which will lead to its own verification. Let us start by saying that Mr Tennyson has a strong sense of the dignity and efficiency of *law*,—of *law* understood in its widest meaning. Energy nobly controlled, an ordered activity delight his imagination. Violence, extravagance, immoderate force, the swerving from appointed ends, revolt,—these are with Mr Tennyson the supreme manifestations of evil.

Under what aspect is the relation of the world and man to God represented in the poems of Mr Tennyson? Surely,—it will be said,—one who feels so strongly the presence of law in the physical world, and who recognises so fully the struggle in the moral nature of man between impulse and duty, assigning to conscience a paramount authority, has the materials from which arises naturally a vivid feeling of what is called the personal relation of God to his creatures. A little reflection will show that this is not so. It is quite possible to admit in one's thoughts and feelings the existence of a physical order of the material world, and a moral order of the spiritual world, and yet to enter slightly into those intimate relations of the affections with a Divine Being which present him in the tenderest way as a Father,—as a highest Friend. Fichte, the sublime idealist, was withheld from seeing God by no obtruding veil of a material universe. Fichte, if any man ever did, recognised the moral order of the world. But Fichte—living indeed the blessed life in God,—yet annihilated for thought his own personality and that of God, in the infinity of this moral order. No: it is not law but will that reveals will; it is not our strength but our weakness that cries out for the invisible Helper and Divine Comrade; it is not our obedience but our aspiration, our joy, our anguish; it is the passion of self-surrender, the grief that makes desolate, the solitary rapture which demands a partaker of its excess, the high delight which must save itself from as deep dejection by a passing over into gratitude.

Accordingly, although we find the idea of God entering largely into the poems of Mr Tennyson, there is little recognition of special contact of the soul with the Divine Being in any supernatural ways of quiet or of ecstasy. There is, on the contrary, a disposition to rest in the orderly manifestation of God, as the supreme Law-giver, and even to identify him with his presentation of himself, in the physical and moral order of the universe. And if this precludes all spiritual rapture, that "glorious folly, that heavenly madness, wherein true wisdom is acquired,"[*] it preserves the mind from despair or any deep dejection; unless, indeed, the faith in this order itself give way, when in the universal chaos, no will capable of bringing restoration being present, a confusion of mind, a moral obscurity greater than any other, must arise.

Wordsworth in some of his solitary trances of thought really entered into the frame of mind which the mystic knows as union or as ecstacy, when thought expires in enjoyment, when the mind is blessedness and love, when "the waters of grace have risen up to the neck of the soul, so that it can neither advance nor retreat." With Mr Tennyson the mystic is always the visionary, who suffers from an over-excitable fancy. The nobler aspects of the mystical religious spirit, are unrepresented in his poetry. St Simeon upon his pillar is chiefly of interest, as affording an opportunity for studying the phenomena of morbid theopathetic emotion. We find nowhere among the persons of his imagination a Teresa, uniting as she did in so eminent a degree an administrative genius, a genius for action with the genius of exalted piety. The feeble Confessor beholds visions; but Harold strikes ringing blows upon the helms of his country's enemies. Harold is no virgin, no confessor, no seer, no saint, but a loyal, plain, strong-thewed, truth-loving son of England, who can cherish a woman, and rule a people, and mightily wield a battle-axe. In the Idylls when the Grail passes before the assembled knights, where is the king? He is absent, actively resisting evil, harrying the bandits' den; and as he returns, it is with alarm that he perceives the ominous tokens left by the sacred thing:—

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[*] S. Teresa, Life. ch. xvi.

> "Lo there! the roofs
> Of our great hall are rolled in thunder smoke!
> Pray heaven, they be not smitten by the bolt."

The Grail is a sign to maim the great order which Arthur has reared. The mystical glories which the knights pursue are "wandering fires." If Galahad beheld the vision, it was because Galahad was already unmeet for earth, worthy to be a king, not in this sad yet noble city of men, but in some far-off spiritual city.

> "And spake I not too truly, O my knights?
> Was I too dark a prophet when I said
> To those who went upon the Holy Quest,
> That most of them would follow wandering fires,
> Lost in the quagmire?—lost to me and gone,
> And left me gazing at a barren board,
> And a lean Order—scarce return'd a tithe—
> And out of those to whom the vision came
> My greatest hardly will believe he saw;
> Another hath beheld it afar off,
> And leaving human wrongs to right themselves,
> Cares but to pass into the silent life.
> And one hath had the vision face to face,
> And now his chair desires him here in vain,
> However they may crown him otherwhere."

The Round Table is dissolved, the work of Arthur is brought to an end, because two passions have overthrown the order of the realm, which it has been the task of the loyal, steadfast and wise king to create,—first, the sensual passion of Lancelot and Guinevere; secondly, the spiritual passion hardly less fatal, which leaped forth when the disastrous quest was avowed. Only that above all order of human institution, a higher order abides, we might well suppose that chaos must come again; but it is not so:—

> "The old order changeth giving place to new,
> And God fulfils himself in many ways."

Thus, as has been already remarked, Mr Tennyson's sense of a beneficent unfolding in our life of a divine purpose, lifts him through and over the common dejections of men. With his own friend, it is as with his ideal king; he will not mourn for any overmuch. The fame which he predicted to his friend is quenched by an early death; but he will not despair:—

> "The fame is quench'd that I foresaw,
> The head hath missed an earthly wreath;
> I curse not nature, no, nor death;
> For nothing is that errs from law."

Even the thought of the foul corruption of the grave becomes supportable, when it is conceived as a part of the change which permits the spirit to have its portion in the self-evolving process of the higher life:—

> "Eternal process moving on,
> From state to state the spirit walks;
> And these are but the shatter'd stalks,
> Or ruin'd chrysalis of one."

It is only when the doubt of a beneficent order of the world cannot be put away—it is only when nature (as discovered by the investigations of geology), seems ruthless alike to the individual and the species, "red in tooth and claw with ravine," it is only then that the voice of the mourner grows wild, and it appears to him that his grief has lost its sanctity and wrongs the quiet of the dead.

Mr Tennyson finds law present throughout all nature, but there is no part of nature in which he dwells with so much satisfaction upon its presence as in human society. No one so largely as Mr Tennyson, has represented in art the new thoughts and feelings, which form the impassioned side of the modern conception of progress. His imagination is for ever haunted by "the vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be." But the hopes and aspirations of Mr Tennyson are not those of the radical or movement character. He is in all his poems conservative as well as liberal. It may be worth while to illustrate the feeling of Shelley, in contrast with that of Mr Tennyson, with reference to this idea of progress. In the year 1819 Shelley believed that England had touched almost the lowest point of social and political degradation:

> "An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king,—
> Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
> Through public scorn, mud from a muddy spring,—
> Rulers, who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
> But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
> Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow,—
> A people starv'd and stabb'd in the untilled field,—
> An army which liberticide and prey
> Make as a two-edged sword to all who wield,—
> Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay,—
> Religion Christless, Godless,—a book sealed,
> A Senate—time's worst statute unrepealed."—

Such laws, such rulers, such a people Shelley found in his England of half a century since. Did he therefore despair, or if he hoped was the object of his hope some better life of man in some distant future? No: all these things

> "Are graves, from which a glorious Phantom may
> Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day."

The regeneration of society, as conceived by Shelley, was to appear suddenly, splendidly shining with the freshness and glory of a dream; as the result of some bright, brief national struggle; as the consequence of the apparition of some pure being, at once a poet and a prophet, before whose voice huge tyrannies and cruel hypocrisies must needs go down, as piled-up clouds go down ruined and rent before a swift, pure wind; in some way or another which involves a catastrophe, rather than according to the constantly operating processes of nature.

Now Mr Tennyson's conception of progress, which he has drawn from his moral and intellectual environment, and which accords with his own moral temper, is widely different. No idea perhaps occupies a place in his poems so central as that of the progress of the race. This it is which lifts out of his idle dejection and selfish dreaming the speaker in "Locksley Hall;"

> "Not in vain the distance beacons. Forward, forward let us range,
> Let the great world spin for ever down the ringing grooves of change."

This it is which suggests an apology for the fantasies of "The Day-Dream." This it is which arms the tempted with a weapon of defence, and the tempter with a deadlier weapon of attack in "The Two Voices." This it is of which Leonard writes, and at which old James girds in "The Golden Year." This it is which gives a broad basis of meditative thought to the Idyll that tells of the passing of Arthur, and renders it something more than a glorious fable. This it is which is the sweetness of "The Poet's Song," making the wild swan pause, and the lark drop from heaven to earth. This it is which forms the closing prophecy of "The Princess," the full confession of the poet's faith. This it is which is heard in the final chords of the "In Memoriam," changing the music from a minor to a major key. And the same doctrine is taught from the opposite side in "The Vision of Sin," in which the most grievous disaster which comes upon the base and sensual heart is represented as hopelessness with reference to the purpose and the progress of the life of man :

> "Fill the can and fill the cup,
> All the windy ways of men
> Are but dust that rises up
> And is lightly laid again."*

But in all these poems throughout which the idea of progress is so variously expressed, and brought into relation with moods of mind so diverse, the progress of mankind is uniformly represented as the evolution and self-realisation of a law ; it is represented as taking place gradually and slowly, and its consummation is placed in a remote future. We "hear the roll of the ages ;" the "increasing purpose" runs through centuries ; it is "with the process of the suns" that the thoughts of men are widened. It is when our sleep should have been prolonged through many decades and quinquenniads that we might wake to reap the flower and quintessence of change :

> "For we are Ancients of the earth,
> And in the morning of the times."

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* So in the "In Memoriam" when the "light is low" and the heart is sick, Time appears not as a wise master-builder, but as a "maniac, scattering dust."

It is because millenniums will not bring the advance of knowledge near its term that the tempted soul in "The Two Voices" feels how wretched a thing it must be to watch the increase of intellectual light during the poor thirty or forty years of a life-time. It is "in long years" that the sexes shall attain to the fulness of their mighty growth, until at last, man and woman

> "Upon the skirts of Time
> Sit side by side, full-summ'd in all their powers,
> Dispensing harvest, sowing the To-be,
>
> . . . .
>
> Then comes the statelier Eden back to man:
> Then reign the world's great bridals, chaste and calm;
> Then springs the crowning race of humankind.
> May these things be!"

And the highest augury telling of this "crowning race" is drawn from those who already having moved upward through the lower phases of being become precursors and pledges of the gracious children of the future:

> "For all we thought and loved and did,
> And hoped, and suffer'd, is but seed
> Of what in them is flower and fruit;
>
> "Whereof the man, that with me trod
> This planet, was a noble type
> Appearing ere the times were ripe,
> That friend of mine who lives in God,
>
> "That God, which ever lives and loves,
> One God, one law, one element,
> And one far-off divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves."

The great hall which Merlin built for Arthur, is girded by four zones of symbolic sculpture; in the lowest zone, beasts are slaying men; in the second, men are slaying beasts;

> "And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
> And on the fourth are men with growing wings."

To work out the beast is the effort of long ages; to attain to be "a perfect man" is for those who shall follow us afar off; to soar with wings is for the crowning race of the remotest future.

Apart from the growth of the individual that golden age to which the poet looks forward, the coming of which he sees shine in the distance, is characterized, as he imagines it, chiefly by a great development of knowledge, especially of scientific knowledge; this first; and, secondly, by the universal presence of political order and freedom, national and international, secured by a vast and glorious federation. It is quite of a piece with Mr Tennyson's feeling for law, that his imagination should be much impressed by the successes of science, and that its promises should correspond with his hopes. The crowning race will be a company

> "Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
> On knowledge; under whose command
> Is Earth and Earth's, and in their hand
> Is Nature like an open book."

Were we to sleep the hundred years, our joy would be to wake

> "On science grown to more,
> On secrets of the brain, the stars"

It is the promises and achievements of science which restore sanity to the distraught lover of "Locksley Hall." In "The Princess" the sport half-science of galvanic batteries, model steam-engines, clock-work steamers and fire-balloons, suggest the thought of a future of adult knowledge:

"This fine old world of ours is but a child
Yet in the go-cart. Patience! Give it time
To learn its limbs: there is a hand that guides."

But Mr Tennyson's dream of the future is not more haunted by visionary discoveries and revelations of science than by the phantoms of great political organizations. That will be a time

"When the war-drum throbs no longer, and the battle flags are furl'd
In the Parliament of men, the Federation of the world."

A time in which

"Phantoms of other forms of rule,
New Majesties of mighty states"

will appear, made real at length; a time in which the years will bring to being

"The vast Republics that may grow,
The Federations and the Powers;
Titanic forces taking birth."

These days and works of the crowning race are, however, far beyond our grasp; and the knowledge of this, with the faith that the progress of mankind is the expression of a slowly, self-revealing law, puts a check upon certain of our hopes and strivings. He who is possessed by this faith will look for no speedy regeneration of men in the social or political sphere, and can but imperfectly sympathise with those enthusiastic hearts whose expectations, nourished by their ardours and desires, are eager and would forestall futurity. Mr Tennyson's justness of mind in a measure forsakes him, when he has to speak of political movements into which passion in its uncalculating form has entered as a main motive power. Yet passion of this type is the right and appropriate power for the uses of certain times and seasons. It is by ventures of faith in politics that mountains are removed. The Tory member's elder son estimates the political movements of France in an insular spirit which, it may be surmised, has in it something of Mr Tennyson's own feeling :—

> "Whiff! there comes a sudden heat,
> The gravest citizen seems to lose his head,
> The king is scared, the soldier will not fight,
> The little boys begin to shoot and stab."

Yet to France more than to England the enslaved nations have turned their faces when they have striven to rend their bonds. It is hardly from Mr Tennyson that we shall learn how a heroic failure may be worth as much to the world as a distinguished success. It is another poet who has written thus :—

> "When liberty goes out of a place it is not the first to go, nor the second or third to go,
> It waits for all the rest to go—it is the last.
> When there are no more memories of heroes and martyrs,
> And when all life, and all the souls of men and women are discharged from any part of the earth,
> Then only shall liberty, or the idea of liberty, be discharged from that part of the earth,
> And the infidel come into full possession."

Mr Tennyson's ideal for every country is England, and that is a blunder in politics :

> "A land of settled government,
> A land of just and old renown,
> Where Freedom slowly broadens down
> From precedent to precedent."

That is an admirable verse ; but it is nobler to make than to follow precedents; and great emotions, passionate thought, audacities of virtue quickly create a history and tradition of precedents in the lives alike of individuals and of nations. Mr Tennyson loves freedom, but she must assume an English costume before he can recognize her; the freedom which he loves is

> "That sober freedom out of which there springs
> Our loyal passion to our temperate kings."

She is

> "Freedom in her royal seat
> Of England, not the schoolboy heat—
> The blind hysterics of the Celt."

He cannot squander a well-balanced British sympathy on hearts that love not wisely but too well:—

> "Love thou thy land with love far brought
> From out the storied Past, and used
> Within the Present, but transfused
> Through future time by power of thought."

What Mr Tennyson has written will indeed lead persons of a certain type of character in their true direction; for those of a different type it will for ever remain futile and false. "Reason," Vauvenargues has said, "deceives us more often than does nature." "If passion advises more boldly than reflection, it is because passion gives greater power to carry out its advice." "To do great things, one must live as if one could never die." England can celebrate a golden wedding with Freedom, and gather children about her knees; let there be a full and deep rejoicing. But why forbid the more unmeasured joy of the lover of Freedom who has dreamed of her and has fought for her, and who now is glad because he has once seen her, and may die for her?

Mr Tennyson's political doctrine is in entire agreement with his ideal of human character. As the exemplar of all nations is that one in which highest wisdom is united with complete self-government, so the ideal man is he whose life is led to sovereign power by self-knowledge resulting in self-control, and self-control growing perfect in self-reverence. The golden fruit which Herè prays for, promising power, which Aphrodite prays for, promising pleasure, belongs of right to Pallas alone, who promises no other sovereignty, no other joy than those that come by the freedom of perfect service,—

> "To live by law,
> Acting the law we live by without fear."

Mr Tennyson has had occasion to write two remarkable poetical *éloges*—one on the late Prince Consort, the other on the great Duke. In both, the characters are drawn with fine discrimination, but in both, the crowning virtue of the dead is declared to have been the virtue of obedience, that of self-subjugation to the law of duty. In both the same lesson is taught, that he who toils along the upward path of painful right-doing

> "Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
> Are close upon the shining table-lands
> To which our God Himself is moon and sun."

Even Love "takes part against himself" to be at one with Duty, who is "loved of Love." Through strenuous self-mastery, through the strong holding of passion in its leash, Enoch Arden attains the sad happiness of strong heroic souls. But it is not only as fortitude and endurance that Mr Tennyson conceives the virtue of noble obedience; it flames up into a chivalric ardour in the passionate loyalty of the Six Hundred riders at Balaclava:

and Cranmer redeems his life from the dishonour of fear, of faltering and of treason, by the last gallantry of a soldierlike obedience to the death:

> "He pass'd out smiling, and he walk'd upright;
> His eye was like a soldier's, whom the general
> He looks to, and he leans on as his God,
> Hath rated for some backwardness, and bidd'n him
> Charge one against a thousand, and the man
> Hurls his soil'd life against the pikes and dies."

Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control, the recognition of a divine order and of one's own place in that order, faithful adhesion to the law of one's highest life,—these are the elements from which is formed the ideal human character. What is the central point in the ethical import of the Arthurian story as told by Mr Tennyson? It is the assertion that the highest type of manhood is set forth in the poet's ideal king, and that the worthiest work of man is work such as his. And what is Arthur? The blameless monarch, who "reverenced his conscience as a king;" unseduced from his appointed path by the temptations of sense or the wandering fires of religious mysticism; throughout the most passionate scene of the poem "sublime in self-repression":—

> "I wanted warmth and colour, which I found
> In Lancelot,—now I see thee what thou art,
> Thou art the highest, and most human too,
> Not Lancelot, not another."

Arthur's task has been to drive back the heathen, to quell disorder and violence, to bind the wills of his knights to righteousness in a perfect law of liberty. It is true that Arthur's task is left half done. While he rides forth to silence the riot of the Red Knight and his ruffian band, in his own court are held those "lawless jousts," and Tristram sings in the ears of that small, sad cynic, Dagonet, his licentious song :—

> "Free love—free field—we love but while we may."

And thus were it not that a divine order overrules our efforts, our successes, and our failures, we must needs believe that the realm is once more reeling back into the beast.

Disorder of thoughts, of feelings and of will is, with Mr Tennyson, the evil of evils, the pain of pains. The Princess would transcend, through the temptation of a false ideal, her true sphere of womanhood ; even this noblest form of disobedience to law entails loss and sorrow ; she is happy only when she resumes her worthier place through the wisdom of love. In "Lucretius" the man who had so highly striven for light and calm, for "the sober majesties of settled, sweet Epicurean life," is swept by a fierce tempest in his blood back into chaos ; there is but one way of deliverance, but one way of entering again under the reign of law,—to surrender his being once more to Nature, that she may anew dash together the atoms which make him man, in order that as flower, or beast, or fish, or bird, or man, they may again move through her cycles ; and so Lucretius roughly wooes the passionless bride, Tranquillity. And may we not sum up the substance of Mr Tennyson's personal confessions in "In Memoriam," by saying that they are the record of the growth through sorrow of the firmer mind, which becomes one with law at length apparent through the chaos of sorrow; which counts it crime "to mourn for any overmuch;" which turns its burden into gain, and for which those truths that never can be proved, and that had been lost in the first wild shock of grief, are regained by "faith that comes of self-control."

III.

Remaining at the same point of view we now turn to a consideration of the works of Mr Browning. As we started with the assumption that Mr Tennyson has a vivid feeling of the dignity and potency of *law*, let us assume, for the present, that Mr Browning vividly feels the importance, the greatness and beauty of passions and enthusiasms, and that his imagination is comparatively unimpressed by the presence of law and its operations.

If this be so, we might anticipate that Mr Browning's interpretation of external nature would differ materially from that of Mr Tennyson. And such is the case. It is not the order and regularity in the processes of the natural world which chiefly delight Mr Browning's imagination, but the streaming forth of power and will and love from the whole face of the visible universe. His senses, indeed, considered as mere senses, are peculiarly lively and vigorous; he sees a yellow primrose with the utmost precision and vividness to be yellow, and to be a primrose. His Englishman in Italy turns from fruit to fruit feeding his eyes with colours, he hears each sound of the hot garden as it were with clear-cut outline, he finds delight in the mere grotesqueness of the strange sea-creatures tumbled from the fisher's basket;—

> "You touch the strange lumps,
> And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner
> Of horns and of humps."

Those joys of vigorous youth, on the hills, in the woods, which are little more than the satisfying of a pure animal appetite, are celebrated by David as he harps before the afflicted Saul:—

> "Oh the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,—
> The strong rending of boughs from the fir tree,—the cool silver shock
> Of the plunge in a pool's living waters."

But Mr Browning's most characteristic feeling for nature appears in his rendering of those aspects of sky or earth or sea, of sunset, or noonday, or dawn, which seem to acquire some sudden and passionate significance; which seem to be charged with some spiritual secret eager for disclosure; in his rendering of those moments which betray the passion at the heart of things, which thrill and tingle with prophetic fire. When lightning searches for the guilty lovers, Ottima and Sebald, like an angelic sword plunged into the gloom, when the tender twilight, with its one chrysolite star, grows aware, and the light and shade make up a spell, and the forests by their mystery and sound and silence mingle together two human lives for ever, when the apparition of the moon-rainbow appears gloriously after storm, and Christ is in his heaven,,when to David the stars shoot out the pain of pent knowledge and in the grey of the hills at morning there dwells a gathered intensity,—then nature rises from her sweet ways of use and wont, and shows herself the Priestess, the Pythoness, the Divinity which she is. Or rather, through nature, the Spirit of God addresses itself to the spirit of man.

If Mr Tennyson's thinking had any tendency in the direction vaguely named pantheistic, it would be towards identifying God with the order and wisdom of the universe; if Mr Browning's thinking had such a tendency, it would be towards identifying Him with the passion, so to speak, of nature. In the joy of spring-time God awakens to intenser life :—

"The lark
Soars up and up, shivering for very joy;
Afar the ocean sleeps; white fishing gulls
Flit where the strand is purple with its tribe
Of nested limpets; savage creatures seek
Their loves in wood and plain—and God renews
His ancient rapture!"

A law of nature means nothing to Mr Browning if it does not mean the immanence of power, and will, and love. He can pass with ready sympathy into the mystical feeling of the East, where in the unclouded sky, in the torrent of noonday light God is so near

"He glows above
With scarce an intervention, presses close
And palpitatingly, His soul o'er ours."

But the wisdom of a Western *savant* who in his superior intellectuality replaces the will of God by the blind force of nature seems to Mr Browning to be science falsely so called, a new ignorance founded upon knowledge,

"A lamp's death when, replete with oil, it chokes."

To this effect argues the prophet John in "A Death in the Desert," anticipating with the deep prevision of a dying man the doubts and questionings of modern days. And in the third of those remarkable poems which form the epilogue of the "Dramatis Personæ," the whole world rises in the speaker's imagination into one vast spiritual temple, in which voices of singers, and swell of trumpets and cries of priests are heard going up to God no less truly than in the old Jewish worship, while the face of Christ, instinct with divine will and love, becomes apparent, as that of which all nature is a type or an adumbration.

Mr Browning, like Mr Tennyson, is an optimist, but the idea of a progress of mankind enters into his poems in a comparatively slight degree. It is to be noted, first, that whereas Mr Tennyson considers the chief instruments of human progress to be a vast increase of knowledge and of political organization, Mr Browning makes that progress dependent on the production of higher passions and aspirations,—hopes, and joys, and sorrows; and secondly that whereas Mr Tennyson finds the evidence of the truth of the doctrine of progress in the universal presence of a self-evolving law, Mr Browning obtains his assurance of its truth from inward presages and prophecies of the soul, from anticipations, types and symbols of a higher greatness in store for man, which even now reside within him, a creature ever unsatisfied, ever yearning upward in thought, feeling and endeavour:

> "In man's self arise
> August anticipations, symbols, types

> Of a dim splendour ever on before
> In that eternal circle run by life.
> For men begin to pass their nature's bound,
> And find new hopes and cares which fast supplant
> Their proper joys and griefs; they outgrow all
> The narrow creeds of right and wrong, which fade
> Before the unmeasured thirst for good: while peace
> Rises within them ever more and more."

But Mr Browning thinks much less of the future of the human race, and of a terrestrial golden age than of the life and destiny of the individual, and of the heaven that each man may attain; and it is in his teaching with reference to the growth of the individual and its appropriate means that we find the most characteristic part of Mr Browning's way of thought. We have seen that in Mr Tennyson's ideal of manhood the main elements of character and conduct are found in obedience to the law of conscience, adhesion to duty, self-knowledge, self-control, self-reverence, clearness from the soil of evil,

> "Wearing the white flower of a blameless life."

And the chief instruments in the development of the individual, according to this view, are those periods, or occasions of life, protracted, it may be, through long years of patient endurance and laborious toil, or, it may be, coming in the sudden crises of events which put the soul upon its trial, a trial consisting in the temptation of passion, set over against the mandate of conscience, in the inducements to self-indulgence, set over against the duty of self-control. Now, the first principle of Mr Browning's philosophy of life precludes this ideal; for it seems to him that the greatness and glory of man lie not in submission to law, but in aspiration to something higher than ourselves; not in self-repression, but in the passions which scorn the limits of time and space, and in the bright endeavours towards results that are unattainable on earth.* Such aspiration is indeed itself the very law of our being; but that it should not waste itself in wild and wandering ways, there is needed above us, and above all the shows of earth, above the beauty of nature, above human desire, and art, and philosophies, one thing of which all these are shadows,—that God who is supreme power and wisdom, and love.

Man here on earth, according to the central and controlling thought of Mr Browning, man here in a state of preparation for other lives, and surrounded by wondrous spiritual influences, is too great for the sphere that contains him, while, at the same time, he can exist only by submitting for the present to the conditions it imposes; never without fatal loss becoming content with such submission, or regarding his present state as perfect or final. Our nature here is unfinished, imperfect, but its glory, its peculiarity, that which makes us men,—not God, and not brutes,—lies precisely in this character of imperfection, giving scope as it does for indefinite growth and progress—

> "Progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
> Not God's and not the beasts'; God is, they are,
> Man partly is, and wholly hopes to be."

And it is by a succession of failures, stimulating higher aspirations and endeavours, that we may reach at last

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* Hence in part Mr Browning's enthusiastic admiration of Shelley, a poet of a genius in many respects so remote from that of Mr Browning.

> "The ultimate angels' law
> Indulging every instinct of the soul,
> There where law, life, joy, impulse, are one thing."

One of two lives must be chosen by each of us—a worldly or a spiritual life. The former begins and ends in limited joys and griefs, hopes and fears; it is conditioned by time and space; if accepted as in itself sufficient it does not reveal God, but rather conceals him; it need not be sensual or devilish, but in being merely earthly it is fatal to the true life of a human soul. Success in this life of limitation is possible here below, and even a distinguished success, when material, æsthetic, and intellectual pleasures are organised for the gratification of a prudent man, who knows how to enjoy them temperately. The spiritual life, on the contrary, begins and ends in hopes and fears, in joys and sorrows which in their very nature are infinite; to it earth and all earthly things are means, not ends; for it time is of importance, because through time one enters into eternity; this higher life tends perpetually to God; it is heavenly and divine; but on earth it may seem no better than a succession of failures,—failures however, which are in truth the highest glory of a human being.

Now a man may be guilty of either of two irretrievable errors; seduced by temptations of sense, denying the light that is in him, yielding to prudential motives, or to supineness of heart or brain, or hand, he may renounce his spiritual, his infinite life and its concerns. That is one error. Or he may try to force those concerns, and corresponding states of thought, and feeling, and endeavour into this finite life,—the life which is but the starting point and not the goal. He may deny his higher nature, which is ever yearning upward to God through all noble forms of thought, emotion and action; he may weary of failure which (as generating a higher tendency) is his peculiar glory; or else he may deny the conditions of finite existence, and attempt to realise in this life what must be the achievement of eternity.

Hence it is not obedience, it is not submission to the law of duty, which points out to us our true path of life, but rather infinite desire and endless aspiration. Mr Browning's ideal of manhood in this world always recognises the fact, that it is the ideal of a creature who never can be perfected on earth, a creature whom other and higher lives await in an endless hereafter. Between the two extremes, alike destructive to our proper existence, lies the middle course along which a man should move. To deny heaven and the infinite life,—that is one extreme. To deny earth and the finite life, that is the other extreme. If we are content with the limited and perishable joys and gifts, and faculties of this world, we shall never see God,

> Nor all that chivalry of His,
> The soldier-saints, who, row on row,
>
> Burn upward each to his point of bliss—
> Since, the end of life being manifest,
> He had burned his way thro' the world to this.

If, on the contrary, we aim at accomplishing under all the restrictions of this life, what is the work of eternity, if we desire absolute knowledge, or none, infinite love or no love, a boundless exercise of our will, the deploying of our total power, or no exercise of the will, then we shall either destroy ourselves, we shall dash ourselves to pieces against the walls of time and space, or else seeing that our objects are unattainable, we shall sink into a state of hopeless enervation. But between these two extremes lies a mid-region in which the life of man may appropriately find a place. He must not rest content with earth and the gifts of earth; he must not aim at "thrusting in time eternity's concern;" but he must perpetually grasp at things attainable by his highest striving, and, having attained them, find that they are unsatisfying, so that by an endless series of aspirations and endeavours, which generate new aspirations and new endeavours, he may be sent on to God, and his manifested love, and his eternal heaven:—

> "One great aim, like a guiding-star, above—
> Which tasks strength, wisdom, stateliness, to lift
> His manhood to the height that takes the prize;
> A prize not near—lest overlooking earth
> He rashly spring to seize it—nor remote,
> So that he rest upon his path content:
> But day by day, while shimmering grows shine,
> And the faint circlet prophesies the orb,
> He sees so much as, just evolving these,
> The stateliness, the wisdom, and the strength,
> To due completion, will suffice this life,
> And lead him at his grandest to the grave."*

These ideas lead us to the central point from which we can perceive the peculiarity and origin of Mr Browning's feeling with regard to external nature, art, religion, love, beauty, knowledge. Around these ideas we perceive, while we read through his works, one poem after another falling into position, while at the same time each brings some special interest of its own.

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* "Colombe's Birthday," *Act* iv. Compare the speech of Domizia, beginning with the line, "How inexhaustibly the spirit grows," in the fifth act of "Luria."

Is it of external nature that Mr Browning speaks? The preciousness of all the glory of sky and earth lies in its being the manifested power and love of God, to which the heart springs as fire. In that Easter Dream of the last judgment what is the doom of God upon the condemned soul? It is to take whatever the soul desires, and since the lost man had loved the world—the world with its beauty and wonder and delight—but had never yearned upward to God who dwelt within them, the decree is pronounced :

"Thou art shut
Out of the heaven of spirit ; glut
Thy sense upon the world."

And no condemnation,—it is shown,—could be more awful ; for nature has betrayed and ruined us if we rest in it ; betrayed and ruined us, unless it send us onward unsatisfied to God.

And what are Mr Browning's chief doctrines on the subject of art? Perhaps no poet has so fully interpreted the workings of the artistic spirit as it finds expression in poetry (from Aprile to Aristophanes,) sculpture (Jules,) painting (Andrea del Sarto, Fra Lippo Lippi, Pictor Ignotus) and music (Abt Vogler, A Toccata of Galuppi, Hugues of Saxe-Gotha ;) and as we found it quite in harmony with Mr Tennyson's feeling of the dignity and potency of law that his imagination should be impressed by the methods and results of science, so it is natural that Mr Browning with his feeling for the nobility of enthusiasms and passions should enter profoundly into the nature of art, and the spiritual strivings of the artist. Now Mr Browning emphasises his teaching on the subject of art, perhaps unconsciously, by the remarkable contrast between those poems which represent the life and genius of the artist, and those which represent the life and character of the connoisseur. It is always in an unfavourable light that he depicts the virtuoso or collector, who, conscious of no unsatisfied aspirations such as those which make the artist's joy and sorrow, rests in the visible products of art, and looks up to nothing above or beyond them. In "The Palace of Art" Mr Tennyson has shown the despair and isolation of a soul surrounded by all luxuries of beauty, and living in and for them; but in the end the soul is redeemed and converted to the simple humanities of earth. Mr Browning has shown that such a sense of isolation and such despair are by no means inevitable; there is a death in life which consists in tranquil satisfaction, a calm pride in the soul's dwelling among the world's gathered treasures of stateliness and beauty. No creature loves the Duke whose last Duchess stands painted by Fra Pandolf on the wall; her smiling he has stopped long since; there she looks as if she were alive; the piece is a wonder; and now he will come to terms easily about the dowry of the new Duchess; he is indeed dead to love among dead things; yet are the dead things marvellous:

"Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me."

So again the unbelieving and worldly spirit of the dying Bishop, who orders his tomb at St Praxed's, his sense of the vanity of the world simply because the world is passing out of his reach, the regretful memory of the pleasures of his youth, the envious spite towards Gandolf, who robbed him of the best position for a tomb, and the dread lest his reputed sons should play him false and fail to carry out his designs, are united with a perfect appreciation of Renaissance art, and a luxurious satisfaction, which even a death-bed cannot destroy, in the splendour of voluptuous form and colour. The great lump of *lapis lazuli*,

> "Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
> Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast,"

must poise between his sculptured knees; the black basalt must contrast with the bas-relief in bronze below;

> "Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan
> Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off;"

the inscription must be "choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word." And so with no pang of remorse, no horror of isolation, the Bishop dies.

Such poems expose the worldliness of the mere connoisseur's and collector's feeling for art. The true glory of art is that in its creation there arise desires and aspirations never to be satisfied on earth, but generating new desires and new aspirations, by which the spirit of man mounts to God Himself. The artist (Mr Browning loves to insist on this point) who can realise in marble or in colour, or in music his ideal has thereby missed the highest gain of art. In "Pippa Passes" the regeneration of the young sculptor's work turns on his finding that in the very perfection which he had attained lies ultimate failure. And one entire poem, "Andrea del Sarto," has been devoted to the exposition of this thought. Andrea is "the faultless painter;" no line of his drawing ever goes astray; his hand expresses adequately and accurately all that his mind conceives; but for this very reason, precisely because he is "the faultless painter," his work lacks the highest qualities of art:

> "A man's reach should exceed his grasp,
> Or what's a Heaven for? all is silver-grey,
> Placid and perfect with my art—the worse."

And in the youthful Raphael, whose technical execution fell so far below his own, Andrea recognises the true master:

> "Yonder's a work, now, of that famous youth,
> The Urbinate who died five years ago.
> ('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
> Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
> Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
> Reaching, that Heaven might so replenish him,
> Above and through his art—for it gives way;
> That arm is wrongly put,—and there again—
> A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
> Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
> He means right—that, a child may understand,
> Still, what an arm! and I could alter it,
> But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
> Out of me! out of me!"

The true artist is ever sent through and beyond his art unsatisfied to God, the fount of light and beauty. Tears start in the eyes of Abt Vogler, who has been extemporising on his musical instrument, as now in the silence he is desolated by the fall of that beautiful palace of sound which he had reared, and which is for ever lost. There is for a while a sense of sadness and vacancy and failure; but the failure generates a new movement of advance and ascension, and the soul of the musician stretches upward hands of desire to God:

"Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable Name?
Builder and maker Thou, of houses not made with hands!
What, have fear of change from Thee who art ever the same?
Doubt that Thy power can fill the heart that Thy power expands?
There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth, the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.

"All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that He heard it once; we shall hear it by-and-by."

And once more we find a full confession of Mr Browning's creed with respect to art in the poem entitled "Old Pictures in Florence." He sees the ghosts of the early Christian masters, whose work has never been duly appreciated, standing sadly by each mouldering Italian Fresco; and when an imagined interlocutor enquires what is admirable in such work as this, the poet answers that the glory of Christian art lies in its rejecting a limited perfection, such as that of the art of ancient Greece, the subject of which was finite, and the lesson taught by which was submission, and in its daring to be incomplete, and faulty, faulty because its subject was great with infinite fears and hopes, and because it must needs teach man not to submit but to aspire.

A large number of Mr Browning's poems have love for their theme; and here again we find the same recurring thoughts. In Mr Tennyson's poems treating of the trials, difficulties and dangers of the heart, the temptation which is commonly represented as the most formidable is the temptation to indulge passion at the expense of duty or in violation of the law of conscience. In Mr Browning's poems the temptation almost invariably is to sacrifice the passion which ennobles and glorifies life either to prudential motives, or fear of public opinion, or through a supine lethargy or slackness of the spirit. As the enthusiasm of the artist carries him through and beyond his art to God, so any intense passion, an "outlaw of time and space," gives rise to an infinite aspiring, which becomes the true pledge and the fitting initiation of a never-ending movement of advance Godward through the infinite future.

Hence naturally the *dramatis personæ* of many of Mr Browning's poems fall into two groups—the group of those whose souls are saved by love, and the group of those whose souls are lost by some worldliness, or cowardice, or faintness of heart. The old French Academician, too prudent or self-restrained to yield to the manifold promptings of nature and utter his love, has ruined four lives, which for that sin have been condemned to be henceforth respectable and passionless:—

"You fool, for all
Your lore! WHO made things plain in vain?
What was the sea for? What, the gray
Sad church, that solitary day,
Crosses and graves and swallows' call?

Was there nought better than to enjoy?
No feat, which, done, would make time break,
And let us pent-up creatures through
Into eternity, our due?
No forcing earth teach Heaven's employ?

No wise beginning, here and now,
What cannot grow complete (earth's feat)
And Heaven must finish, there and then?
No tasting earth's true food for men,
Its sweet in sad, its sad in sweet?

No grasping at love, gaining a share
O' the sole spark from God's life at strife
With death, so, sure of range above
The limits here? For us and love
Failure; but, when God fails, despair."

So again in "Youth and Art" the same lesson is enforced. Boy-sculptor and girl-singer, afterwards to be each successful in the world, the one to be wife of "a rich old lord," the other to be "dubbed knight and an R. A.," are too prudent to yield to the summons of love. And therefore in the deepest sense each has failed:—

"Each life's unfulfilled you see;
It hangs still patchy and scrappy;
We have not sigh'd deep, laugh'd free,
Starved, feasted, despaired,—been happy."

So yet again in "The Statue and the Bust," the Duke and the lady will not break down the slight barrier that separates their lives; they postpone the infinite moment of accomplishment, and therefore

> "Gleam by gleam
> The glory dropped from their youth and love,
> And both perceived they had dreamed a dream."

What though the completion of their love had been a crime! It served none the less as the test of their lives; and therefore love was not their sin, but to have failed in love, and thus, when the bridegroom passed to his joy, to have remained without because the loin was ungirt and the lamp unlit. And once more,—it is the same failure in the trial of life which condemns to the shame and hell of a low worldliness the evil one of "The Inn Album." There was a time when he might have given all for love, and have well lost the world; but it was his choice to gain the world and losing love, to lose his own soul.

> "Slowly, surely, creeps
> Day by day o'er me the conviction—here
> Was life's prize grasped at, gained, and then let go!
> That with her—may be, for her—I had felt
> Ice in me melt, grow steam, drive to effect
> Any or all the fancies sluggish here
> I' the head that needs the hand she would not take
> And I shall never lift now."

Over against the group of these lost souls who have abjured or forfeited love, stands the group of those whom love has glorified and saved, pure it may be with a radiant spotlessness, or, it may be, soiled and stained with griefs and shames and sins, but yet redeemed by love. And thus Colombe of Ravestein, fair in her innocence and radiant energy of heart, renouncing the world, and entering into the joy of her love, stands side by side with the sorrowful lady of "The Inn Album," who being defrauded of love, the true food of life, will not stay her hunger with the swines' husks, but will hunger on till God fulfil what man has failed to accomplish :

> "There is
> Heaven, since there is Heaven's simulation—earth;
> I sit possessed in patience; prison-roof
> Shall break one day, and Heaven beam overhead."

The sins of one who, amid his sins, is yet true to a disinterested love are leniently regarded by Mr Browning; the sin of worldliness, the sophistries of the coward-heart are in his eyes unpardonable. In "Bifurcation" a noble adhesion to duty accompanied with the hope that in the end duty will itself open a way to love, that heaven will "repair what wrong earth's journey did," is contrasted with an erring loyalty to love accompanied with the hope that in the end love will become one with duty. The poet does not venture to apportion praise and blame between her who postponed love, and him who postponed duty.

> "Inscribe each tomb thus; then, some sage acquaint
> The simple—which holds sinner, which holds saint."

Those periods of life which appear most full of moral purpose to Mr Tennyson, are periods of protracted self-control, and those moments stand eminent in life in which the spirit has struggled victoriously in the cause of conscience against impulse and desire. With Mr Browning the moments are most glorious in which the obscure tendency of many years has been revealed by the lightning of sudden passion, or in which a resolution that changes the current of life has been taken in reliance upon that insight which vivid emotion bestows; and those periods of our history are charged most fully with moral purpose which take their direction from moments such as these. We cannot always burn with the ecstasy, we cannot always retain the vision. Our own languors and lethargy spread a mist over the soul, or the world with its prudential motives and sage provisoes, and chicane of counsels of moderation, tempts us to distrust the voice of every transcendent passion. But even in the hour of faithlessness, if we can cling blindly to the facts revealed in the vanished moment of inspiration we shall be saved.

> "Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!
>   But not quite so sunk that moments,
> Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
>   When the spirit's true endowments
> Stand out plainly from its false ones,
>   And apprise it if pursuing
> Or the right way or the wrong way,
>   To its triumph or undoing.
>
> There are flashes struck from midnights,
>   There are fire-flames noon-days kindle,
> Whereby piled-up honours perish,
>   Whereby swoln ambitions dwindle,
> While just this or that poor impulse
>   Which for once had play unstifled
> Seems the sole work of a life-time
>   That away the rest have trifled."

In such a moment the somewhat dull youth of "The Inn Album" rises into the justiciary of the Highest; in such a moment Polyxena with her right woman's-manliness discovers to Charles his regal duty, and infuses into her weaker husband her own courage of heart:—

> "'Twill be, I feel,
> Only in moments that the duty's seen
> As palpably as now—the months, the years
> Of painful indistinctness are to come."

And rejoicing in the remembrance of a moment of high emotion which determined the issues of a life, the speaker of "By the Fireside" exclaims :—

"How the world is made for each of us!
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit—the thing it does."

It is natural that Mr Browning should look to these moments of passionate insight for the disclosures of our highest duty, and should seek for its leadings less in the objective arrangements of society, or the external accidents of our lives, than in the inward promptings of the heart.* But love here, as every other high form of ardour or enthusiasm, implies without and above us a supreme Loving Will; and hence it is not aimless or fruitless even if on earth it seem to fail. Gifts prove their use; in the apparent failure and disappointment of the loving heart, there is contained an ultimate success —everlasting desire, aspiration, endeavour, with a Love of God always overhead. The true "love" is not included

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* A comparison of the conservative with the movement poet in J. S. Mill's essay on Alfred de Vigny is throughout in large measure applicable to the two poets considered in the present study. "Of the virtues and beauties of our common humanity [Mr Tennyson] views with most affection those which have their natural growth under the shelter of fixed habits and firmly settled opinions; local and family attachments; . . . those emotions which can be invested with the character of duties; those of which the objects are, as it were, marked out by the arrangements either of nature or of society, we ourselves exercising no choice: [Mr Browning] delights in painting the affections which choose their own objects, especially the most powerful of these, passionate love, and of that, the more vehement oftener than the more graceful aspects; selects by preference its subtlest workings and its most unusual and unconventional forms, and shows it at war with the forms and customs of society."

"in a life," but the "life" is sustained and carried endlessly forward "in a love."* Pompilia and Caponsacchi are not two defrauded souls; the work of time remains and grows throughout eternity:—

> "O lover of my life, O soldier-saint,
> No work begun shall ever pause for death!
> Love will be helpful to me more and more
> I' the coming course, the new path I must tread,
> My weak hand in thy strong hand, strong for that!"

Here, as in every instance, each of the poets insists on the complementary portion of a great truth. Passion may degrade itself to unworthy objects, or may warp the operation of our higher powers by subtle encroachments. If we love, let our love be like that of the blameless Arthur, not like that of a Tristram or a Lancelot. But on the other hand, self-control, self-superintendence, and so-called obedience to duty may decline to a mere trade, a gross and obvious mechanism, agreeable to the lethargy of our nature because it protects us from the unexpected summons of chivalrous emotion, and forbids the difficult casuistry of the finer spirit of justice. The Duty before whom flowers laugh, and through whom the most ancient Heavens are fresh and strong, is a living Presence whose countenance changes forever with quickening hopes and fears, and whose limbs are instinct with the spirit of freedom and of joy.

With regard to the political passion, again, Mr Browning is in contrast with Mr Tennyson. To co-operate with the slowly evolving tendency of human progress is, as conceived by Mr Tennyson, the highest duty of the leader of men. His ideal of a modern patriot is an English gentleman who has a seat in Parliament and carries a valuable amendment; one especially who in times of tumultuous change stands firm by the party of order:—

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* See the two contrasted poems, "Love in a Life," and "Life in a Love."

> "A soul on highest mission bent,
> A potent voice of Parliament,
> A pillar steadfast in the storm
>
> Should licenced boldness gather force;"

but one also who, when the fulness of the times has come, may prove

> "A lever to uplift the earth
> And roll it in another course."

Mr Browning sympathises rather with the bright enthusiasm for freedom, which receives its promptings from the everlasting ideals that haunt the soul of man more than from the turn of external events. And so in the face of all chances of failure Luigi sets out one spring night to free his country from the tyrant, and to receive that gift of the morning star which God reserves for him who overcometh and keepeth his works to the end. And if failure follow, and earth is lost, at least Heaven remains; so the patriot knows whose place is not in his seat in Parliament, but in the cart at the Shambles' Gate,

> "Thus I entered, and thus I go!
> In triumphs people have dropped down dead.
> 'Paid by the World,—what dost thou owe
> Me?' God might question: now instead
> 'Tis God shall repay! I am safer so."

Here again each of the poets expresses one portion of a truth. Without reverence for duty, of which freedom is the essential condition, there is no genuine love of freedom. That is Mr Tennyson's portion of the truth. But passion for a righteous cause may reveal new ideals of duty, and may confer power sufficient to advance toward them. That is Mr Browning's portion of the same truth.

Once more: Compare Mr Browning's manner of estimating the worth of knowledge with that of Mr Tennyson. It is the widening of the horizon of ascertained truth, each positive gain, each scientific discovery or mechanical invention which Mr Tennyson chiefly values; such knowledge being however subordinate to a higher Wisdom, which tempers the audacities of the intellect with influence from the loving traditions of the heart. To Mr Browning the gleams of knowledge which we possess are of chief value because they "sting with hunger for full light." The goal of knowledge, as of love, is God Himself. Its most precious part is that which is least positive—those momentary intuitions of things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard.* The needs of the highest part of our humanity cannot be supplied by ascertained truth, in which we might rest or which we might put to use for definite, limited ends; rather by ventures of faith, which test the courage of the soul, we ascend from surmise to assurance, and so again to higher surmise. And therefore the revelation of God in Christ has left room for doubt and guess, because growth is the law of man's nature and perfected knowledge would have stayed his growth:—

> "Man knows partly but conceives beside,
> Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,

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* See "Easter Day," xxvii., xxviii.

> And in this striving, this converting air
> Into a solid, he may grasp and use,
> Finds progress."

And thus in "The Ring and the Book" the Pope anticipates that the mission of the age immediately after his own, the mission of the *sæculum rationalisticum* may be

> "To shake
> This torpor of assurance from our creed,
> Reintroduce the doubt discarded."

But while the room left by the revelation of God for ventures of faith is really room left for spiritual progress, Christianity, by its promise of a boundless life beyond the grave is saved from the failure of heathenism, which could not extinguish man's longings for a higher than material or terrestrial perfection, but was unable to utilise them, or to suggest how they could be transformed from restlessness and self-conflict to a sustaining hope. This is the sorrow of Cleon; the life of man in this world is inadequate to his soul's demands. Accordingly the poetry of paganism is, for Mr Browning, the poetry of sorrow; the poetry of Christianity is that of joy attained through all apparent sorrows. To Cleon the limitations of life, the prospect of death, the approach of age, are all sources of agony which were fruitless, but that it serves to suggest a faint surmise of some future state "unlimited in capability for joy." To the old Rabbi ben Ezra, —partaker with Christians of the faith in immortality, —age is an ecstasy and death a rapture :—

> "Look not thou down but up!
> To uses of a cup,
> The festal board, lamp's flash, and trumpet's peal,

> The new wine's foaming flow,
> The Master's lips a-glow!
> Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with earth's wheel?"

I have illustrated Mr Browning's system of thought chiefly from his shorter poems; but to the same central ideas belong "Paracelsus," "Sordello," and "Easter Day." In each we read "a soul's tragedy." Paracelsus aspires to absolute knowledge, the attainment of which is forbidden by the conditions of our existence. In the same poem a second phase of the same error, that of refusing for the present to submit to the terms of life, is represented in the Shelley-like poet, Aprile, who would "love infinitely and be loved." Paracelsus is the victim of an aspiring *intellect;* Aprile, of the temptations of a yearning, passionate *heart.* Mr Browning attempted to complete our view of this side of the subject by exhibiting the failure of an attempt to manifest the infinite scope, and realise the infinite energy of *will,* the inability of a great nature to deploy all its magnificent resources, and to gain a full consciousness of its own existence by the exercise of sway and mastery, whether as politician or poet, over the mass of men. And thus was written "Sordello," a companion poem to "Paracelsus." The need of Sordello, above all other needs, although it was but at the last he came to perceive this, was of some Power above himself, some soul above his soul, to which he should have yielded himself, and which would have made Love a taskmaster over him, constraining him to stoop to service however subject to the limitations of our manhood—his need was indeed no other than that of a God in Christ.

But the same subject has another side, and this Mr Browning has also been careful to present. It was the error of Paracelsus and Aprile and Sordello to endeavour to overleap the limitations of life, or to force within those limits an infinity of knowledge, emotion or volition, which they are unable to contain. It is no less fatal an error to rest content within the bounds of our present existence, accepting this as final, or to cease straining beyond all earthly things to the highest wisdom, love, beauty, goodness—in a word, to God. And this is the side of the subject which is regarded in "Easter Day." Why is the condemnation of the soul by God in that Dream inevitable? Because the speaker in the Dream failed in the probation of life—accepted the finite joys and aims of earth, each with some taint in it, as sufficient and perfect, and never grasped at or yearned towards the heavenly influences and joys that flitted faint and rare above the earthly, but which were taintless and therefore best.

With "The Ring and the Book" began a distinct period in Mr Browning's career as poet. In the name of that poem lay a piece of symbolic meaning; to work into the form of a ring the virgin gold, the artificer needs to mingle alloy with the metal; the ring once made, a spirt of acid drives off the alloy in fume. So in the story of the Roman murder-case the poet mingled fancy or falsehood with truth—not for falsehood's sake, but for the sake of truth. The characteristic of Mr Browning's later poetry is that it is forever tasking falsehood to yield up fact, forever (to employ imagery of his own) as a swimmer beating the treacherous water with the feet in order that the head may rise higher into pure air made for the spirit's breathing. Mr Browning's genius unites an intellect which delights in the investigation of complex problems with a spiritual and emotional nature which reveals itself in swift and simple solutions of those problems ; it unites an analytic or discursive power supplied by the head with an intuitive power furnished by the heart or soul. Now in Mr Browning's earlier poems his strong spiritual ardours and intuitions were the factors of his art which most decisively made their presence felt ; impassioned truth often flashed upon the reader through no intervening and resisting medium. However the poet expended his force of intellect in following the moral casuistry of a Blougram, we felt where the truth lay. In "The Ring and the Book," and in a far greater degree in some more recent poems, while the supreme authority resides in the spiritual intuitions or the passions of the heart, their momentary decisive work waits until a prolonged casuistry has accomplished its utmost ; falsehood seems almost more needful to the poet than truth.

And yet it is never actually so. Rather to the poet, as truth-seeker, it appeared a kind of cowardice to seek truth only where it might easily be found : the strenuous hunter will track it through all winding ways of error. The masculine characters in Mr Browning's poems are ordinarily made the exponents of his intellectual casuistry—a Hohenstiel-Schwangau, an Aristophanes—the female characters from Pippa and Polyxena to Pompilia, and Balaustion are revealers to men of divine truth, which with them is either a celestial grace, or a dictate of pure human passion. Eminent moments of life have the same interest for the poet now as formerly—moments when life, caught up out of the ways of custom and low levels of prudence, takes its guidance and inspiration from a sudden discovery of truth through some high ardour of the heart; therefore it does not seem much to him to task his ingenuity through almost all the pages of a lengthy book in creating a tangle and embroilment of evil and good, of truth and falsehood, in order that a shining moment at last may spring forward and do its work of severing absolutely and finally right from wrong, and shame from splendour. Thus Mr Browning came more and more to throw himself into prolonged intellectual sympathy with characters towards whom his moral sense stood in ardent antagonism. We saw the errors of an idealist Aprile; they were easy to understand; let us now hear all that an Aristophanes, darkening the light that is in him, may have to say in his own behalf. We saw how the poetry of a Chiappino's life descended into ignoble prose. Let us now hear the self-defence of the prosaic life of action, a life of compromise and expediency, from the lips of Hohenstiel-Schwangau. We saw the passionate fidelity of love in a Colombe, in a Norbert. Let us now hear all that a husband of Elvire can say to prove that he may fitly be on the track of a fizgig like Fifine. Mr Browning's courageous adhesion to truth never deserts him; only, like that of Hugues,

> "His fugue broadens and thickens
> Greatens and deepens and lengthens;"

until we are tempted at times to ask like the bewildered organist, "But where is the music?" And there are one or two poems in which we wait in vain for any unstopping of the full-organ, any blare of the *mode Palestrina.* A strenuous acceptance of the world for the sake of things higher than worldly is enjoined by the first principles of Mr Browning's way of thinking; the falsehoods of life must therefore be accepted, understood, and mastered for the sake of truth. His best gift to his age is however not intellectual casuistry. Better to us than his teaching of truth by falsehood is his teaching of truth as truth. Though in his recent poems he may linger long between "turf" and "towers," carefully studying each, a moment usually comes of such terrible impassioned truth-seeking as that which proved the sanity of Leonce-Miranda. To approach the real world, to take it as it is and for what it is, yet at the same time to penetrate it with sudden spiritual fire has been the aim of Mr Browning's later poetry.*

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* The earliest appearance in Mr Browning's poetry of what I have spoken of as its central thought is in a passage of "Pauline" and in the note in French appended to that passage.

1867.

GEORGE ELIOT.

When we have passed in review the works of that great writer who calls herself George Eliot, and given for a time our use of sight to her portraitures of men and women, what form, as we move away, persists on the field of vision, and remains the chief centre of interest for the imagination? The form not of Tito, or Maggie, or Dinah, or Silas, but of one who, if not the real George Eliot, is that second self who writes her books, and lives and speaks through them. Such a second self of an author is perhaps more substantial than any mere human personality encumbered with the accidents of flesh and blood and daily living. It stands at some distance from the primary self, and differs considerably from its fellow. It presents its person to us with fewer reserves; it is independent of local and temporary motives of speech or of silence; it knows no man after the flesh; it is more than an individual; it utters secrets, but secrets which all men of all ages are to catch; while, behind it, lurks well pleased the veritable historical self secure from impertinent observation and criticism. With this second self of George Eliot it is, not with the actual historical person, that we have to do. And when, having closed her books, we gaze outward with the mind's eye, the spectacle we see is that most impressive spectacle of a great nature, which has suffered and has now attained, which was perplexed and has now grasped the clue—standing before us not without tokens on lip and brow of the strife and the suffering, but resolute, and henceforth possessed of something which makes self-mastery possible. The strife is not ended, the pain may still be resurgent; but we perceive on which side victory must lie.

This personal accent in the writings of George Eliot does not interfere with their dramatic truthfulness; it adds to the power with which they grasp the heart and conscience of the reader. We cannot say with confidence of any one of her creations that it is a projection of herself; the lines of their movement are not deflected by hidden powers of attraction or repulsion peculiar to the mind of the author; most noteworthy is her impartiality towards the several creatures of her imagination; she condemns but does not hate; she is cold or indifferent to none; each lives his own life, good or bad; but the author is present in the midst of them, indicating, interpreting; and we discern in the moral laws, the operation of which presides over the action of each story, those abstractions from the common fund of truth which the author has found most needful to her own deepest life. We feel in reading these books that we are in the presence of a soul, and a soul which has had a history.

At the same time the novels of George Eliot are not didactic treatises. They are primarily works of art, and George Eliot herself is artist as much as she is teacher. Many good things in particular passages of her writings are detachable; admirable sayings can be cleared from their surroundings, and presented by themselves, knocked out clean as we knock out fossils from a piece of limestone. But if we separate the moral soul of any complete work of hers from its artistic medium, if we murder to dissect, we lose far more than we gain. When a work of art can be understood only by enjoying it, the art is of a high kind. The best criticism of Shakspere is not that which comes out of profound cogitation, but out of immense enjoyment; and the most valuable critic is the critic who communicates sympathy by an exquisite record of his own delights, not the critic who attempts to communicate thought. In a less degree the same is true of George Eliot. There is not a hard kernel of dogma at the centre of her art, and around it a sheath or envelope which we break and throw away; the moral significance coalesces with the narrative, and lives through the characters.

In George Eliot's poems the workmanship is not less sincere than that of her prose writings, and a token of sincerity is that inasmuch as she laboured under a disadvantage, that disadvantage immediately shows itself. These honest failures are immensely more precious than any possible piece of splendid mendacity in art, which might have gained a temporary success. The poems are conspicuously inferior to the novels, and a striking indication that poetry is not George Eliot's element as artist is this, that in her poems the idea and the matter do not really interpenetrate; the idea stands above the matter as a master above a slave, and subdues the matter to its will. The ideal motives of "The Spanish Gipsy," of "Jubal," of "Armgart," can be stated in a concise form of words. For the mystery of life there is substituted the complexity of a problem of moral dynamics, a calculable composition of forces. And with this the details of the poems are necessarily in agreement. A large rhythm sustains the verse, similar in nature to the movement of a calmly musical period of prose; but at best the music of the lines is a measurable music; under the verse there lies no living heart of music, with curious pulsation, and rhythm, which is a miracle of the blood. The carefully-executed lyrics of Juan and Fedalma are written with an accurate knowledge of what song is, and how it differs from speech. The author was acquainted with the precise position of the vocal organs in singing; the pity is she could not sing. The little modelled verses are masks taken from the dead faces of infantile lyrics that once lived and breathed.

Having been brought into the presence of the nature which has given us these books, the first thing which strikes us is its completeness. No part of our humanity seems to have been originally deficient or malformed. While we read what she has written the blood circulates through every part of our system. We are not held suspended in a dream with brain asleep. The eye of common observation is not blinded by an excess of mystical glory; the heart is made to throb with fervour; the conscience is aware of the awful issues of life and death; the lip is made facile to laughter. The genius of this writer embraces us like the air on every side. If some powerful shock have numbed for a while any one of our nerves of sensation, she plays upon it with a stimulating restorative flow. And in this fact of the completeness of her nature we receive a guarantee of the importance of any solution which George Eliot may have wrought out for herself of the moral difficulties of life. No part of the problem is likely to have been ignored. From a partial nature we can expect only a partial solution, and the formation of a sect. To be a modern Pagan may be easy and eminently satisfactory to a creature who has nothing within him which makes the devotion of the Cross more than a spectacle of foolishness. To annihilate the external world, and stand an unit of volition in the presence of a majestic moral order, is sufficient to a naked will, like Fichte, a central point of soul which knows not imagination or memory, or the sweet inspirations and confidences of the flesh and blood. Such a nature as George Eliot's may indeed arrive at a very partial solution of the problem of highest living, and may record its answer in the phraseology of a sect; but the result will have been reached by some process different from the easy one of narrowing the terms in which the problem has been stated.

In this nature, complete in all its parts, and with every part strong, the granite-like foundation of the whole is conscience, the moral perceptions and the moral will. Abstract the ethical interest from "Romola," or from "The Spanish Gypsy," and there is total collapse of design, characters, incidents. Other story-tellers centre our hopes and fears in the happiness or unhappiness of their chief personages; a wedding or a funeral brings to an end at once our emotional disturbance and the third volume of the novel. George Eliot is profoundly moved by the spectacle of human joy and human sorrow; death to her is always tragic, but there is something more tragic than cessation of the breath, and of the pulse; there is the slow letting go of life and the ultimate extinction of a soul; to her the marriage joys are dear, but there is something higher than the highest happiness of lovers. "What greater thing," she muses, while Adam and Dinah stand with clasped hands, and satisfied hearts, "what greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined for life, to strengthen each other in all labour, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in all pain, to be one with each other in silent, unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting." She has shown us one thing greater,—the obedience of man and woman to a summons more authoritative than that of any personal emotion:—

> We must walk
> Apart unto the end. Our marriage rite
> Is our resolve that we will each be true
> To high allegiance, higher than our love.

When Tom and Maggie sink in the hurrying Floss there is left an aching sense of abrupt incompleteness, of imperious suspension, of intolerable arrest; and with this a sense of the utter helplessness of our extremest longings. The musician's hand has broken the movement in the midst, and it can never be taken up again. This is cruel to all our tender desires for joy. But there is something more dreadful. When the heavens break up over the head of Silas Marner, when the lots declare him, the innocent man, guilty in the midst of the congregation of Lantern Yard; when he goes out with despair in his soul, with shaken trust in God and man, to live for weary years a life of unsocial and godless isolation, accumulating his hoard of yellow pieces, the tragedy is deeper. When the beautiful Greek awakes from his swoon beside the Arno to find no pleasant solitary lair, but the vindictive eyes of Baldassare looking down at him, and the eager knuckles at his throat, the real piteousness and terror is not that a young man is about to die, but that now the visible seal of finality is to be set upon that death of the soul which had already taken place.

In each tale of George Eliot's telling if the question arise of the ruin or restoration of moral character, every other interest becomes subordinate to this. The nodes of the plot from which new developments spring are often invisible spiritual events. It is a crisis and we feel it to be such, when there falls into Maggie's hands a copy of *De Imitatione Christi;* the incident is fraught, we are at once aware, with momentous consequences. "'Father, I have not been good to you; but I will be, I will be,' said Esther, laying her head on his knee." Slight words, but words which determine an epoch, because as they were uttered, self-love was cast behind, and the little action of laying her head upon her father's knee was endowed with sacramental efficacy. The relations that human beings can form with one another which are most intimate, most full of fate, are with George Eliot not intellectual or merely social relations, but essentially moral. Eppie toddles in through the weaver's open door, and does much more than console him for his lost treasure; she is to him the sunshine and spring breeze thawing the arrested stream of his affections, delivering him from his state of unnatural isolation, and re-uniting him with his fellow-men. Edgar Tryan brings happiness to Janet, but it is by saving her soul. Felix Holt is much more than a lover ; painfully divested of coats and neck-ties (not an example, in this particular it may be hoped to all proletarian Radicals), with his somewhat formulated nobility, and his *doctrinaire* delight in exposition of principles, he yet is a genuine moral nature, and approaching Esther Lyon as a conscience approaches a conscience, and with an almost rude insistency of moral force, he becomes the discoverer to her of the heroisms which lay concealed in her own dainty feminine nature. To Romola her early love is as a morning cloud, growing momently fainter and more distant ; the one profound attachment which she forms is to her spiritual father, the man "who had been for her an incarnation of the highest motives," who had forced her to submit to the painful supremacy of conscience.

The conscience of George Eliot asserts itself so strongly because there are in her nature other powers strong also, and urging great claims upon the will. Her senses are framed for rich and varied pleasure. The avenues between the senses and the imagination are traversed to and fro by swift and secret intelligencers. There are blind motions in her blood, which respond to vague influences, the moral nature of which may be determined by a contingency ; there are deep incalculable instincts, the heritage from past generations, which suddenly declare themselves with an energy that had not been surmised. There are zeals and ardours of the heart, eager demands and eager surrenders. There is the grasping, permitted or restrained, of a richly endowed nature after joy,—after joy from which to avert the eyes for ever is bitter as the sundering of flesh and soul. This nature, in which conscience must needs be stern, is a nature of passionate sensibility. The pure gleaming of gems, the perfect moulding of a woman's arm, the face of youth that is like a flower, and its aureole of bright hair, the strong voice of a singer that urges and controls, the exquisite movement and excitement of the dance, not one of these fails to find an answer in the large joy-embracing nature of George Eliot. We recall to mind Tito's presence in the dark library of Bardi, "like a wreath of spring dropped suddenly in Romola's young but wintry life;" and the fascination exercised over Adam by the sweet, rounded, blossom-like, dark-eyed Hetty; and Maggie borne along by the wave of arrogant baritone music too strong for her; and the wonder and worship of Rufus Lyon in presence of that miracle of grace, the Frenchwoman found by the roadside; and Fedalma circling to the booming and ringing tambourine, under the flushed clouds and in midst of the spectators of the Plaça:—

> Ardently modest, sensuously pure,
> With young delight that wonders at itself,
> And throbs as innocent as opening flowers,
> Knowing not comment, soilless, beautiful.
>
> * * * *
>
> All gathering influences culminate,
> And urge Fedalma. Earth and heaven seem one,
> Life a glad trembling on the outer edge
> Of unknown rapture.

This capacity for pure joy, this noble sensibility to beauty, are attributes, not of the lower characters of George Eliot's creating, but of the worthiest. They are felt by her to be derived from the strength of our nature, not from its weakness. Adam Bede falls in love with a woman who has nothing to recommend her but exquisite curves of cheek and neck, the liquid depth of beseeching eyes, the sweet childish pout of the lips, and he cleaves to her with almost a humility of devotion. Does George Eliot think meanly of her hero for a proceeding so unbecoming a sensible man? By no means. She perceives that "beauty has an expression beyond and far above the one woman's soul that it clothes; as the words of genius have a wider meaning than the thought that prompted them. It is more than a woman's love that moves us in a woman's eyes—it seems to be a far-off mighty love that has come near to us, and made speech for itself there; the rounded neck, the dimpled arm, move us by something more than their prettiness—by their close kinship with all we have known of tenderness and peace. The noblest nature sees the most of this *impersonal* expression in beauty." Whence sometimes, as in the case of Adam, tragic consequences.

A man or woman endowed with great susceptibility to beauty, and prior to experience making large demands upon the world for joy, runs the risk of terrible calamity. Dissociated from the sympathetic emotions the immoderate love of beauty, as Baudelaire has well said, "leads men to monstrous and unheard of disorders." The appetite for joy consumes all that the earth can afford, and remains fierce and insatiate. It is impossible even to imagine such a calamity overtaking George

Eliot, so numerous, and full of soundness and vigour are the sympathies which bind her to her fellows. There are certain artists who concentrate the light of an intense intelligence and passionate sympathy upon their two or three chief figures, which move in an oppressive glare of consciousness, while towards the rest they show themselves almost indifferent. George Eliot's sympathy spreads with a powerful and even flow in every direction. Hetty, with her little butterfly soul, pleasure-loving but not passionate, luxurious, vain, hard of heart, is viewed with the sincerest and most intelligent sympathy. Tito is condemned, decreed to death, but he is understood far too truly to be an object of hatred. Tessa, the pretty pigeon,—Hinda, who has little more soul than a squirrel, are lovable after their kind ; and up from these through the hierarchy of human characters to Romola and Fedalma, to Zarca and Savonarola, there is not one grade too low, not one too high for love to reach. Poverty of nature and the stains of sin cannot alienate the passionate attachment of this heart to all that is human. "See, Lord," prays Dinah in the prison, "I bring her, as they of old brought the sick and helpless, and thou didst heal them ; I bear her on my arms, and carry her before thee." The long unnatural uses of a defeated life, which distort the character and render it grotesque, cannot hide from these eyes its possibilities of beauty. Mr Gilfil, the caustic old gentleman with bucolic tastes and sparing habits, many knots and ruggednesses appearing on him like the rough bosses of a tree that has been marred, is recognizable as the Maynard Gilfil "who had known all the deep secrets of devoted love, had struggled through its days and nights of anguish, and trembled under its unspeakable joys." And the saddest ordeal of love—to witness the diminishing purity and splendour of a star-like soul, the clouding-over of a heroic nature by a film of dishonour—this too is endurable by the faithfulness of the heart. The day of the great Dominican's death is to the last a day of sacred commemoration to Romola; all his errors, all his weaknesses are forgiven.

George Eliot's manifold sympathies create behind her principal figures an ample background in which they find play and find repose. An English landscape in the manner of Constable, rich with rough, soft colour, and infallible in local truth is first presented. Men, women, children, animals are seen, busy about their several concerns. The life of a whole neighbourhood grows up before us; and from this the principal figures never altogether detach themselves. Thus a perspective is produced; the chief personages are not thrust up against the eye; actions are seen passing into their effects; reverberations of voices are heard strangely altering and confused; and the emotions of the spectator are at once roused and tranquillized by the presence of a general life surrounding the lives of individuals. Hetty disappears, but the affairs of the Hall Farm still go on; Savonarola falls, but Florence remains. No more exquisite back-ground group can be found in the literature of fiction than the Poyser household, from the little sunny-haired Totty, and her brothers as like their father as two small elephants are like a great elephant, up to Martin Poyser the elder, sitting in his arm-chair with hale, shrunken limbs, and "the quiet *outward* glance of healthy old age," which "spies out pins on the floor, and watches the flickering of the flame or the sungleams on the wall." The pathos of their shame and sorrow deepens in the presence of the unconsciousness of childhood, and the half-consciousness of self-contented age.

But the sympathies of George Eliot reach out from the slow movement of the village, from the inharmonious stir of the manufacturing town, from the Hall Farm, and from the bar of the Rainbow Inn to the large interests of collective humanity. The artistic enthusiasm of the Renaissance period, the scientific curiosity of the present century, the political life at Florence long since, the political movements of England forty years ago, and religious life in manifold forms—Catholic, Anglican, and Nonconforming, are none of them remote from her imaginative grasp. Here the heart allies itself with a vigorous intellect, the characteristics of which are its need of clearness, of precision; and its habitual turn for generalization. The "unlimited right of private haziness," so dear to many minds, is a right which George Eliot never claims on her own behalf. And in her mind facts, especially moral facts, are for ever grouping themselves into laws; the moral laws which her study of life discovers to her being definite and certain as the facts which they co-ordinate. The presence of a powerful intellect observing, defining, and giving precision explains in part the unfaltering insistance of the ethical purport of these books. It bears down upon the conscience of the reader with painful weight and tenacity.

The truths in presence of which we live, so long as the imagination of George Eliot controls our own, are not surmises, not the conjectures of prudence, not guesses of the soul peering into the darkness which lies around the known world of human destiny, nor are they attained by generous ventures of faith ; they are tyrannous facts from which escape is impossible. Words which come pealing from "a glimmering limit far withdrawn," words "in a tongue no man can understand," do not greatly arouse the curiosity of George Eliot. Other teachers would fain lighten the burden of the mystery by showing us that good comes out of evil. George Eliot prefers to urge, with a force which we cannot resist, the plain and dreadful truth that evil comes out of evil—"whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." No vista of a future life, no array of supernatural powers stationed in the heavens, and about to intervene in the affairs of men, lead her gaze away from the stern, undeniable facts of the actual world. "Our deeds are like children that are born to us ; they live and act apart from our will. Nay, children may be strangled, but deeds never : they have an indestructible life both in and out of our consciousness." Other teachers transfigure and transmute human joys and sorrows, fears and hopes, loves and hatreds, with light from a spiritual world : the sufferings of the present time are made radiant with the coming of the glory which shall be revealed in us : in George Eliot's writings it is the common light of day that falls upon our actions and our sufferings ; but each act, and each sorrow, is dignified and made important by the consciousness of that larger life of which they form a part—the life of our whole race, descending from the past, progressing into the future, surrounding us at this moment on every side.

As was to be expected from the translator of Feuerbach's "Essence of Christianity," religion is approached with an ardent tenderness. The psychology of the religious consciousness had been accepted by Feuerbach in its entirety; but theological metaphysics were abandoned. For supernaturalism, naturalism was substituted; the phenomena remained the same, but the substance was changed. A miracle not priestly but scientific was effected—the bread and wine which feed the soul, and which had been very God, became now very man, and nothing more than man; in the sacred acts and dogmas of religion man presents to himself his own flesh and his own blood, and feeds upon them. "God is an unutterable sigh, lying in the depths of the heart." The supernatural basis of religion is denied; a natural one assumes its place; and the phenomena remain unchanged. Such a doctrine adapts itself readily to the purpose of the novelist. Absolute fidelity in representing the facts of the religious consciousness is not only permitted, but enjoined; and every phase of religious faith and feeling from the rudest to the most noble and the purest, becomes precious to the lover of mankind. The Rev. Rufus Lyon in the chapel of Malt-house Yard, Dinah Morris on the Green of Hayslope, the Frate in the Duomo of Florence, Mr Tryan who preached the Gospel at Milby, and Dr Kenn who preached the Church at St Oggs—one and all are dear to the affectionate student of religious emotion.

Dolly Winthrop's feeling of religious truths "in her inside," and the naïve anthropomorphism of her Raveloe theology, contain the essence of all religion, and differ from the sublimest devotion of saint or mystic not by kind but by degree :—"Well, Master Marner, it's niver too late to turn over a new leaf, and if you've niver had no church, there's no telling the good it 'll do you. For I feel so set up and comfortable as niver was, when I've been and heard the prayers, and the singing to the praise and glory o' God as Mr Macey gives out—and Mr Crackenthorp saying good words, and more partic'lar on Sacramen' Day ; and if a bit o' trouble comes, I feel I can put up wi' it, for I've looked for help i' the right quarter, and gev myself up to Them as we must all give ourselves up to at the last ; and if we'n done our part, it isn't to be believed as Them as are above us 'ull be worse nor we are, and come short o' Theirn." The triumph of George Eliot's art is that her portraitures of the religious nature, conspicuously that most noble one of the female Methodist preacher, are never mere artistic studies ; there is no touch of unsympathetic intellectuality about them ; no touch of coldness. And here, surely, there is more than a triumph of art. One cannot but believe that a large religious experience lies somewhere in the life of the writer herself, now, perhaps, receiving a different interpretation from that which it originally yielded ; but not thrown away as worthless, nor turned from as ignoble.

George Eliot's humour allies itself with her intellect on the one hand, and with her sympathies and moral perceptions on the other. The grotesque in human character is reclaimed from the province of the humorous by her affections, when that is possible, and is shown to be a pathetic form of beauty. The pale, brown-eyed weaver, gazing out from his cottage door with blurred vision, or poring with miserly devotion over his golden hoard, touches us, but does not make us smile. The comedy of incident, the farcical, lies outside her province; once or twice, for reasons that appear hardly adequate, the comedy of incident was attempted, and the result was not successful. The humour of George Eliot usually belongs to her entire conception of a character, and cannot be separated from it. Her humorous effects are secured by letting her mind drop sympathetically into a level of lower intelligence, or duller moral perception, and by the conscious presence at the same time of the higher self. The humorous impression exists only in the qualified organs of perception which remain at the higher, the normal point of view. What had been merely an undulation of matter, when it touches the prepared surface of the retina, breaks into light. By the fire of the "Rainbow Inn," the butcher and the farrier, the parish clerk and the deputy clerk puff their pipes with an air of severity, "staring at one another as if a bet were depending on the first man who winked," while the humbler beer-drinkers "keep their eyelids down, and rub their hands across their mouths as if the draughts of beer were a funeral duty, attended with embarrassing sadness." The slow talk about the red Durham is conducted with a sense of grave responsibility on both sides. It is *we* who are looking on unobserved who experience a rippling over of our moral nature with manifold laughter; it is to *our* lips the smile rises—a smile which is expressive not of any acute access of risibility, but of a voluminous enjoyment, a mass of mingled feeling, partly tender, partly pathetic, partly humorous.

The dramatic appropriateness of the humorous utterances of George Eliot's characters renders them unpresentable by way of extract. Each is like the expression of a face which cannot be detached from the face itself. The unresentful complacency with which Dolly Winthrop speaks of the frailties of masculine human creatures is part of the general absence of severity and of high views with respect to others which belongs to her character, and receives illustration from her like complacent forbearance with the natural infirmities of the pups. "They *will* worry and gnaw—worry and gnaw they will, if it was one's Sunday cap as hung anywhere so they could drag it. They know no difference, God help 'em; it's the pushing o' the teeth as sets them on, that's what it is." Contrast Dolly's indulgent allowances in men's favour, tempered by undeniable experiences of their scarcely excusable failings, with the keen and hostile perceptions of Denner, Mrs Transome's waiting-woman, with mind as sharp as a needle, whose neat, clean-cut, small personality is jarred by the rude power, and coarse, incoherent manners of men. "It mayn't be good luck to be a woman," Denner said, "but one begins with it from a baby: one gets used to it. And I shouldn't like to be a man—to cough so loud, and stand straddling about on a wet day, and be so wasteful with meat and drink. They're a coarse lot, I think." We turn for a kindlier judgment to Dolly. "Eh, to be sure," said Dolly, gently, (while instructing Silas in the mysteries of Eppie's wardrobe,) "I've seen men as are wonderful handy wi' children. The men are awk'ard and contrairy mostly, God help 'em; but when the drink's out of 'em, they aren't unsensible, though they're bad for leeching and bandaging—so fiery and unpatient."

Complete in all its parts, and strong in all, the nature of George Eliot is yet not one of those rare natures which without effort are harmonious. There is no impression made more decisively upon the reader of her books than this. No books bear upon their faces more unmistakably the pain of moral conflict, and the pain of moral victory, only less bitter than that of defeat. Great forces warring with one another; a sorrowful, a pathetic victory—that is what we discern. What is the significance of it all?

The need of joy is only another expression for the energy of individual life. To be greatly happy means to live strong and free; a large nature means an abundant capacity for delight. To develop one's own life freely, and to reinforce it with supplies drawn from this side and from that, is the first requirement of man. But what if this immense need of joy imperil the life and happiness of others? What if to satisfy my eager appetite for enjoyment I must take from the little store of my less fortunate neighbour? The child knows nothing of this scarcity in the world of the food of joy. His demands for pleasure are precisely proportioned to his desires. He discovers at first no occasion for self-sacrifice. And there are some child-like souls to whom the facts of life are for ever an offence, and the laws of life an unintelligible tyranny. The god of the world is a jealous god, the "Urizen" of William Blake, who would bind us with the curse and chain of duty. Delight and obedience, man and woman, body and soul, naturally one, are sundered by this evil god. But for Urizen, the god of prohibition, our songs of experience would be only songs of a larger and more joyous innocence :—

Abstinence sows sand all over
  The ruddy limbs and flaming hair;
But desire gratified
  Plants fruits of life and beauty there.

We start and look up at such a voice as this, the clear voice of an immortal child singing in the midst of us conquered and captive men. For the law lays upon all but rare natures its heavy weight. Hence conflict in adult spirits, the individual life, with its need of self-development and of joy asserting vast claims which are opposed by the social affections, by the conscience, and the scientific intellect observing the facts of the world. In some souls the conflict speedily terminates, the forces are unequally arrayed against one another on this side and on that. The social affections and the conscience can make no stand against the egoistic desires, and are crushed in a brief murderous encounter. Or, on the other hand, the sense of personality is feeble, the desire of self-surrender great, and the unity is easily and happily attained of a pure, self-abandoning existence. With George Eliot, when her conflict of life began, the forces on each side were powerful, and there did not at first appear a decisive preponderance of one over the other. A prolonged struggle, with varying fortunes, was to be expected before any victory could be achieved.

The tragic aspect of life, as viewed by this great writer, is derived from the Titanic strife of egoistic desires with duties which the conscience confesses, and those emotions which transcend the interests of the individual. It seems to her no small or easy thing to cast away self. Rather the casting self away is an agony and a martyrdom. All the noblest characters she has conceived, certainly all those characters in presenting which a personal accent seems least doubtfully recognisable—the heroical feminine characters or those that might have been heroical, characters of great sensibility, great imaginative power, great fervour of feeling—Maggie, Romola, Fedalma, Armgart—cling with passionate attachment to the joy which must needs be renounced. The dying to self is the dying of young creatures full of the strength and the gladness of living. The world is indeed cruel; to be happy is so sweet. If the joy were ignoble it could be abandoned with less anguish and remorse, but it is pure and high. Armgart, in the moment of her supreme musical triumph, feels no vulgar pleasure :—

> At the last applause,
> Seeming a roar of tropic winds that tossed
> The handkerchiefs, and many coloured flowers,
> Falling like shattered rainbows all around—
> Think you, I felt myself a *Prima Donna?*
> No, but a happy spiritual star,
> Such as old Dante saw, wrought in a rose
> Of light in Paradise, whose only self
> Was consciousness of glory wide-diffused;
> Music, life, power—I moving in the midst,
> With a sublime necessity of good.

And the rapture of Fedalma in her dance is not less pure, a blossoming of joy. Why should such flowers be torn and cast away?

The problem of life is somewhat simplified by a distinction which is more than once referred to in the writings of George Eliot. "The old Catholics," said Felix Holt, "are right, with their higher rule and their lower. Some are called to subject themselves to a harder discipline, and renounce things voluntarily which are lawful for others. It is the old word, 'necessity is laid upon me.'" While Fedalma is turning away for ever from the man she loves, Hinda washes the shells she has been gathering on the strand; then leaps and scampers back beside her queen. We do not ask Hinda to take upon her the vow of renunciation. There is an appropriateness in Tessa's growing fat with years, and indulging in the amiable practice of a mid-day or afternoon doze. Childlike glee, indolence, comfort, and content—let them retain these, because they can know neither joy nor sorrow of a higher strain. And to hearts that are sore with hidden wounds and unconquerable sense of loss, the pathetic spectacle of their gladness and their repose is assuaging.

But why must Armgart, why must Fedalma lose the brightness of their exquisite joy? Because they may attain to something nobler, something in truer keeping with the world in which they move. They, and such as they, must needs accept the higher rule, subjection to which is the peculiar heritage of largeness and of love. The world is sad, and each of them is a part of it; and being sad, the world needs sympathy more than it needs joy—joy which in its blindness is cruel. While Armgart is engulfed by the splendour of her own felicity, limping Walpurga moves unnoticed about her, the weary girl who knows joy only by negatives, and Leo, the grey-haired musician, lives with sad composure about the graves of his dead hopes and dead delights. While Fedalma dances with free feet, Zarca and his band of chained gipsies are approaching,

> With savage melancholy in their eyes,
> That star-like gleam from out black clouds of hair.*

Romola would fain be delivered from the burden of responsibility, from the cares and obligations of a dusty life, where duties remain and the constraining motive of love is gone, and she drifts away over the dark waters; she awakes to find the sorrow of the world still hemming her in; she cannot release herself from the obedience of the higher rule.

The renunciant's vow is accepted by these great souls, but not without a sudden, cruel discovery of truth, or a long discipline of pain. Armgart, who had been "a happy, spiritual star," will now take humble work and do it well, teach music and singing in some small town, and so pass on Leo's gift of music "to others who can use it for delight." She will bury her dead joy; but it is piteous to do so; she is tender to it; the dead joy is flesh of her flesh; she cannot fling it away or insult it with the savage zeal of the vulgar ascetic :—

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* Possibly the imaginative germ from which this scene, long after, sprung up, may be found in an incident referred to in "Brother and Sister," iv.,—

> "A gypsy once had startled me at play,
> Blotting with her dark smile my sunny day."

O, it is hard,
To take the little corpse and lay it low,
And say "None misses it but me."

Fedalma, choosing sublimer pain, is still the Fedalma of the Plaça grown great through sympathy and sorrow and obedience ; not burying a dead joy, but slaying one that lives—

Firm to slay her joy
That cut her heart with smiles beneath the knife,
Like a sweet babe foredoomed by prophecy.

And Romola, calmly happy and calmly sad in the sweet evening of her life, is the Romola whose heart blossomed with the perfect flower of love in presence of a dark beautiful face, and to the music of a murmuring voice in the untroubled days of her youth.

From the Frate who commanded her to draw forth the crucifix hidden in her bosom, Romola learns the lesson of the Cross which Maggie had learnt less clearly from the voice out of the far-off middle ages. "The higher life begins for us, my daughter, when we renounce our own will to bow before a Divine law. That seems hard to you. It is the portal of wisdom, and freedom and blessedness. And the symbol of it hangs before you. That wisdom is the religion of the Cross. And you stand aloof from it: you are a pagan ; you have been taught to say, 'I am as the wise men who lived before the time when the Jew of Nazareth was crucified.' . . . . What has your dead wisdom done for you, my daughter ? It has left you without a heart for the neighbours among whom you dwell ; without care for the great work by which Florence is to be regenerated and the world made holy :

it has left you without a share in the Divine life which quenches the sense of suffering Self in the ardours of an ever-growing love." Romola's leading of Lillo with gentle, yet firm, hand and sweet austerity into the presence of these great truths indicates how needful she had found them for the uses of life; how patiently and persistently she had acquired their lesson. "It is only a poor sort of happiness that could ever come by caring very much about our own narrow pleasures. We can only have the highest happiness, such as goes along with being a great man, by having wide thoughts and much feeling for the rest of the world as well as ourselves; and this sort of happiness often brings so much pain with it, that we can only tell it from pain by its being what we would choose before everything else, because our souls see it is good."

The same doctrine of the necessity of self-renunciation, of the obligation laid upon men to accept some other rule of conduct than the desire of pleasure, is enforced in the way of warning with terrible emphasis. Tito Melema, Arthur Donnithorne, Godfrey Cass, Maggie Tulliver, are in turn assailed by one and the same temptation—to deny or put out of sight certain duties to others, to gratify some demand for egoistic pleasure or happiness, or to avoid some wholesome necessary pain. Arthur, vain, affectionate, susceptible, owed no one a grudge, and would have liked to see everyone about him happy, and ready to acknowledge that a great part of their happiness was due to the handsome young landlord. Tito was clever and beautiful, kind and gentle in his manners, without a thought of anything cruel or base. And Godfrey was full of easy good nature; and Maggie of a wealth of eager love. But in the linked necessity of evil each of these, beginning with a soft yielding to egoistic desires, becomes capable of deeds or of wishes that are base and cruel. "'It's a woman,' said Silas, speaking low and half-breathlessly, just as Godfrey came up. 'She's dead, I think—dead in the snow at the stone-pits, not far from my door.' Godfrey felt a great throb: there was one terror in his mind at that moment—it was that the woman might *not* be dead. That was an evil terror—an ugly inmate to have found a nestling-place in Godfrey's kindly disposition." Maggie has heard the voice of the great mediæval bearer of the Cross; a higher rule than that of self-pleasing lives in her innermost conscience, and therefore she has strength at the last to renounce the cruel pursuit of personal joy, and to accept a desert for her feet henceforth to walk in, and bitter waters to allay her thirst.

The scientific observation of man, and in particular the study of the mutual relations of the individual and society, come to reinforce the self-renouncing dictates of the heart. To understand any individual apart from the whole life of the race is impossible. We are the heirs intellectual and moral of the past; there is no such thing as naked manhood; the heart of each of us wears livery which it cannot throw off. Our very bodies differ from those of primeval savages—differ, it may be, from those of extinct apes only by the gradual gains of successive generations of ancestors. Our instincts, physical and mental, our habits of thought and feeling, the main tendency of our activity, these are assigned to us by the common life which has preceded and which surrounds our own. "There is no private life," writes George Eliot in "Felix Holt," "which has not been determined by a wider public life, from the time when the primeval milkmaid had to wander with the wanderings of her clan, because the cow she milked was one of a herd which had made the pastures bare."

If this be so, any attempt to render our individual life independent of the general life of the past and present, any attempt to erect a system of thought and conduct out of merely personal convictions and personal desires must be a piece of slight, idealistic fatuity. The worship of the Goddess of Reason and the constitution of the year One, are the illusions of revolutionary idealism, and may fitly be transferred from this Old World which has a history to the rising philosophers and politicians of Cloudcuckoo-town. Not Reason alone, but Reason and Tradition in harmonious action guide our steps to the discovery of truth :—

We had not walked
But for Tradition ; we walk evermore
To higher paths, by brightening Reason's lamp.

Do we desire to be strong? We shall be so upon one condition—that we resolve to draw for strength upon the common fund of thought and feeling and instinct stored up, within us and without us, by the race. We enter upon our heritage as soon as we consent to throw in our lot with that of our fellow-men, those who have gone before us, who are now around us, who follow after us, continuing our lives and works. War waged against the powers by which we are encompassed leads to inevitable defeat; our safety, our honour, our greatness lie in an unconditional surrender.

Here we come upon one chief intention of "The Spanish Gypsy." Zarca is strong, and never falters; Father Isidor is no less strong. The Gypsy chieftain and the Catholic Prior has each accepted with undivided will the law of his life, imposed upon each by the tradition of his nation and his creed. Fedalma attains strength by becoming one with her father and her father's tribe; by bowing in entire submission to the might of hereditary influences. But the Spanish Duke would find in his personal needs and private passions the principles by which to guide his action: he would be a law to himself; he acknowledges no authority superior to his own desires; he resolves to break with his past, and to construct a new life for himself, which shall have no relation to his duties as a Spaniard, a Christian, and a man of ancient blood. Vain effort of an idealist to create from the resources of his inner consciousness a new time and new place other than the actual! Don Silva's nature is henceforth shattered into fragments: he cannot really break with his past; he cannot create a new world in which to live; his personality almost disappears; the gallant cavalier becomes the murderer of his friend and of the father of his love; a twofold traitor.*

It will be readily seen how this way of thinking abolishes rights, and substitutes duties in their place. Of rights of man, or rights of woman, we never hear speech from George Eliot. But we hear much of the duties of each. The claim asserted by the individual on behalf of this or that disappears, because the individual surrenders his independence to collective humanity, of which he is a part. And it is another consequence of this way of thinking that the leadings of duty are most often looked for, not within, in the promptings of the heart, but without, in the relations of external life, which connect us with our fellow-men. Our great English novelist does not preach as her favourite doctrine the indefeasible right of love to gratify itself at the expense of law; with the correlative right, equally indefeasible, to cast away the marriage bond as soon as it has become a painful incumbrance. She regards the formal contract, even when its spirit has long since died, as sacred and of binding force. Why? Because it is a formal contract. "The light abandonment of ties, whether inherited or voluntary, because they had ceased to be pleasant, would be the uprooting of social and personal virtue." Law is sacred. Rebellion, it is true, may be sacred also. There are moments of life "when the soul must dare to act upon its own warrant, not only without external law to appeal to, but in the face of a law which is not unarmed with Divine lightnings —lightnings that may yet fall if the warrant has been false." These moments, however, are of rare occurrence, and arise only in extreme necessity. When Maggie and Stephen Guest are together and alone in the Mudport Inn, and Maggie has announced her determination to accompany him no farther, Stephen pleads:—"'We have proved that it was impossible to keep our resolutions. We have proved that the feeling which draws us to each other is too strong to be overcome: that natural law surmounts every other; we can't help what it clashes with.' 'It is not so, Stephen. I'm quite sure that is wrong. I have tried to think it again and again; but I see, if we judged in that way, there would be a warrant for all treachery and cruelty. We should justify breaking the most sacred ties that can ever be formed on earth. If the past is not to bind us where can duty lie? We should have no law but the inclination of the moment.'" Maggie returns to St. Oggs: Fedalma and Don Silva part: Romola goes back to her husband's house. We can imagine how unintelligible such moral situations, and such moral solutions, would have appeared to the great female novelist of France. The Saint Clotilda of Positivism had partly written a large work intended to refute the attacks upon marriage contained in the writings of George Sand, "to whom," adds her worshipping colleague, "she was intellectually no less than morally superior." Perhaps we may more composedly take on trust the excellence of Madame Clotilde de Vaux's refutation, inasmuch as the same object has been indirectly accomplished by the great female novelist of England, who for her own part has not been insensible to anything that was precious in the influence of Comte.

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* The absence of traditional attachments to the life of Florence leaves Tito without one of the chief guarantees of political honour, and so his facile ability turns easily to treacherous uses.

"If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie?" As the life of the race lying behind our individual life points out the direction in which alone it can move with dignity and strength, so our own past months and years lying behind the present hour and minute deliver over to these a heritage and a tradition which it is their wisdom joyfully to accept when that is possible. There are moments, indeed, which are the beginning of a new life; when, under a greater influence than that of the irreversible Past, the current of our life takes an unexpected course; when a single act transforms the whole aspect of the world in which we move; when contact with a higher nature than our own suddenly discovers to us some heroic quality of our heart of the existence of which we had not been aware. Such is the virtue of confession of evil deeds or desires to a fellow-man; it restores us to an attitude of noble simplicity; we are rescued from the necessity of joining hands with our baser self. But these moments of new birth do not come by intention or choice. The ideal which we may set before ourselves, and count upon making our own by constancy and fidelity of heart, is that which Don Silva imagines for himself:—

> A Past that lives
> On through an added Present, stretching still
> In hope unchecked by shaming memories
> To life's last breath.

If no natural piety binds our days together, let us die quickly rather than die piecemeal by the slow paralyzing touch of time.

All that helps to hold our past and present together is therefore precious and sacred. It is well that our affections should twine tenderly about all material tokens and memorials of bygone days. Why should

Tito keep his father's ring? Why indulge a foolish sentiment, a piece of mere superstition, about an inanimate object? And so Tito sells the ring, and with it closes the bargain by which he sells his soul. There is, indeed, a noble pressing forward to things that are before, and forgetting of things that are behind. George Eliot is not attracted to represent a character in which such an ardour is predominant, and the base forgetting of things behind alarms and shocks her. We find it hard to abstain from reading as autobiographical the little group of eleven poems entitled "Brother and Sister," while at the same time it is impossible to dissociate them from some of the earlier scenes of "The Mill on the Floss." These poems are heavy with the tenderness of memory, filled with all the sweetness and sadness of lost but unforgotten days, and overbowed with the firmament of adult thought, and grief, and love:—

> "The wide-arched bridge, the scented elder-flowers,
> The wondrous watery rings that died too soon,
> The echoes of the quarry, the still hours
> With white robe sweeping-on the shadeless noon,
>
> Were but my growing self, are part of me,
> My present Past, my root of piety."

It is noted, as characteristic of Hetty's shallow nature, that in her dream of the future, the brilliant future of the Captain's wife, there mingles no thought of her second parents, no thought of the children she had helped to tend, of any youthful companion, any pet animal, any relic of her own childhood. "Hetty could have cast all her past life behind her, and never cared to be reminded of it again. I think she had no feeling at all towards the old house, and did not like the Jacob's ladder and the long row of hollyhocks in the garden better than any other flowers—perhaps not so well." Jubal, after his ardent pursuit of song through the world, would return to Lamech's home, "hoping to find the former things." Silas Marner would see once more the town where he was born, and Lantern Yard, where the lots had declared him guilty. But Hetty is like a plant with hardly any roots; "lay it over your ornamental flower-pot and it blossoms none the worse."

This is the life we mortals live. And beyond life lies death. *Now* it is not hard to face it. We have already given ourselves up to the large life of our race. We have already died as individual men and women. And we see how the short space of joy, of suffering, and of activity allotted to each of us urges to helpful toil, and makes impossible for us the "glad idlesse" of the immortal denizen of earth. This is the thought of "Jubal." When the great artist returns to his early home, he is already virtually deceased—he has entered into subjective existence. Jubal the maker of the lyre is beaten with the flutes of Jubal's worshippers. This is tragic. His apotheosis and his martyrdom are one. George Eliot is not insensible to the anguish of the sufferer. But a strenuous and holy thought comes to make his death harmonious as his life. He has given his gift to men. He has enriched the world. He is incorporate in

A strong persistent life
Panting through generations as one breath,
And filling with its soul the blank of death.

GEORGE ELIOT.

II.—"MIDDLEMARCH" AND "DANIEL DERONDA."

GREAT artists belong ordinarily to one of two chief classes—the class of those whose virtue resides in breadth of common human sympathy, or of those who, excelling rather by height than breadth, attain to rare altitudes of human thought or human passion. For the one, the large table-land, with its wealth of various life, its substantial possessions, its corn, its shadow-casting trees, and lowing kine; for the other, the mountain-summit, its thrill, its prospect, its keen air, and its inspiration. To the one we look for record, and sane interpretation of the average experience of men; to the other, for discoveries and deliverances of the soul, for the quickening into higher life of our finest spiritual susceptibilities, and sometimes for the rescue of our best self from the incredulity, inertia, and encumbrances which gather about it in the ways of use and wont. And Art is justified of all her children. From the first half of our century we could ill lose Scott, who represents in so distinguished a manner the class of artists who excel by breadth; we could ill lose Wordsworth or Shelley, who in different ways belongs each as distinctively to the other class. It will always be a question with such persons as love to settle points of precedence, to which of these divisions of great creative natures the higher honour is due; and men will always decide the question in opposite ways, according to their respective types of character. The table-land may be an elevated one, not without undulations of gentle rise and fall; the mountain-summit may be a narrow apex, bald and bleak, unvisited by any feet save those of a few climbers whose sanity may well be doubted; but, on the other hand, it may be a Delectable Mountain—"Mount Marvel" or "Mount Clear"—on which the shepherds feed their flocks, and to which for a brief season mortal pilgrims graciously guided may repair.

However this point of precedence shall be decided, what we may set down for certain is that those rare artists who unite in themselves the excellences of both classes—who are broad and who are also high—rank above all others in the hierarchy of art. Of such Shakspere may be considered the master and chief. No mount of passion—not that of the Prometheus of Æschylus or of Shelley—climbs to such a skyey eminence as that on which the agony of Lear is accomplished; no more mysterious isolation of youthful sorrow for ever allures and for ever baffles than that of Hamlet; nor has a speculative summit more serene or of wider vision been attained by foot of man than that of the great enchanter of the "Tempest," who is Shakspere himself looking down, detached and yet tender, upon the whole of human experience. From Scott we obtain no Hamlet, no Prospero. But the world of Shakspere's creation includes with such figures as these a Henry V., a Benedick, a Bottom the weaver, a Toby Belch, and types enough to populate a planet with varieties of common human nature, from the courtier to the clown.

Among artists who with Shakspere unite breadth of sympathy with power of interpreting the rarer and more intense experiences of the souls of men, George Eliot must be placed. The former is the side of her personality which belongs to prose, the latter is akin to poetry. Scott, who was a poet in the first stage of his great career, and wrote poetry admirable of its kind, naturally and rightly fell into the easier pace of a prose-writer; and never attempting to use artificial wings, nor possessing wings by nature, he went hither and thither over the level surface of our earth, and left few things upon it unvisited. It was evident that even while engaged upon her incomparable prose works, George Eliot was haunted by a desire for a more purely-ideal and impassioned order of creation; but verse is not her true medium of expression, and in "The Spanish Gypsy," while prosaic elements—such as the semi-humorous passages—remain, which are not assimilated by the work (all her rich prosaic powers thus counting for worse than nothing), her imagination, cut off from the allies which had been accustomed to reinforce it, falls at times painfully under the domination of ideas and of the intellect. There is an unrelieved intensity, a prolonged stress, in the poem, which although it is essentially moral, contracts the consciousness of the reader, until his gaze seems narrowing "into one precipitous crevice." In "Daniel Deronda," for the first time, the poetical side of George Eliot's genius obtains adequate expression, through the medium which is proper to her—that of prose—and in complete association with the non-poetical elements of her nature. It is the ideal creation, happier in conception and in tone, which "The Spanish Gypsy" failed to be.

The demands which such a work makes upon the reader are so large and so peculiar, that it is not a matter of surprise that at first it should select an audience, and speak fully to only a comparatively few. George Eliot has prefixed to one of the chapters of her novel the beautiful lines of Whitman:—

> "Surely whoever speaks to me in the right voice,
> him or her I shall follow,
> As the water follows the moon, silently,
> with fluid steps anywhere around the globe."

There are those who hear the right voice and respond to it; but the majority of persons addressed by a new and original work of art prefer their own impatience to its summons or challenge. "Receptiveness," George Eliot has said, "is a rare and massive power like fortitude." Before approaching certain great or beautiful things—certain frescoes of Italian masters, certain symphonies of German musicians—we need recollection, and a dismissal from our consciousness of all that it contains of hard, narrowing, vulgar and superficial. We do well to hold our own personality and its force of reaction somewhat in abeyance, by this means to secure a clear space for the new experiences; we do well to acquire a strenuous submission, and overmaster not only the impatience of vanity and restless egoism, but for the time even the play of intellectual vivacity. It will not seem strange to some readers of our great living novelist to speak of the duty of making access to her work in some such spirit as this. Merely to recognize the veracity, the faithfulness to fact, of George Eliot's last novel, implies that one has had strength of wing to move with some ease and for some time in a plane of feeling which, though real, and perhaps of all things most real, is above and at times out of sight of our every-day tempers and moods of mind. To start aside from the creator's idea, and to fortify oneself by some commonplace of vulgar cynicism, is not difficult; it is less easy to listen, to receive, to keep, and to depart pondering things in one's heart; but this latter course brings with it compensations.

Beside the clever critics some readers of "Daniel Deronda" ought perhaps to put on record their experience, and confess what have been the dealings of this book with their spirits. Those who have heard in it "the right voice," which one follows "as the water follows the moon, silently," will have been conscious of a quickening and exaltation of their entire spiritual life. The moral atmosphere they breathed became charged with a finer and more vivifying element; the face of the world seemed to glow for them with a richer tint, "a more vivid gravity of expression;" moods of *ennui* or rebellion appeared more futile and unworthy than formerly; it became natural to believe high things of man; and a certain difficulty and peril attended the necessary return to duller or at least humbler tempers of heart (as it is difficult to pass from a sonata of Beethoven to the common household sounds), until these too were touched and received a consecration. The book has done something to prevent our highest moments from making our every-day experience seem vulgar and incoherent, and something to prevent our every-day experience from making our highest moments seem spectral and unreal.

To discover the central motive of "Daniel Deronda" it should be studied in connection with its immediate predecessor, "Middlemarch." In externals the contrast is striking. In "Middlemarch" the prosaic or realistic element occupies a much larger place; a great proportion of the book is only not a satire because with the word satire we are accustomed to associate the idea of exaggeration and malicious purpose. The chief figures —Lydgate, Dorothea—are enveloped by a swarm of subordinate characters, each admirably real, and to whom we are compelled to give away a share of our interest, a share of our admiration or our detestation. In "Daniel Deronda" the poetical or ideal element as decidedly preponderates. We should feel the needle-pricks of Mrs Cadwallader's epigrams an irritating impertinence. Our emotions are strung too tensely to permit us to yield an amused tolerance to the fine dispersion of idea in Mr Brooke's discourse. In place of a background of ugliness,—the Middlemarch streets, the hospital, the billiard-room, the death-chamber of Peter Featherstone, his funeral procession attended by Christian carnivora,—we have backgrounds of beauty, the grassy court of the abbey enclosed by a Gothic cloister, its July sunshine, and blown roses; Cardell Chase, and the changing scenery of the forest from roofed grove to open glade; evening on the Thames at

Richmond with the lengthening shadows and the mellowing light, its darkening masses of tree and building between the double glow of the sky and the river; the Turneresque splendour of sunset in a great city, while the lit, expectant face is gazing from Blackfriars Bridge, westward, where the grey day is dying gloriously; the Mediterranean, its shores "gemlike with purple shadows, a sea where one may float between blue and blue in an open-eyed dream that the world has done with sorrow."*

These differences in externals correspond with the essential inward difference between the two works,—the one, "Middlemarch," is critical, while its successor aims at being in a certain sense constructive. Readers of "Middlemarch" will remember that the story is preceded by a prelude which sets forth its principal theme. Dorothea Brooke is a Saint Theresa, with a passionate ideal nature which demands an epic life; but she is born out of due season into this period of faiths which are disintegrating and of social forces which are still unorganized. "Many Theresas have been born who found for themselves no epic life wherein there was a constant unfolding of far-resonant action; perhaps only a life of mistakes, the offspring of a certain spiritual grandeur ill-matched with the meanness of opportunity. . . . With dim lights and tangled circumstances they tried to shape their thought and deed in noble agreement; but after all, to common eyes their struggles seemed mere inconsistency and formlessness; for these later-born Theresas were helped by no coherent social faith and order which could perform the function of knowledge for the ardently willing soul. Their ardour alternated between a vague ideal and the common yearning of womanhood; so that the one was disapproved as extravagance, and the other condemned as a lapse."

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* The poetry of dawn and sunset in a great city have now their classical passages in literature, Wordsworth's noble sonnet on Westminster Bridge for one, and George Eliot's record of the vision of glory seen by Mordecai from Blackfriars for the other.

And thus Dorothea, with a heart large enough for the Virgin Mary, with a nature ardent, theoretic, and intellectually consequent, her mind yearning after "some lofty conception of the world which might frankly include the parish of Tipton and her own conduct there,"—Dorothea finds no epic life, but a life of mistakes. From the social world which hemmed her round, seeming a walled-in maze of small paths that led nowhither, she dreams for a little while that she is about to make escape into a world of large ideas impelling to far-resonant action. She is to sit at the feet of a master and prophet, who by a binding doctrine shall compel her own small life and faith into strict connection with the vast and amazing past, and occupy that life with action at once rational and ardent. Her prophet, with his Xisuthrus and Fee-fo-fum, is a pedant bringing to the great spectacle of life nothing but a small, hungry, shivering self, whose consciousness is never rapturously transformed into the vividness of a thought, the ardour of a passion, the energy of an action, who is always scholarly and uninspired, ambitious and timid, scrupulous and dim-sighted. "'She says he has a great soul. A great bladder for dried peas to rattle in,' said Mrs Cadwallader." No consequent doctrine of human life is discoverable by

Dorothea, no satisfying action is possible for her, but she stays her soul with the trust of noble natures, "that by desiring what is perfectly good, even when we don't quite know what it is and cannot do what we would, we are part of the divine power against evil—widening the skirts of light and making the struggle with darkness narrower." From her failure which is pain Dorothea only passes to her failure which is happiness. From her vague ideal she lapses into the common yearning of womanhood, the need to bless one being with all good, and to receive the love of one heart. "Her full nature, like that river of which Cyrus broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on earth." Saint Theresa becomes the wife of Will Ladislaw.

But the central theme receives a second illustration in "Middlemarch," much as the pervading sentiment of "King Lear" is developed through the stories alike of Lear and of Gloucester. Lydgate, who has received a true vocation, whose intellectual passion predestines him to far-resonant action in the world of scientific research, Lydgate, against whom the temptations of the flesh and the devil would have been idle, is subdued by that third enemy of man, the world, incarnated in the form of a creature with feminine voice, swan-like neck, perfectly turned shoulders, exquisite curves of lip and eyelid, and, hidden behind these, the hardness of a little sordid soul. George Eliot, with a hand tender and yet unfaltering, has traced the dull decay of ardour in a spirit framed for the pursuit of great ends, the lapse of slackening resolution, the creeping paralysis which seized upon an enthusiasm out of adjustment to one constant portion of the victim's life. "Some gentlemen have made an amazing figure in literature by general discontent with the universe as a trap of dulness into which their great souls have fallen by mistake; but the sense of a stupendous self and an insignificant world may have its consolations. Lydgate's discontent was much harder to bear; it was the sense that there was a grand existence in thought and effective action lying around him, while his self was being narrowed into the miserable isolation of egoistic fears, and vulgar anxieties for events that might allay such fears." The London physician who has gained an excellent practice, and written a Treatise on Gout, is a murdered man, and Rosamond is indeed "his basil plant," which flourishes wonderfully on the murdered man's brains.

Thus "Middlemarch" closes with neither heroic joy nor noble tragic pain. The heart-beats and sobs after an unattained goodness of a Saint Theresa, foundress of nothing, "tremble off and are dispersed among hindrances instead of centering in some long-recognizable deed." The intellectual passion which might have produced a Bichat has for nett resultant a heavy insurance, and a treatise upon that disease which owns a good deal of wealth on its side. Heart and brain prove alike failures. If anything promises success in the history unfolded by the chronicler of "Middlemarch," it is the hand of the good workman, Caleb Garth. Here is something which, even in an epoch of incoherent ideas and chaotic social forces, can yet accomplish something. Faust, despairing of all philosophies, may yet drain a marsh or rescue some acres from the sea. The religion of conscientious work is somewhat higher at least than the religion of Bulstrode, which serves but to spin a spider-web of falsehood over the foul recesses of conscience. Caleb "had never regarded himself as other than an orthodox Christian, and would argue on prevenient grace if the subject were proposed to him;" but his virtual divinities were "good practical schemes, accurate work, and the faithful completion of undertakings; his prince of darkness was a slack workman."

This is well, but it is not enough for our needs. Elsewhere George Eliot has pictured a finer Caleb Garth —the maker of violins, Stradivarius:—

> "That plain white-aproned man who stood at work
> Patient and accurate full fourscore years."

Violins are good; but how if there be no great music in man's soul to put the violin to use? If no Bach be possible, the final cause of our Stradivarius becomes obscure. Assuredly the critical study of our nineteenth century which is presented in "Middlemarch" tests the virtue and faithfulness of the heart: were we not resolved to resist even inevitable evil, and help to will our own better future and the better future of the world, it were easy to despair. The noble sadness of Romola, the calm of a high renunciation, sustains and enlarges the heart like the clear-obscure after a solemn sunset; the contemplation of Fedalma's agony of love and devoted loyalty produces "a sort of regenerating shudder" through the frame. But the failure of Lydgate impoverishes the spirit as the failure of light at morning does. And the happiness of Dorothea only serves to protect us from that danger, to which so few of us are subject, the danger of striving "to wind ourselves too high for sinful man beneath the sky." It calls for a gentleness and condescension of the heart, and a mild resignation of our more ardent hopes.

But "Middlemarch" is not the final word of our great imaginative teacher. Whether consciously so designed or not, "Daniel Deronda" comes to us as a counterpoise or a correlative of the work which immediately preceded it. There we saw how two natures framed for large disinterested services to humanity can be narrowed—the one into the round of the duteous sweet observances of domestic life—the other into the servitude,

"Eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves,"

which the world imposes upon those who accept its base terms and degrading compensations. Here we are shown how two natures can be ennobled and enlarged: the one rescued through anguish and remorse, and by the grace, human if also divine, which the soul of man has power to bestow upon the soul of man, from self-centered insolence of youth, the crude egoism of a spoiled child; and rendered up, first a crushed penitent to sorrow, then weak as a new-yeaned lamb to the simplicity of a mother's love, and at last plunged into a purgatory of fire, consuming and quickening and seven times heated, until the precious soul is released from bond and forfeiture, and reclaimed for places consecrated by love and duty: the other, a nature of finer mould and temper than that of Lydgate, with none of the spots of commonness in it which produced a disintegrating effect on

Lydgate's action, but exposed through its very plenteousness and flexibility of sympathy to peculiar dangers—the danger of neutrality in the struggle between common things and high which fills the world, the danger of wandering energy and wasted ardours; and from these dangers Deronda is delivered, he is incorporated into a great ideal life, made one with his nation and race, and there is confided to him the heritage of duty bound with love which was his forefathers', and of which it had been sought to deprive him.

Such are the spiritual histories of Gwendolen Harleth and of Daniel Deronda, told in the briefest summary. When we speak of "Middlemarch" as more realistic, and the later novel as more ideal, it is not meant that the one is true to the facts of life and the other untrue; it is rather meant that in the one the facts are taken more in the gross, and in the other there is a passionate selection of those facts that are representative of the highest (and also of the lowest) things. The Dresden Madonna, with awed rapture, a sacred joy and terror in her eyes, bearing the divine Child, is not less true to the essential facts of womanhood than is a plain grandmother of Gerard Dow shredding carrots into her pot. That some clever critics should find the hero of George Eliot's last novel detestable is easily understood; that some should find him incredible proves no more than that clever critics in walking from their lodgings to their club, and from their club to their lodgings, have not exhausted the geography of the habitable globe. If "knowledge of the world" consist chiefly in a power of estimating the average force of men's vulgar or selfish appetites, instincts, and interests, it must be admitted that in such knowledge the author of "Middlemarch" and of "Felix Holt" is not deficient; but there is another knowledge of the world which she also possesses, a knowledge which does not exclude from recognition the martyr, the hero, and the saint.

Daniel Deronda, however, as we meet him in the novel, has not attained to be any of these: with all the endowments needed for an eminent benefactor of men, we yet perceive how he might have failed of his true direction and function. To some readers he has seemed no thin shadow, no pallid projection from the author's imagination, but a veritable creature of flesh and blood, and his trials and dangers have seemed most real and worthy of the closest scrutiny. Here and there, if we have but eyes framed for moral discovery, we may still discern some well-begotten son or daughter of whom the father or mother declares with a little quiver of loving pride in the voice, "He has never given me an hour's trouble since he was born," one who in the venerable Christian words has been "filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb." The speciality of Deronda among the *dramatis personæ* of George Eliot's art is that a pure sympathetic nature is with him innate; his freedom from egoism is a possession which has come to him without a struggle. Maggie Tulliver is tempted with a fierce temptation to sacrifice the happiness of another to her own. It is through an agony that Fedalma becomes able to slay the life within her of personal joy. Even Dorothea has a great discovery of the heart to make; she had early emerged from the moral stupidity of taking the world "as an udder to feed her supreme self; yet it had been easier to her to imagine how she would devote herself to Mr Casaubon, and become wise and strong in his strength and wisdom, than to conceive with that distinctness which is no longer reflection but feeling . . . that he had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference."

Deronda even in childhood is sensible of the existence of independent centres of self outside himself, and can transfer his own consciousness into theirs. He is thus predestined to be a saviour and redeemer. And however incredulous persons of culture, with extensive knowledge of the world, may be as to the existence of this type among men, the heart of humanity in all ages, alike in the mystic East and the scientific West, has clung to belief in its existence as to the most precious of man's spiritual possessions. From the very fact that such persons are free from an absorbing egoism it becomes difficult to determine the precise outline of their personality. We can more easily describe the character of Mohammed than that of Jesus, if for no other reason than that the one had a pride and lust of power and personal pleasure of which we find no trace in the other. When a man diffuses himself, as the sun diffuses warmth and light, the force which communicates itself so generously seems to be alienated from its original owner. A Grandcourt whose nature is one main trunk of barren egoism from which all the branches of fresh desire have withered off, is recognized forthwith to be human. But Deronda, sensitive at every point with life which flows into him and throughout him, and streams forth from him in beneficent energy,—Deronda is a pallid shadow rather than a man ! *

For, in truth, unless the absence of egoistic greed render him an illusion, we must allow to Deronda the possession of a rich and powerful vitality. We meet him first as a boy, not pining for want of the food of joy, but finding life very delightful in the woods and fields around the old memorial Abbey, his face one of those which, when it meets your own, makes you believe that human creatures have done nobly in times past, and might do more nobly in times to come ; his voice,—for he has inherited the gift of song,—one of those thrilling boy-voices which seem to bring an idyllic heaven and earth before our eyes ; his disposition so sane and sound that in it every-day scenes and habits do not beget rebellion or *ennui*, but delight, affection, aptitudes. We see him upon the July day among the roses—when the doubt as to his parentage struck confusion into his being—stung by a sudden pain so intense that suffering may be said to have taken the quality of action. To be loosened from the roots of loyalty and of affection on which he had grown, and to be thrown abroad upon his individual powers and rights, was a change so cruel ! We watch him while the sense of resentment against Sir Hugo struggles with his inborn lovingness, nor can we rest at ease until we see that he assumes no attitude of hard, proud antagonism, but has acquired that temper which reconciles criticism with tenderness ; we trace the idea of tolerance towards error doing its work as his mind ripens ; we perceive how his inexorable sorrow takes the form of fellowship with all who suffer, and makes his imagination tender and active on behalf of others ; and then when there springs up in him a meditative yearning after wide knowledge, how this coalesces with his sympathies, so that a speculative tendency runs along with his sensitiveness to human sorrow, and his precocity as a boy consists in the interest which possesses him in knowing how human miseries are wrought. He is becoming fitted at once to extend help with every imaginable delicacy of feeling to individual man or woman, and to submit himself to the wider claims of a great national cause. He is impassioned by ideas, and these ideas are not dried specimens to be tabulated and exhibited in a glass case, like the ideas which interested the learned author of the "Key to all Mythologies,"—they are living powers which feed motive and opinion. Arrived at manhood he is man in the plenitude of power—there is a calm intensity of life and richness of tint in his face ; it is beautiful with youthful health, and the forcible masculine gravity of its repose ; the idyllic boy-voice has changed into one rich as the deep notes of a violoncello ; his hands, long, flexible, and firmly-grasping, are such as Titian has painted when he wanted to show the combination of refinement with force. And in what present themselves as the more passive elements of his nature we still recognize strength and not weakness,—in his sensibility to checks arising from the multitude and comprehensiveness of his spiritual needs, in his massive receptiveness, in the clinging conservatism of his affections. "But Deronda is described, he does not act?" His college friend is successful, however, and Mirah is rescued, and Gwendolen restored and renewed, and the existence of Mordecai is prolonged beyond his death in a life of faithful and devoted effort. This is the action of the sun, and half of it transmutes itself into other forms of energy than the original heat and light.

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* In the following paragraph and elsewhere, when bringing together many scattered phrases and sentences from George Eliot's novel, I have not thought it desirable to enclose these numerous broken sentences within marks of quotation.

Enfolded within this large attainment of the youthful manhood of Deronda there lie, however, larger potential powers, and there is yet possible a great spiritual success, or a lamentable spiritual failure,—a waste of the precious seed as much to be deplored as the waste in Lydgate's case. Which fate is decreed for him by the environing forces of the world and his own inward virtue? Deronda's probation, full as it is of real spiritual peril, is not the probation of the average man. Is it therefore, imaginary or of trivial interest? A master of moderation in thought, feeling, and speech, writing at a time when "enthusiasm of humanity" was in no degree a popular creed or a popular cant,—the time of Swift and his Houyhnhnms,—described thus a class of persons whose dangers and trials seemed to him very grave and real:—"For as the chief temptations of the generality of the world are the ordinary motives to injustice or unrestrained pleasure, or to live in the neglect of religion, from that frame of mind which renders many persons almost without feeling as to anything distant, or which is not the object of their senses; so there are other persons without this shallowness of temper, persons of a deeper sense as to what is invisible and future, who not only see, but have a general, practical feeling that what is to come will be present, and that things are not less real for their not being objects of sense; and who from their natural constitution of body and of temper, and from their external condition, may have small temptations to behave ill, small difficulty in behaving well, in the common course of life." And Butler goes on to notice the peculiar probation of this class of persons. Deronda stands away from the generality of the world, whose chief temptations "are the ordinary motives to injustice or unrestrained pleasure," and in a passage of marvellous subtlety, pregnancy, and truth, George Eliot has depicted the special dangers to which his nature is exposed :—

> "It happened that the very vividness of his impressions had often made him the more enigmatic to his friends, and had contributed to an apparent indefiniteness in his sentiments. His early-wakened sensibility and reflectiveness had developed into a many-sided sympathy, which threatened to hinder any persistent course of action : so soon as he took up any antagonism, though only in thought, he seemed to himself like the Sabine warriors in the memorable story—with nothing to meet his spear but flesh of his flesh, and objects that he loved. His imagination had so wrought itself to the habit of seeing things as they probably appeared to others, that a strong partisanship, unless it were against an immediate oppression, had become an insincerity for him. His plenteous, flexible sympathy had ended by falling into one current with that reflective analysis which tends to neutralize sympathy. Few men were able to keep themselves clearer of vices than he; yet he hated vices mildly, being used to think of them less in the abstract than as part of mixed human natures having an individual history, which it was the bent of his mind to trace with understanding and pity. With the same innate balance he was fervidly democratic in his feeling for the multitude, and yet, through his affections and imagination, intensely conservative; voracious of

speculations on government and religion, yet loth to part with long-sanctioned forms which, for him, were quick with memories and sentiments that no argument could lay dead. We fall on the leaning side; and Deronda suspected himself of loving too well the losing causes of the world. Martyrdom changes sides, and he was in danger of changing with it, having a strong repugnance to taking up that clue of success which the order of the world often forces upon us, and makes it treason against the common weal to reject. And yet his fear of falling into an unreasoning, narrow hatred, made a check for him; he apologized for the heirs of privilege; he shrank with dislike from the loser's bitterness and the denunciatory tone of the unaccepted innovator. A too reflective and diffusive sympathy was in danger of paralyzing in him that indignation against wrong and that selectness of fellowship which are the conditions of moral force; and in the last few years of confirmed manhood he had become so keenly aware of this, that what he most longed for was either some external event, or some inward light, that would urge him into a definite line of action, and compress his wandering energy. He was ceasing to care for knowledge—he had no ambition for practice—unless they could both be gathered up into one current with his emotions; and he dreaded, as if it were a dwelling-place of lost souls, that dead anatomy of culture which turns the universe into a mere ceaseless answer to queries, and knows, not everything, but everything else about everything—as if we should be ignorant of nothing concerning the scent of violets except the scent itself, for which one had no nostril. But how and whence was the needed event to come?—the influence that would justify partiality, and make him what he longed to be, yet was unable to make himself—an organic part of social life, instead of roaming it like a yearning disembodied spirit, stirred with a vague social passion, but without fixed local habitation to render fellowship real?"

Thus Deronda has fallen into a meditative numbness, and is gliding farther and farther from that life of practically energetic sentiment which he would have proclaimed to be for himself the only life worth living. An entire class of persons must find this searching and exquisite study the analysis of their own private sorrow and trial, and will appropriate each sentence as a warning, a check, and a substantial instrument of help.

But Deronda is not to be one of the lost souls; the will, which made strong his grandfather Charisi, is now to be evoked from the grandchild by a motive to which alike his intellect and affections will lend force. And at this point it may be worth while to notice two counter-objections which are alleged against George Eliot's work. To some readers the whole story of Mordecai and of his relation to Deronda appears fantastic and unreal—a piece of workmanship all made out of the carver's brain, or something less solid and substantial than this—a mere luminous vapour, or a phantom of the mind, which science cannot justify or even recognize. On the other hand, able critics lament over the growth, in George Eliot's writings, of scientific habits of thought and expression, and in a style of warning "eäsy and freeä," which seems to combine the authorities of "godamoighty" and "parson," bid this great thinker and artist expect the extinction of her genius. She has actually employed in a work of fiction such words as "dynamic" and "natural selection," at which the critic pricks up his delicate ears and shies. If the thorough-bred critic could only be led close up to "dynamic," he would find that "dynamic" will not bite. A protest of common sense is really called for against the affectation which professes to find obscurity in words because they are trisyllabic or because they carry with them scientific associations. Language, the instrument of literary art, is an instrument of ever-extending range, and the truest pedantry, in an age when the air is saturated with scientific thought, would be to reject those accessions to language which are the special gain of the time. Insensibility to the contemporary movement in science is itself essentially unliterary, for literature with its far-reaching sensibilities should be touched, thrilled, and quickened by every vital influence of the period; and indeed it is not alone the intellect which recognizes the accuracy and effectiveness of such scientific illustration as George Eliot occasionally employs; the cultured imagination is affected by it, as the imagination of the men of Spenser's time was affected by his use of the neo-classical mythology of the Renaissance.

But there is graver reason which justifies an artist of the present day in drawing near to science, and receiving all it has to bestow of ascertained truth and enlightened impulse. The normal action of the reason upon the imagination has been happily described by Comte,—"Elle la stimule en la réglant." This expresses with accuracy the relation of these faculties in the nature of our English novelist,—reason is to her imagination both law and impulse. And therefore her art is not a mere luxury for the senses, not a mere æsthetic delicacy or dainty. It has chosen for its part to be founded in truth, to nourish the affections, to quicken the conscience, to reinforce and purify the will. In her art the artist lives,

> "Breathing as beauteous order that controls
> With growing sway the growing life of man."

Art dissociated from the reason and the conscience becomes before long a finely distilled poison; while considered merely as art it has thus declined—in however exquisite little phials it may be presented—from its chief functions. It no longer sways or controls our being; it painfully seeks to titillate a special sense. An indifference arises as to what is called the substance or "content" of works of art, and the form is spoken of as if that had a separate and independent existence. There follows, as Comte has again observed, "the inevitable triumph of mediocrities;" executive or technical skill, of the kind which commands admiration in a period devoid of noble motive and large ideas, being attainable by persons of mere talent. The artificial refinements of a coterie are held to constitute the beautiful in art, and these can be endlessly repeated. "A deplorable aptitude in expressing what they neither believe nor feel," continues the great thinker whose words have just been quoted, "gains in the present day an ephemeral ascendancy for talents as incapable of an æsthetic creation as of a scientific conception." And George Eliot has herself alluded in a passing way to the presence of the same vice in our contemporary literature: "Rex's love had been of that sudden, penetrating, clinging sort which the ancients knew and sung, and in singing made a fashion of talk for many moderns whose experience has been by no means of a fiery dæmonic character."

The largeness and veracity of George Eliot's own art proceed from the same qualities which make truth-seeking a passion of her nature; and a truth-seeker at the present day will do ill to turn a deaf ear to the teachings of science. As little as Dante need George Eliot fear to enter into possession of the fullest body of fact which the age can deliver to her; nay, it is essential to the highest characteristics of her art that she should not isolate herself from the chief intellectual movement of her time. If in the objection which has been brought against her recent style there be any portion of truth, it will be found in the circumstance that an occasional sentence becomes laboured, and perhaps overloaded in her effort to charge it fully and accurately with its freight of meaning. The manner of few great artists—if any—becomes simpler as they advance in their career, that is, as their ideas multiply, as their emotions receive more numerous affluents from the other parts of their being, and as the vital play of their faculties with one another becomes swifter and more intricate. The later sonatas of Beethoven still perplex facile and superficial musicians. The later landscapes of Turner bewilder and amaze the profane. The difference between the languid and limpid fluency of the style of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" and the style of Shakspere's later plays, so compressed, so complex, so live with breeding imagery, is great. Something is lost but more has been gained. When the sustained *largo* of the sentences of "Daniel Deronda" is felt after the crude epigrammatic smartnesses of much of the writing in "Scenes of Clerical Life" we perceive as great a difference and as decided a preponderance of gain over loss.

But what renders singular the warning addressed to George Eliot that her work is undergoing a "scientific depravation" is that the whole of her last book is a homage to the emotions rather than to the intellect of man. Her feeling finds expression not only in occasional gnomic utterances in which sentiments are declared to be the best part of the world's wealth, and love is spoken of as deeper than reason, and the intellect is pronounced incapable of ascertaining the validity of claims which rest upon loving instincts of the heart, or else are baseless. The entire work possesses an impassioned aspect, an air of spiritual prescience, far more than the exactitude of science. The main forces which operate in it are sympathies, aspirations, ardours; and ideas chiefly as associated with these. From his meditative numbness Deronda is roused, his diffused mass of feeling is rendered definite, and is impelled in a given direction, his days become an ordered sequence bound together by love and duty, his life is made one with the life of humanity. How is this change brought about? And how is that other change effected by which Gwendolen is checked in her career of victorious self-pleasing, is delivered from her habits of a spoiled child, and is made—she also—a portion of the better life of man? Does Deronda take counsel with a Lydgate, and learn by the microscope the secrets of moral energy and resolved submission to spiritual motive? Or does some theory of ethics make the moral world new for him? Neither of these. It is the discovery of his parentage and his people which creates claims to which his heart consents with joy, and Deronda's life takes its new direction not from the inductions of a savant of the West, but from the inspiration of a Hebrew prophet, with whom the inferences of what Coleridge would have named the prudential understanding are wholly overshadowed by the faith of what he would have named the imaginative reason.

Is then the objection warranted that the part assigned to Mordecai and his influence upon Deronda are a fantastic unreality which offends against our saner judgment? Is such a person as Mordecai incredible?

And again, is the idea which the consumptive Jew breathes into Deronda only the hectic fever-dream of a visionary, or has it substance and validity for the imagination of the reader? And why all this concern about Jews—the stiff-necked race? Quid ergo amplius Judæo est? aut quæ utilitas circumcisionis?

It might be said, in answer to some of these questions, that as a fact Mordecai is an ideal study from a veritable Jew, Cohn or Kohn, one of the club of students who met some forty years since at Red Lion Square, Holborn,* and that recently a scheme for the redemption of Palestine for Israel was actually in contemplation among members of the Jewish race.† But to criticize "Daniel Deronda" from the literal, prosaic point of view, would be as much a critical stupidity as to undertake the defence of Shakspere's "King Lear" from the charge of historical improbability. It is enough if the idealization is worked out upon lines which have a starting-point and a direction that can be justified to the intellect, and if the imagination consents to yield credence to ideal truth. The century which has contained an actual Mazzini, an actual Lamennais, can surely credit the existence of an imagined Mordecai. Or is the lament of Mr Mill, uttered in 1838, still true of a younger generation: "Nowadays nature and probability are thought to be violated if there be shown to the reader, in the personages with whom he is called upon to sympathize, characters on a larger scale than himself, or than the persons he is accustomed to meet at a dinner or a quadrille party?" We owe to the author of "Daniel Deronda" the gratitude due to one who enriches human life for her discovery in Ram's bookshop, and among the kindly-hearted mercenary Cohens, of a prophet of the Exile. To feel that intense spiritual forces lie concealed under the heaped *débris* of follies, and fashions, and worldliness which accumulates around us, makes our existence one of more awed responsibility, and of quicker hopes and fears. There are powers in our midst of which we are not aware; the electric charge of the spirit may play upon us at any moment, we know not from what point; material interests and machinery are not yet, and never will be, supreme; still from the spirit of man to the spirit of man flow forth the issues of life and death. "This consumptive Jewish workman in threadbare clothing, lodged by charity, delivering himself to hearers who took his thoughts without attaching more consequences to them than the Flemings to the ethereal chimes ringing above their market-places, had the chief elements of human greatness: a mind consciously, energetically moving with the larger march of human destinies, but not the less full of conscience and tender heart for the footsteps that tread near and need a leaning-place; capable of conceiving and choosing a life's task with far-off issues, yet capable of the unapplauded heroism which turns off the road of achievement at the call of the nearer duty whose effect lies within the beatings of the hearts that are close to us, as the hunger of the unfledged bird to the breast of its parent."

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* See Mr M'Alister's letter to the *Academy*, July 29, 1876, with its interesting quotations from Mr G. H. Lewes's article in the *Fortnightly Review*, April 1, 1866.

† See also "George Eliot and Judaism," by Prof. Kaufmann, of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Buda-Pesth, pp. 13-20, and pp. 66-70.

To understand aright the Jewish idea of Mordecai we should approach it through the wider human idea of George Eliot. It might indeed be contended that at a period when on the continent of Europe the idea of nationality—unity of Italy, pan-Teutonism, pan-Slavism—has played and is playing so important a part, there were a historical justification and a historical propriety in its employment as a poetical motive in a work of art. If the political imagination of the English nation is seldom assailed by great principles or ideas, their force upon the history of the world has not therefore been small; lives have been spent for them, and blood has been gladly offered up. Probably none but English readers in our day would refuse to accept as deserving of imaginative credence such an idea as that which inspires Mordecai. That an ancient people, who under every battering shock of doom have preserved their faith and their traditions, should resume their place in the community of nations, could be hardly more wonderful than that they exist at all. A French philosopher conceived a polity of Western nations, with France as the presiding power; there is a grandeur (and grandeur is a quality of thought by no means necessarily implying something unreal or theatrical) in the conception of a future which shall include an organization of the East as well as of the West, and which places at the head of Eastern civilization the greatest and most spiritual of Shemitic races.

But the central conception of "Daniel Deronda" is religious, and not political: religious, not in the sense which implies faith in a personal providence superintending the lives of men, or faith in the intervention of the miraculous and the supernatural, or faith in a life for each man and woman beyond the grave in other worlds than ours. No miraculous apparition of a Holy Grail in the mediæval romance is bright with more mysterious glory, and solemn with more transcendent awe, than the meeting of the Jewish workman and Deronda in the splendour of sunset, and in the gloom of the little second-hand bookshop, while the soul of one transfuses itself into the soul of the other. But the miracles are wrought by the spirit of man; human life itself is shown to be sacred, a temple with its shrines for devout humility and aspiration, its arches and vaults for praise, its altar for highest sacrifice. "The refuge you are needing from personal trouble," declares Deronda to Gwendolen, "is the higher, the religious life, which holds an enthusiasm for something more than our own appetites and vanities." The religious conception of "Daniel Deronda," as of the other writings of George Eliot, is that of a life of mankind over, above, and around the life of the individual man or woman, and to which the individual owes his loyalty and devotion, the passion of his heart, and the utmost labour of his hand. "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. . . . . Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect. How precious are thy thoughts unto me! how great is the sum of them!" Of this religion—a religion by which a man's life may become a noble self-surrender whether it contain but a portion of truth or contain the whole—Mordecai is a prophet, and Deronda is a chosen and anointed priest. The Judaic element comes second in the book—the human element first.

To any one who had attended to the leading motives, the centres around which the emotions organize themselves, in the preceding writings of George Eliot, the ideas of Mordecai, and their constraining power with Deronda, cannot have appeared strange and novel. The higher, the religious life is that which transcends self, and which is lived in submission to the duties imposed upon us by the past, and the claims of those who surround us in the present, and of those who shall succeed us in time to come. To be the centre of a living multitude, the heart of their hearts, the brain from which thoughts, as waves, pass through them—this is the best and purest joy which a human creature can know. Of this kind is the glory and rapture of the artist. Armgart, while she sings, feels herself

> "A happy spiritual star
> Such as old Dante saw, wrought in a rose
> Of light in Paradise, whose only self
> Was consciousness of glory wide-diffused;
> Music, life, power—I moving in the midst
> With a sublime necessity of good."

Fedalma, when the ecstasy of the dance sways through her, seems

> "New-waked
> To life in unison with a multitude
> Feeling my soul upborne by all their souls,
> Floating within their gladness! Soon I lost
> All sense of separateness: Fedalma died
> As a star dies and melts into the light."

But in its very rapture there is a danger of egoism in this joy; and of such egoism of the artist we have a conspicuous example in the rejection of the bonds of love, the claims of a father and of a child, by Deronda's mother. As Don Silva, in "The Spanish Gypsy," for the love of one maiden would fain renounce the inheritance of honour and of duty which his past had imposed upon him, so the daughter of the Jew, Charisi, would escape from the will of her father, the traditions of her race, the clinging arms of her babe, and would live a life of freedom in her art alone. That which she resisted proves—as it proved for Don Silva—too strong for her, and in her hour of physical weakness the impersonal forces she had fled from rise within her and rise around her, the dread Erinnyes of her crime.

But there is another way than the artist's of becoming the vital centre of a multitude. To be the incarnation of their highest thought, and at the same time to be the incarnation of their purest will—what nobler lot is possible to man? The epic life, the national leadership, to which—not, perhaps, without some touch of gross personal ambition—Zarca aspired, and which Fedalma accepted as the leader of a forlorn hope, this is decreed to Deronda, free from all taint of personal ambition, and free from the sorrow of anticipated failure. "I," said Mordecai, answering the objections of Gideon, "I, too, claim to be a rational Jew. But what is it to be rational—what is it to feel the light of the divine reason growing stronger within and without? It is to see more and more of the hidden bonds that bind and consecrate change as a dependent growth—yea, consecrate it with kinship; the past becomes my parent, and the future stretches towards me the appealing arms of children." A revolutionary writer of genius in this century of revolution, who designed for his imagined hero an epic life, would probably represent him as the banner-bearer of some new ideas—liberty, progress, the principles of 1789—and the youthful hero would exhale his enthusiasms upon a barricade. It is characteristic of our English novelist, who, through her imagination and affections, is profoundly conservative, that with her the epic life should be found in no breaking away from the past, no revolt against tradition. Hope and faith are with her the children of memory; the future is the offspring and heir of the past.

Daniel Deronda then is a Jew, because the Jewish race is one rich with memories, possessed of far-reaching traditions, a fit object for satisfying that strong historic sympathy which is so deep a part of Deronda's nature; a race obstinately adherent to its ideas, with intense national characteristics, and therefore fitted to give definiteness and compression to whatever in Deronda was vague or little strenuous; a sad, despised, persecuted race, and so much the more dear to one whose heart is the heart of a saviour; a race whose leaders and prophets looked longingly for no personal immortality, but lived through faith in the larger life to come of their nation; a race not without some claim to be what Jehuda-ha-Levi asserted it to be, "the heart of mankind;" a race, finally, which though scoffed at for its separateness, implied in its confession of the Divine Unity the ultimate unity of mankind. In the great institution of Goethe's imagining in his "Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre," where a complete religious education is taught to children, the first or Ethnic Religion is that the substance and spirit of which is to be sought for not in a supernatural revelation or in philosophy, but in the history of the world. "I observe," said Wilhelm, "you have done the Israelites the honour to select their history as the groundwork of this delineation, or, rather, you have made it the leading object there." It is not merely in the picturesque and intense personalities which the Hebrew people affords, that its attraction for George Eliot's imagination has lain; it is partly at least because through Jewish persons and Jewish ideas, the teachings of this Ethnic Religion may be well expressed.

To Deronda, the ideal of manhood in its fulness of power and of beauty, the ideally perfect lot is assigned. For others self-conquest had been an agony, the higher rule had been a hard discipline, the life of renunciation and of love had been one of strictly tested faithfulness, or of quietude after tempest, a repose tender yet stern. With Romola the quick heart-beats of personal joy are for ever stilled; no triumphant ecstasy is henceforth possible for Armgart; Fedalma's young delight has been slain and offered up a sacrifice to the fidelity of her soul. But "the very best of human possibilities" befalls Deronda, "the blending of a complete personal love in one current with a larger duty." While his hands are striving to shape the future of a people he wears upon his breast the precious talisman of Mirah's love. "The velvet canopy never covered a more goodly bride and bridegroom, to whom their people might more wisely wish offspring; more truthful lips never touched the sacramental marriage-wine; the marriage blessing never gathered stronger promise of fulfilment than in the integrity of their mutual pledge."

Over against Gwendolen, the petted child, with her double nature, her layers of selfishness stifling the stray seeds of possible good, her iridescent moods, her contending passion and fear of contrite pain, her high spirit and her sudden fits of inward dread, her lack of all religious emotion, and of that piety which consists in tender, clinging affection to home and childhood, and the objects consecrated by our dead past; over against Gwendolen is set Mirah, beautiful in the singleness and purity of her soul. The clever critics found Mirah as uninteresting as they found Deronda unreal. She is indeed not a Mary Stuart, nor a Phraxanor, and is no more interesting than some delicate ivory-tinted blossom. The intensest pleasure he had received in life, declared the dying Keats, was in watching the growth of flowers: but Keats was a poet. A perfect, harmonious, still, yet richly tinted life, like the life of flowers, is that of Mirah; whatever dead substance comes in her way is either rejected or forced to take some beautiful living form;* "she had grown up in her simplicity and truthfulness like a little flower-seed that absorbs the chance confusion of its surroundings into its own definite mould of beauty." From her force of heart, from an unconquerable purity of vital power—the crystal virtue, as Mr Ruskin has named it—follows the result that her whole being possesses a flawless unity, an exquisite symmetry, every atom being bright with coherent energy. In the Psyche-mould of Mirah's frame "there rested a fervid quality of emotion sometimes rashly supposed to require the bulk of a Cleopatra; her impressions had the thoroughness and tenacity that give to the first selection of passionate feeling the character of a life-long faithfulness." Then, too, sorrow had been a familiar guest with her, and in Daniel's love there lay the joy of a blessed protectiveness. It is something less than this that Mirah was an artist witnessed to by the appalling Klesmer, who had reduced to despair Gwendolen's amateurishness, and that in all practical matters she manifests an unerring good sense. There is perpetual music in the life of him who can feel the beating of a heart so fervid and so gentle, who can bow tenderly over so dear a head.

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* Ruskin's Ethics of the Dust, p. 85, from which I here appropriate a few expressions.

Contrasted with Deronda, who is the sympathetic nature in its purest and highest energy, stands Grandcourt, who is the absolute of egoism. His life is the dull, low life of some monstrous reptile, coloured like the slime or dust in which he lies, seemingly torpid and indifferent to all outside himself, yet at watch with blinking eyes for every slightest motion of the one thing which interests him,—his prey; and owning a deadly power of spring and cruel constriction such as the boa can display. But there is nothing of the romantic villain in his appearance; he is only an English gentleman, with faultless manners when he did not intend them to be insolent, long narrow grey eyes, an extensive baldness surrounded by a fringe of reddish blond hair, a slight perpendicular whisker, a toneless aristocratic drawl, certain ugly secrets in the past, a strong dislike to brutes who use the wrong soap or have ill-formed nails, a wide susceptibility to boredom, and a resolve to tolerate no damned nonsense in a wife. Let the waves wash him down to keep company with things of the monstrous world, and become a third with the ground-shark and the poulpe.

Of Gwendolen and her spiritual history, although it occupies the principal space in George Eliot's novel, little has here been said, because this portion of the story seems to have been acquiesced in with something like common consent by the majority of readers. Men reap what has been sown, but there are many sowers of good and of evil in the field of the world, and it may happen that we enter into the labour not always of the sowers of tares, but sometimes also into that of the sowers of good seed.* And so it happens with Gwendolen. The new soul born within her through remorse and that penitential sorrow from which she had not long since so deliberately guarded herself, is sustained in its clinging infantile weakness by hands of another which are tender and strong. A living man, who is to her the best, the most real, the most worshipful of all things known, becomes her external conscience, while her inner conscience is still able to do no more than open wondering eyes, half-dazzled by the light, after its long, dark, and withering imprisonment in the airless cell of egoism. Gwendolen, with her girlish inexperience, and her slight girlish love of sway, would not be sacrificed to creatures worth less than herself, but would play the game of life with exceptional cleverness, and so conquer circumstance. It is well that the gambling at life, where her gain must be another's loss, goes against her. She had thought to conquer circumstance, and good and evil join to defeat her; Deronda, "like an awful-browed angel," fixes upon her his gaze of condemnation, and Grandcourt benumbs her in the icy constriction of his will.

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* Something to this effect George Eliot has somewhere written—in "Middlemarch," I believe—but I am unable to light upon the passage.

Gwendolen has a fulness of nature which removes her far from the Rosamond Vincy type of womanhood; she is not "one of the narrow-brained women who through life regard all their selfish demands as rights, and every claim upon themselves as an injury." It is possible for her before she loves goodness for its own sake to love goodness in a human form. This is well, though still she remains to herself the centre of the world, and Deronda exists not for his own sake, not for others, not for the world, but only for her. At last the crisis arrives; "she feels the pressure of a vast mysterious movement," she is being dislodged "from her supremacy in her own world, and is getting a sense that her horizon was but a dipping onward of an existence with which her own was revolving." Where is her poise of crude egoism, where the fierceness of maidenhood which had flamed forth against Rex? It is a moment of supreme revelation of the heart, in which shame and reserve shrivel in the white flame of life. The fountains of the great deep are broken up: "Gwendolen looked before her with dilated eyes, as at something lying in front of her, till she stretched her arms out straight, and cried with a smothered voice, 'I said I should be forsaken. I have been a cruel woman. And I am forsaken.'" But forsaken she is not. Draw the veil over the rest, for a gaze profanes what is sacred between the soul of a renunciant and a redeemer.

"Daniel Deronda" closes in the presence of death; "Middlemarch" with promises of happy living; yet "Middlemarch" leaves the heart as though in the greyness of a sweet August twilight, when we accept the subdued colours, and the dearness of the tranquil hour. Death, as we witness it in the concluding chapter of "Daniel Deronda," is solemn and beautiful as a sunset, but we see the stars come forth, and are aware that the world is revolving into a nobler dawn.

1877.

LAMENNAIS.

I.

AMONGST the leaders of the Catholic reaction of the present century, Lamennais stands in an exceptional position, as one who possessed sympathies too wide for his cause, and by them was carried into opposition to his party, his dearest friends, and his former self. It is peculiarly difficult to do justice to such an intellectual life as his in a short sketch like the following, since there is not one system of thought to be dealt with, but several systems, each distinct from the other, elaborate, and fully conceived. A skilful hand might, no doubt manipulate these so as to construct a kind of unity out of the ultimate principles of all; but in reality, while Lamennais's changes of opinion are easy to account for, and by an observer of clear insight might even, in great degree, have been predicted, a genuine unity is to be sought for rather in the moral character of the man than in any of his intellectual beliefs. There it is that we discover the actual centre of all he thought and felt and did.

Much that is true may be conveyed by saying that Lamennais possessed, in a high degree, the *prophetic* character. What was the Hebrew prophet as we find him represented to us in the books of the Kings and Chronicles, and self-revealed in the writings of the prophets themselves? Primarily, a "man of God"—a man elevated by his mass of character and fervour of moral feelings above the common level of the race. Yet at the same time, in the deepest sense, a social man—not social, indeed, in the vulgar meaning of the word—no lover of salutations in the street or greetings in the market-place—but in all his solitudes, upon the mountain and in the desert, and in kings' palaces, and in the solitudes of thought or of vision, impassioned by the highest interests of society. A man of the people, therefore, as well as a man of God. Eagerly watching the movements of society, with small critical discernment and little play of intelligence, but with much fierce insight ; crying aloud against its sins, and crying aloud against the sins of its oppressors and blind guides ; indignant, disdainful, pitiful, exultant, forlorn for its sake ; haughty and humble because alone with God ; hating nothing so much as moderation and worldly compromises ; with his mouth full of blessing and of curses, the same spring sending forth sweet water and bitter ; and with his soul ever possessed by a vision of a shining future to be realised through unknown instruments, but, as a sure moral instinct testified, not without confusion and garments rolled in blood. Such a prophet was Lamennais.

But, if a prophet, he was yet a prophet in our logical western world, and Bacon and Descartes had lived before him. Paris, with its scientific methods and practised intellects, differed a good deal from Jerusalem, and a simple "Thus saith the Lord" would have been received with a peculiar expression of the lips and eyes by the children of Voltaire not to be found upon the faces of the children of Abraham. Notwithstanding this, a

"Thus saith the Lord" is often on the lips of Lamennais. He however attempts, again and again, to give his perceptions of truth a logical basis. For the last twenty years of his life he paid homage always more and more to the scientific movement. But the system of Lamennais, as developed in his "Esquisse d'une Philosophie," is less a philosophy than a vast philosophical epopee, such as we might imagine to have been chanted ages ago in some Indian grove; and, while doing homage to the scientific movement, Lamennais certainly possessed little of the scientific intellect. "Un esprit si absolu," M. Renan well says, "ne pouvait être curieux."

There is another side of the character of Lamennais very different from that which has been brought under notice, but not inconsistent with it. In the austere solitudes of mountains, and in rocky angles drenched by the spray of water-falls, we are surprised by beautiful and tender flowers. But the surprise in such cases is without just cause. An atmosphere of purity is favourable to all delicate growths. It is not hard to picture to one's self the wild, Bedouin-like Elijah repeating rhymes to a child of Jezebel upon his knee. Certainly Lamennais (who had something of Elijah in him) possessed a nature the boldness and elevation of which were not unfavourable to gentleness and tender feeling. He was, in a remarkable degree, sensitive to the beauty of the external world, and of art. His immense need of repose—such a need as is proper to great natures—sought satisfaction in the Breton woods for days and weeks, and in the society of persons whose simplicity of character invincibly attracted him. His conversation was often full of play, and so are many of his letters, though it must be acknowledged the play sometimes becomes laborious. His poetical writings (if we may so style such compositions as "Les Paroles d'un Croyant" and "Une Voix de Prison") pass in swift transitions from scenes of horror, conclaves of deceitful and tyrannical kings, tortures, and gloom, and blood, martyrdoms and terrible victories, denunciations and prophetic wrath, to gracious presences of childhood and womanhood, interiors of cottage life, whispers as of quiet seas, radiance as of summer dawns, and comfortable words of hope and love.

II.

Félicité Robert de la Mennais, the fourth of six children, was born at Saint Malo, in Brittany, on the 19th of June, 1782. M. Pierre-Louis Robert, his father, a merchant and shipowner of Saint Malo, for important services rendered to the Government, and for acts of munificence to the poor in times of scarcity, was ennobled by Louis XVI. a few years after the birth of Félicité, and took his title from a small estate called La Mennais. The Robert family was characteristically Breton, determined, energetic, attached to the past, apt to extreme views and feelings. Through his mother's family, some Irish blood entered into Féli's veins. Of his childhood we are told little, but enough to make us understand that much physical delicacy, and an excitable nervous temperament, made it irritable, capricious, and rebellious against restraint. We read of his being tied to the school-bench to be kept quiet, and he would himself tell how one day, in a boat secretly seized, he pushed off from shore, and with what feelings he gave defiance to the sea. Nor was it only the spell of animal gladness which nature laid upon the child. At eight years old, gazing upon a stormy waste of waters, "he thought he beheld the infinite and felt God," and said to himself of those beside him, with a sense of pride which afterwards shocked him in one so young, "They are *looking* at what I am looking, but they do not *see* what I see." There is much of the future man in these anecdotes, and when we add the picture of the boy lace-making in an upper room at home, or tending lovingly his flowers, we have already his life in miniature.

While Lamennais was still a child, the thunder-clouds of the Revolution burst. A pious Breton family, clinging to an ancient cause with the provincial tenacity, and attached to the Crown by recent favours, could not but be deeply sensible of the changed circumstances. Lamennais would often, in after years, tell with undiminished emotion how at times a proscribed priest stole, disguised and under cover of darkness, to his father's house; how in a garret, with two candles flaring upon a table which served as altar, the family would assemble, while a servant kept watch without; how mass would be said, little Jean de la Mennais, the elder brother, assisting, and the blessing be given to the old people and the children; and how the priest would depart before the dawn. In 1796, in the time of the Directory Government, a visit was paid to Paris, and the young royalist, with the pride of authorship at fourteen years of age. saw articles of his own appear in some obscure and forgotten journal. It is evident from this that he had not spent all his time in giving trouble to his schoolmasters. Early, indeed, his energy had turned itself upon books, and, when left in the solitude of La Chênaie, the charm of which was so often to subdue the discords of his life, to the somewhat lax guidance of his uncle, he devoured, and, what is more, digested into piles of manuscript, a large library, and before long was familiar with Latin, Greek, Hebrew, English, German, Italian, and Spanish.

This uncle, familiarly known as Tonton, was an eclectic in literature, and could attire in French garb with equal pleasure the Book of Job and the Odes of Horace; and if he was no friend of the eighteenth-century philosophers, he yet did not lock them up from his pupil; so that with ecclesiastical historians, Church fathers, and orthodox divines, Félicité made the acquaintance of the fathers of the Revolution and the divines of the synagogue of Satan. One day the shadow of scepticism passed across his mind, and seemed to pass idly, like the ineffectual shadow of a cloud. His was a soul which in childhood, if not carried away by violent influences in a contrary direction, could not but be devout, and we read of his making pilgrimages to the neighbouring chapels to worship in secret the Holy Sacrament. But at a later period the doubts returned, and he fell into a way of worldly indifference to the affairs of religion, so that his first communion was long delayed. In those days he gave himself up with characteristic ardour to exercises not of the religious kind, becoming a hard rider, fencing for whole days, and swimming till utterly exhausted. We can believe that his will may have rejoiced in proving its mastery over the frail and sensitive body in which it was lodged. But the religious spirit, if it slept lightly for a while, before long awoke to vigorous life. In 1807 appeared a translation by Lamennais of the little ascetic treatise of Louis de Blois, "Speculum Monachorum" ("Guide Spirituel" the translator named it), with a preface breathing a spirit of the tenderest piety, and in the following year his first original production, "Réflexions sur l'État de l'Église."

Already the conflicts of his life had begun. Notwithstanding some eulogistic phrases applied to the Emperor, the "Réflexions" was seized by the police, the relations of Napoleon with the Church at that period being delicate and sensitive to criticism The Restoration came, and Lamennais, free to publish his animadversions, did not let slip the opportunity. Already we perceive the passionate limitation of view, and the absoluteness of expression which characterise the author of the "Essai sur l'Indifférence" and "Le Livre du Peuple;" nor these alone, but also the facility with which he could reverse past judgments, and escape with a high disregard of external consistency from the control of a former self. In 1808 Napoleon was "l'homme de génie qui a refondé en France la monarchie et la religion." In 1814 (the Imperial University had especially excited the anger of Lamennais,) "To study the genius of Bonaparte in the institutions which he formed, is to sound the black depths of crime, and to seek for the measure of human perversity." One and the same system of eloquent hatred applied to objects the most diverse—such was Lamennais, says M. Renan. There is as much truth in this as will float an epigram, that is, a good piece of a truth. In such an opulence of passion Lamennais had no need to hoard his wrath, and at no time did objects fail him on which to wreak his indignation. At this period, Napoleon divided the anathemas with the reformers of the sixteenth and the philosophers of the eighteenth centuries. But Napoleon had still a hundred days to reign. Before many of them passed away, the prophet had fled to the wilderness, or unfiguratively, Lamennais, under the name of Patrick Robertson (son of "Robert"), had withdrawn for safety to Guernsey, and proceeded thence to England.

Protestantism was always from first to last repulsive to Lamennais. The doctrine seemed to him an attempted *via media* between Catholicism and Deism, untenable by a logical mind, and its spirit of individualism in both intellect and feeling shocked him beyond measure; and not unnaturally, since his most ardent desire was for a true *society*, an organisation of beliefs, emotions, and activities, upon the basis of our common humanity. A thinker relying on his private judgment, or a sinner devoted to saving his particular soul, seemed to Lamennais no better than an intellectual or religious troglodyte.

In England, accordingly, the Catholicism of Lamennais took yet a deeper tone. He was, moreover, brought into relation with a person who obtained singular influence over his mind, apparently by the mere virtue which went out of him as a very pious and a very happy man. This was the Abbé Carron, dispenser to the exiled in England of the charity of the Bourbon princes Lamennais was poor, feeble in health, and burdened with the melancholy of one whose eye is fixed on great ideals. The Abbé assisted him to procure employment as a teacher, sustained him with kindly sympathy, and tried to smile him into a cheerful Christian spirit. It was through his advice that Félicité decided to give himself to the Church. With reluctant movements of mind, oppressed by sadness, but yielding to a solemn and insuperable duty, he was made a priest.

This visit to England was the occasion of a curious episode in the life of Lamennais, to which he seems to have avoided reference in after years. At Kensington he made the acquaintance of a young Englishman, Henry Moorman, and the acquaintance soon ripened on Lamennais's side into an almost idolatrous friendship. Henry Moorman, we can perceive, was of a gentle, timid, appreciative, but not creative nature. His deficiency of self-dependence may have bound Lamennais to him, as some masculine spirits love to bestow themselves and their strength upon those of another sex who are weakest, because on them they can bestow so much. Besides which, the ardent and energetic nature, conscious of its own crudeness and disorder, is apt to imagine a perfection and integrity in feebler characters which they by no means actually possess. Moorman's mother and step-father were opposed to an intimacy which might endanger the Protestant faith of their son, and when Lamennais, on his return to France, despatched letter after letter to his friend, they were intercepted. The correspondence was thenceforth carried on in secret, and Henry Moorman, now won over to Catholicism, after much hesitation and asking of advice, decided to escape from his home to France. The escape was effected. Much was predicted for him by his French friends; "the sweet, the interesting Henry" was on his return to be an apostle and martyr at the least; but his relations found means to persuade him to a different view of his vocation, and the prospective apostle subsided—so coldly ironical is fate—into a steady chemist's apprentice. Still letters continued to be written, although Moorman failed to obtain Lamennais's consent to a prettily-devised *ruse de guerre*, according to which a venerable debauchee of the "Anti-Gallican" Coffee-house, who would take a disinterested pleasure in assisting any one to a breach of the seventh commandment, was to receive the letters from France, and transmit them to the young chemist, on the understanding that they came from some girl whom Moorman might be supposed to have met in Paris. Lamennais, we conjecture, wrote indignantly, for his friend in reply becomes abjectly apologetic. This friendship, in which Lamennais gave everything, and got nothing, was terminated by the death of his young convert in the year 1818. The grief of the survivor was deep and lasting.

III.

In April, 1817, in a letter to his brother-in-law, Lamennais mentions "a work on which I have been engaged during the last twelve months." This work soon after appeared in public; it was the first volume of the "Essai sur l'Indifférence." The enthusiasm which it excited is something rare in the annals of theological literature; a great author had arisen in France, a "modern Bossuet," a leader of Catholic thought, one who, if any single man could do so, would turn back the tide of liberalism and secularism. This first was followed in two years by a second volume, and in 1822-23 appeared a third and fourth. Lamennais at this period was the man of highest mark in the ranks of the French priesthood.

What is this famous "Essai sur l'Indifférence en matiére de Religion," and how does it present itself to us now when nearly half a century has elapsed from the date of its first appearance? The name of the book implies the motive from which it proceeded. Looking out on the world with prophet-like eyes, Lamennais saw, or thought he saw, a society dying morally, growing every day more insensible to pleasure and pain in right and wrong doing, every day more apathetic to truth or falsehood of any kind which lies out of the cognizance of the senses, voluptuously self-indulgent, and becoming cruel after its voluptuousness, with a cruelty like that of Rome under the Emperors. That this society should be restored to health, activity, and joy was Lamennais's most deep desire. The disease was a moral and spiritual atrophy; remedy there could be none except religion. The disease was one which affected the whole constitution of society; it was right, therefore, that religion should be presented less as that by which the individual might save his own wretched soul, than as that by which the dying soul of society was to be saved. But how was it possible to make an impression on the dull mass of worldliness, the gross φρόνημα σαρκός of society? It would have been hardly possible had not the prevailing indifference to religion erected itself into a doctrine, different portions of which were delivered with precision and emphasis by several schools of modern thought. There was the atheistical school, which treated religion as a mere matter of political convenience; there was the school of deists, including the greatest names of the eighteenth century, which held as doubtful the truth of all positive religions, believed that each man should follow that in which he was born, and recognised only natural religion as incontestably true; and there was the school of heretics, which admitted a revealed religion, but maintained that the truths it taught might be rejected with the exception of some arbitrarily-selected doctrines styled fundamental. The first denied God, the second denied Christ, the third denied the Holy Ghost speaking through the Church. The first volume of the Essay is an apology for religion considered chiefly as the basis of society, against these three forms of systematised indifference, although indeed apology is hardly the right word, for Lamennais was a combatant who preferred attack to defence, and here he tries to force the lines of the enemy rather than to maintain his own.

But how was religion to be incarnated in the world, so that the desired reorganisation of society might be brought about? The answer of Lamennais was the same as that of De Maistre, De Bonald, and the other leaders of the Catholic reaction: "By the obedience of the world to the Church. The Pope is the keystone of society; without the Pope, no Church; without the Church, no Christianity; without Christianity, no religion; without religion, no society." Ultramontanism in its strictest form was the creed of Lamennais. If there were voices (beside those of the liberals, whom it was not meant to please) that did not join in the chorus of lauds which greeted this first volume of the "Essai," the reason for their silence lay here. In his earliest work, that of 1808, Lamennais had adopted a Warburtonian theory of Church and State, regarding the spiritual and temporal as independent powers, allied upon certain terms advantageous to both. But such a theory had nothing to oppose to the logic of a growing Catholic spirit, or to the logic of events under the governments of Napoleon and the Restoration. In such alliances the children of this world had driven hard bargains in recent times with the children of light. The superb self-assertion of the children of light reacted against the pretensions of the secular powers. If there is to be an *imperium in imperio*, it must not be the State, said they, which shall include the Church. Lamennais had only found the true doctrine of Rome, though it may have been a few centuries out of date, when he declared in favour of the universal sovereignty of the successor of Peter, and represented the authority of kings established by divine right as but "the secular arm," subject by right no less divine to the Sovereign Pontiff at Rome. He found the French Church hampered upon right and left by its connection with the State, and enfeebled by the servile doctrine of Gallicanism, pleasant to the pride of the episcopacy, but almost making a schismatic national Church of that which should be a willing member of the one body of which Christ is the head. "Let us sever the bonds which bind the Church to the State," he cried ; " let it become once more a vigorous organisation, subject to a single will directed by God, and the Church will rise up strong enough to renew the face of society, to breathe life into the cold corpse of the world."

The first volume of the "Essai," which was received, if we disregard the silence of the Liberals and a section of the clergy, with unqualified applause, is in reality the least important portion of the work. Its style is characteristically that of its author, but, as far as its contents go, they might belong for the most part to another man. The fundamental and peculiar principle of Lamennais's philosophy finds its development and application in the subsequent volumes. Indifference to the doctrines of religion would indeed be reasonable could it be proved that religious truth lay without the province of human knowledge. The apologist of theology proceeds to show that such truth is ascertainable, and can be tested by an infallible criterion.

Lamennais, though by the perverseness of criticism, he has been called a solitary and a misanthrope, breathed, as has been already seen, in every breath the life of his fellowmen. Every nerve of his body was a conductor of the electrical force of his own heart and brain outwards, and inwards of the currents of the earth. The insulation of a human being from his fellows was in his eyes in the truest sense death, and is complete in the coffin. Our physical nature owes its existence and preservation to society ; neither physical life nor the propagation of life is possible for the solitary individual. Our emotional nature lives by love and self-surrender : if these die, it is dead. What of our intellectual nature—shall it alone live and flourish apart from society, in solitary observation, self-consciousness, and reasoning? All that could make itself audible in Lamennais rose and answered, "No." Philosophy, under the guidance of Descartes, had for some centuries been leading men in the ways of death. The bitter root of all modern atheism and heresy lay in that innocent-looking *Ego** *cogito, ergo sum.* It was the doctrine of individualism, of belief in one's self, of error, pride, misery. Lamennais undertakes to prove that man, as an individual, can know, that is, can be certain of nothing, and that the senses, inward consciousness, and reasoning are alike unable to furnish him with a criterion of truth.

Now all philosophy, all thought must start from something indemonstrable. Some primary, inexplicable fact must be the ultimate basis of all reasoning. We cannot by an infinite regress discover demonstrations of demonstrations. The *Ego cogito, ergo sum* of Descartes assumed as an indemonstrable fact the veracity of his own faculties. Such an assumption he was not warranted in making; the faculties of the individual are not necessarily veracious, much less infallible. A Bedlam king is no less assured of his regality than the King of France; it is the common testimony of those around us which alone can prove to any one of us that he is not insane. Descartes then did not perceive the actual first fact of the human mind, and yet it is most obvious.

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* The "ego," commonly omitted, was not omitted by Descartes. This fact I have seen noted in a manuscript letter of a singularly accurate writer, the late Sir W. Rowan Hamilton.

Not "I believe in myself," but "I believe in the human race"—submission to authority the infallibility of which is admitted without proofs—that is the fact which is indeed primary, and from which all else proceeds. Do you ask, What guarantee, what proof have I of the infallibility of the race? I reply, The infallibility cannot in the nature of things be guaranteed or proved, but as a fact it is admitted without proof. Were I to attempt to prove it, I should fall into the absurdity of reaccepting my individual reason as the starting-point of philosophy after I had already rejected it. But if the objector adds, "*I* have not this assurance of the infallibility of the common reason of the race," Lamennais is compelled to answer, "Then you are a knave or a fool."

This common reason of the race is resorted to by Lamennais "not merely as a Catholic criterion, or a source of elementary truths, but as a magazine of ready-fabricated dogmas." * All the articles of the Christian creed are borne witness to, and have been, more or less obscurely, since the beginning of the world, by this common reason. There is but one true religion, that which has existed from the days of Adam to our own; through Moses and in Jesus Christ no new religion was revealed, but the old was preserved, hedged in, explained, developed. All so-called false religions are corruptions of the true, which have fallen out of the line of development. But how do we distinguish the true and pure religion from its corrupt forms? Not by comparing creed with creed; there is no need of that; we have but to observe the testimony of mankind, the witness of the common reason. The true religion is that which rests upon the greatest visible authority. This note of the true religion is possessed by Christianity, while of the several societies of Christians none can for a moment exhibit a consensus of authority comparable with that of the Catholic Church. The voice of the Catholic Church therefore is the voice of humanity, and all its utterances as such are infallibly true.

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* Sir W. Hamilton (Reid's Works, ed. Ham. p. 771). Hamilton identifies the doctrine of Lamennais with that of Heraclitus, but erroneously I believe. "The Common" of Heraclitus was derived through the senses. See Lewes's "Hist. of Philosophy."

IV.

This was just such a book as would try the spirits of men, and create division of parties, clear-cut, and insuperable. There was much in it to attract the younger and bolder part of the clergy, secretly prepared by the working of the new Catholic tendency to break with Gallican traditions. There was much also to make the nervous ears of orthodoxy prick up. An attack upon the time-honoured philosophy of Descartes, taught in all the schools, was hardly less than heresy. The theory of a common reason and its infallibility was believed to be (as Lacordaire afterwards, when he had withdrawn from his great master, endeavoured to show) essentially anti-supernatural, appearing as it did to contain an implicit denial of the necessity of revelation. And at the same time the idea of the development of religion—religion itself being but the highest reason of the race—brought with it a question, which an atmosphere impregnated by modern thought was likely soon to ripen into a hope, and an assurance. Has this development reached its term? Is the reason of the race exhausted? Shall all that is obscure in theology never be illuminated, all that is undeveloped in Christian ethics never be made complete? There *were* men who looked for a fresh development of human reason, men on whose lips was the new word "progress," to whom industry seemed pregnant with a new morality, and science with an unborn faith. But these were the liberal philosophers.

On the publication of the second volume of the "Essai" Lamennais became a suspected man. A tempest was gathering against him, and ere long it burst. Even the excellent Abbé Carron was alarmed for his son, and addressed to him a letter filled with kind warning and advice, to which Lammenais replied with unaffected thanks and love. "My principles," he says, "are but the development of the great Catholic maxim, *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus.*" To strengthen his position by a fresh discussion of the disputed points, and to appeal to Rome, such were the two modes of defence open to Lamennais, and he adopted both. A favourable response was received from Rome, yet one hardly decisive enough to satisfy the absolute spirit it was intended to soothe, and Lamennais, after some delay, determined to present himself personally before the Holy Father, to testify his submission, and procure, if possible, an open acknowledgment of his orthodoxy.

In the spring of the year 1824 Lamennais set out for Rome. He delayed some time at Geneva, where the weather was bad, and the odour of Protestantism highly offensive. "I should a hundred times rather live among Turks than in the midst of this abominable population. The rest of Switzerland is hardly better, and I doubt whether there is anywhere in the world a more tiresome country. As to natural curiosities, mountains, valleys, lakes, streams, water-falls, these are soon seen." Thus, with characteristic capacity for injustice, could Lamennais relieve his feelings against the Protestant mountains and lakes; at another time he viewed them with different eyes. The Countess de Maistre received the traveller at Turin. At Rome a triumph awaited him. A new Pope — Leo XII. — had just been elected, and notwithstanding extreme feebleness of health, he exerted himself to welcome with distinguished honour the French champion of the Papacy. He was pressed to occupy an apartment in the Vatican; a cardinal's hat, it was said, was offered to him; but Lamennais declined all favours except a dispensation relieving him from the recital of the daily breviary, "convinced doubtless," says a biographer, "that for him action was more virtuous than meditation or prayer." The Holy Father would gladly have retained him at Rome, but Lamennais felt that his work lay before him in his native country, and as farewell was said, the Pope encouraged him to carry on the warfare he had begun. Lamennais was gone, but a portrait of him long hung upon the wall of Leo's private sitting-room, its only ornament beside a picture of the Virgin.*

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* A letter has been published which professes to be written by Cardinal Bernetti, and which, if authentic, would convict the Pope of hypocrisy in all these marks of favour. "From the time we received and conversed with him," Leo is represented as saying, "we have been struck with terror. From that day we had incessantly before our eyes

After the imperial city like a superb mistress had tempted the soul of Lamennais, his cherishing Breton woods reclaimed him as their own. It seemed inevitable to him that he should be great and conspicuous; his heart longed for peace, repose, and obscurity, the sweet activity and sweet patience of nature. The house of La Chênaie stands in the midst of woods, upon the border of the forest of Coetquen. Waste lands, where at that time grew only furze and heather, fields half-cultivated, a pond shut in by rocks, and the deep waters of which reflected trailing branches of ivy and the foliage of immemorial oaks, gave to the place "a calm and somewhat sad appearance." Here passed away many weeks and months of the life of Lamennais. Not in self-contemplation, or solitary thought, or Wordsworthian communion with the "wisdom and spirit of the universe." External nature to Lamennais was a mother, not a bride, and he gave her his weakness, not his strength; the true bride of his soul was humanity.

A flood of light has been poured upon the history of his mind by the publication of his letters, and in them we perceive with how intense a gaze he watched from his solitude every movement of society and of the political world. The prophet was in the wilderness, but he bore in his heart the cause of his people, its sorrows and its wrongs. He was sensitive to the changes in the political atmosphere; he noted each fact of importance. With the prophetic instinct he pierced through the accidental surrounding of events to their moral import,

his face as of one damned (*sa face de damné*). . . Yes, this priest has the face of one damned. There is *heresiarch* upon his forehead."

brooded upon that, and created a vision of the future out of its undeveloped causes. Evil and good were everywhere at strife before him; he clung to the good, whatever name it bore, had faith in its ultimate victory, and knew that the victory could not be without blood. By no violent convulsions of soul, but simply by passionate inspection of the course of things, and by observing the sides upon which the powers of the earth ranged themselves, the thinker of 1820, intolerant, monarchical, hostile to liberal politics, devoid of sympathy with the scientific movement, was transformed into the thinker of 1830, still indeed intolerant, but as for the rest, the reverse of his former self. So far we find no inconsistency in the man, though his judgment of parties may change. Is it inconsistent to lose faith in a friend when he has for the twentieth time proved himself other than he professed himself to be? Is it inconsistent to receive as an ally one who under a different banner is fighting for the same cause with yourself? The cause for which Lamennais fought was never the monarchy, it was never even the Papacy for its own sake. It was the regeneration and reorganisation of society. It was not an idea, it was something to be done; and if kings and governments, and the Pope as a temporal sovereign, were false to their trust, why let them go; perhaps the *people* would be true to theirs.

Such is the account which his correspondence enables us to give of Lamennais's conversion to the democratic cause. At no time was he greatly attached to the Restoration dynasty. The royal Government in secular matters was blind, impotent, and despotic. The Church remained in the legalised servitude to which Napoleon had reduced it. The bishops acquiesced with unabashed servility, and the clergy appearing as the allies of despotism, all who cared for freedom were becoming estranged from the Church and from religion. There was on the one side a throne supported by bayonets, a force merely material, guided by a policy of interests, devoid of thought and faith; it had even forgotten that bayonets are wielded by human hands. On the other side was a growing spirit of anarchy, an ill-suppressed mass of violence and hatred. The Royalists were worldlings, the Radicals were atheists; the problem which both were trying to solve was "How to constitute a society without God." At the same time God seemed to have withdrawn himself from the essential point of contact through which he animated the world; the light which ought to guide men was darkness, the hand which ought to save was too cowardly or too weak to stir. Rome, which ought to have been a rallying word, was a word which Lamennais was ashamed to utter. Rome was prudent, and had a profound respect for bayonets, whether French, Austrian, Russian, or British. Freedom and religion, the cause of humanity, were being done to death, and Peter warmed himself, and said, "I know not the man."

Yet Christ had said, "Upon this rock I will build my Church," and if the Church, then necessarily the world also. The Church was the one thing which seemed still worth fighting for; the Church, if it were but true to itself, could still save society, and after the overthrow of the existing state of things, which now might be clearly foreseen, the Church perfectly free, and taking the lead in thought, might recreate the world. Was it possible that religion was about to receive a new *development*, the most important since the days of Christ? Many things seemed to favour such a conjecture. The greater the need of a putting forth of divine power, the greater would be the manifestation of God. "What thou doest, do quickly," Lamennais muttered to the kings and cabinets of Europe. The Ordonnances of June, 1828, seemed to fill up the measure of their iniquity. At that time Lamennais gave the Government of France two years to live, and we know whether or not his prophecy was fulfilled. After the coming storm, was it possible that men might see a new heaven and a new earth?

Gradually, too, as Lamennais kept gazing at the movements of society, he thought he discerned a party which was influenced by something higher than material interests, which had some sense of the sacredness of political action. It was the party of "honest Liberals." These were not mere phantasmal statesmen, having no existence in the world of reality; they possessed some spiritual significance. The Revolution, therefore, because it had some spiritual force, would conquer the Governments of Europe, but religion, with its indestructible beliefs, would conquer the Revolution. That this conquest should be effected, however, the Church must be prepared to break with the Governments and recognise the cause of the peoples as her own. To liberalise the Church, to catholicise Liberalism, such were now the ends for which Lamennais drew every breath—ends which were themselves but means to the one great object of his life, the reorganisation of society.

These years between Lamennais's first journey to Rome and the Revolution of 1830 were not passed altogether at La Chênaie. In the spring of 1826 he is in Paris, accepting the consequences of a publication entitled "De la Religion considérée dans ses rapports avec l'ordre politique et civil." Judicial proceedings were taken against him; he was accused of "effacing the limits of the temporal and spiritual powers, and of recognising in the Sovereign Pontiff the right of deposing kings and of releasing subjects from their oath of fidelity." Lamennais was defended by his friend Berryer, and at the close of his advocate's address the accused rose and uttered himself a few words expressing his devotion to the head of the Church:—"His faith is my faith, his doctrine is my doctrine, and to my latest breath I will continue to profess and to defend it." Judgment was given against Lamennais, but in the most lenient terms, and a nominal fine was imposed.

That summer his feeble health entirely gave way. Greatly exhausted, and subject to spasms and frequent fainting-fits, he was ordered by his physicians to the baths of Saint Sauveur in the Pyrenees. One friend, the Abbé de Salinis, accompanied him. The journey he describes as a kind of constant agony: at some leagues past Montauban they were obliged to lift him from the carriage, and lay him on a bed in a farmhouse. The Church seemed about to lose her champion. But at Saint Sauveur his health in some degree returned. Here it was that he was first seen by a little sick boy for whom Lamennais's regard afterwards ripened into a friendship terminated only by death. The boy was Émile Forgues, to whom, nearly thirty years after, Lamennais intrusted the publication of his letters and posthumous works. He had heard the name of the great priest, and imagined him like one of the majestic saints of a cathedral window, with the keys, the book, or the symbolic sword, in gorgeous drapery, with flowing beard and gesture of inspiration. He found in a little dimly-lighted room a small, lean, sorry-looking man, seated in a great straw arm-chair, his head sunk upon his chest. Thus the acquaintance began. The two abbés made the child a companion in their walks, which were never very long. Sometimes the Abbé de Salinis would leave them, and then, seated on the grass, Lamennais would draw from his pocket his Latin "Imitation," and make the boy translate, interrupting him with commentaries perhaps not quite within his comprehension. Or the friend would return, and all three would descend slowly to the banks of the Gave to compete in stone-throwing, for success in which Lamennais would prove a marked incapacity.*

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* The following from George Sand will serve to make the bodily presence of Lamennais more visible. "His [Everard's] head, at once that of a hero and a saint, appears to me in my dreams by the side of the austere and terrible face of the great La Mennais. In the last the brow is an unbroken wall, a brass tablet,—the seal of indomitable vigour, and furrowed like Everard's between the eyebrows with those perpendicular wrinkles which belong exclusively, says Lavater, to those of high capacity who think justly and nobly. The stiff and rigid inclination of the profile, the angular narrowness of the visage, doubtless agree with the inflexible probity, the hermit-like austerity, and the incessant toil of thoughts ardent and vast as heaven. But the smile which comes suddenly to humanise this countenance changes my terror into confidence, my respect into adoration."—("Letters of a Traveller." Letter vii. To Franz Liszt.)

The visit to Saint Sauveur was of brief duration. Again in the same year, in December, we find Lamennais in Paris; and learn that he was concerned in the ill-advised proceeding of which M. Littré has given us the details—the religious ceremony of marriage into which Comte, then in a state of mental alienation, was indecently hurried. Next year there is a gap in the correspondence; Lamennais is face to face with death, and calm and happy. But death which hovered near so often was not yet to touch him, and he came back to the warfare of his life sadly and resolutely. "Dieu l'a fait soldat," said his brother Jean, and the hardest battles were yet to fight. Meanwhile, struggling against feeble health, and against poverty at times so absolute that he was unable to keep a servant, he laboured unceasingly for Catholicism and liberty. He wrote much; disciples gathered round him; in the *Mémorial Catholique* his party found a literary organ; he inspired from a distance the "Association for the Defence of the Catholic Religion," which was virtually a club prepared to start forward and take the initiative in politics when the days of organisation had come; and at La Chênaie and in its neighbourhood Lamennais and his brother prepared a small contingent of young men for the Catholic cause, *élite* volunteers, who should lead in the campaigns of the future.

V.

The events of July, 1830, which Lamennais had long anticipated, seemed to clear the way for a forward movement of his party. Only half of what society needed was accomplished by the Revolution; its character was negative; it secured freedom, but introduced no principle of order. The true principle of order lay essentially in religion; religion and the Revolution, order and freedom, a catholicised liberalism —such were the watchwords of the party which found its centre in the person of Lamennais. Not many weeks after the days of July the *Avenir* newspaper was started, under the conduct of Lamennais, Lacordaire, Montalembert and two or three other distinguished neo-Catholic leaders. Its motto—the words "God and Liberty"—indicates the point of view from which it regarded the questions of the day. The principles advocated were the rendering into politics of its spirit of Catholic Liberalism: —absolute submission to the Holy Father in things spiritual, the complete separation of Church and State, together with the renunciation by the clergy of the budget of worship, liberty of conscience, liberty of the press, freedom in education, the right of association, the right of popular election.

It was not long until the editors discovered that the Government of Louis Philippe inherited the traditions of the Government of Charles X., especially in matters relating to Church and State, and that a change of masters was not necessarily a change of minds. The bishops presented to the Holy See were the creatures of the Government; the University was allowed, in direct opposition to the new Charter, to retain a monopoly of education, in order that the clergy might possess as little direct influence as possible over the youth of the country; secular instruction free of expense was given to the poor, in order that superstition

—that is, the Catholic religion—might be destroyed; the ceremony of public worship was interfered with by legislative enactments. The *Avenir* struggled against overwhelming odds; the Government, the Gallican clergy, the Bourbons were united against it; yet its influence was considerable, especially amongst the younger members of the priesthood. A compact party, with definiteness of position, the audacity of enthusiasm, and high intellectual prowess, may be a formidable power in times of general indecision, faithlessness, and want of heart. Together with the journal was established the "Agence générale pour la défense de la liberté religieuse," a council of nine, Lamennais being president, with associated annual subscribers. The *Avenir* spoke; the "Agence" acted. It presented petitions to the Chamber of Deputies; it resisted infringements of the rights of the clergy by legal proceedings carried, when necessary, into the highest courts; it supported schools against the oppression of the Government officials; it made experiments to determine the boundaries of the law; it served as a bond between local associations intended to advance the cause of religious freedom in France.

Notwithstanding the zeal of the *Avenir* and the "Agence" for the Catholic religion, their enemies succeeded in bringing into suspicion the orthodoxy of Lamennais and his friends. Rumours that their principles were disapproved at Rome, first sullen and inarticulate, became by degrees loud and clear. There could be no doubt that the spirit of the *Avenir* in political matters was very far removed from that which presided over the councils of the Sovereign Pontiff. But Lamennais had long since been forced by the logic of events to distinguish between the temporal sovereign at Rome and the spiritual head of the Church. If the Pope encouraged heretical Russia to stifle in blood the aspirations of Catholic Poland, it was the temporal sovereign who did this, not the infallible priest; Lamennais could still raise his voice for freedom and Poland. And with a *naïve* faith, which would be incredible in a less simple and absolute character, he believed that at Rome they would distinguish between the opponent of the sovereign and of the priest; that they would be just to the most obedient son of the Church, if they were not even grateful to her most devoted champion.

Leo XII. was now dead. Gregory XVI. reigned in his place. Thirteen months after its foundation the editors resolved to suspend the publication of the *Avenir*, and Lamennais announced the fact in the number of November 15, 1831. "If we retire for a moment, it is not through weariness, still less through failing of heart; it is to go, as formerly did the soldiers of Israel, *to consult the Lord in Shiloh.* Doubts have been thrown upon our faith, and even our intentions, for in these times what is not attacked? We leave for a moment the battle-field to fulfil another duty equally urgent. The traveller's staff in our hand, we take our way towards the Eternal City, and there, prostrated at the feet of the Pontiff whom Jesus Christ has appointed to his disciples as a master and a guide, we shall say, 'O father, deign to cast down your eyes upon some of the humblest of your children, accused of being rebels against your infallible and sweet authority; behold they are before you; read what is in their souls; nothing which they would conceal is there; if one thought of theirs, but one, is other than yours, they disavow, they abjure it; you are the rule of their doctrines; never, never have they known another. O father, pronounce over them the word which gives life because it gives light, and let your hand be stretched forth to bless their obedience and their love.'" Some days after this announcement "three obscure Christians"—Lamennais, Lacordaire, and Montalembert (then a youth of twenty-one years)—set their faces towards the capital of the Christian world.

Lamennais has related the incidents of this pilgrimage to Rome in a book which, in some respects, must stand apart from his other writings. When he spoke on behalf of a struggling cause or an oppressed nation, the thoughts were extreme and passionate, visions of horror and of shame rose before the imagination, the language was abrupt, and heaved like the breast of one over-excited, labouring in vain to give relief to the violence of emotion. But in the "Affaires de Rome" it is chiefly with himself and his own wrongs that he is concerned, and therefore the tone is moderate, the feeling healthful and changeful, the style full of natural grace, picturesque, tender, ironical, playful, grave by turns. The travellers left Paris towards the close of the year 1831. At Lyons they found the city in the hands of the insurrectionary workmen, and Lamennais could not fail to be impressed deeply by the order and gravity and noble respect for justice that governed a populace which, from desperation, had suddenly risen to absolute power. "Thanks be given to God," he wrote elsewhere, "who allowed us to witness this illustrious justification of the true people, so suspected, so calumniated. Never did a spectacle so great and touching meet our eyes as that which this immense city presented, fallen, after an heroic struggle, into the hands of the mere workmen. As soon as they were in possession, the most perfect order, the most complete security reigned, together with the entirest freedom. . . . Not a disorder, not a single offence against property or person. . . . One might see these men of toil, their poor workshop blouses on, with faces hollow and worn, but calm, here musket on shoulder preserving the public safety, there prostrated on the pavement of a solitary church praying with confidence to Him who suffered like them and for them." Such a sight as this, if men would but consult the facts of nineteenth century revolutionary movements, would not be found unusual. With a heart overflowing with love for the poor, despised, and suffering, sensible above all else to the sublime in character, and himself wounded and saddened, how could Lamennais feel other than consecrated, by his presence at such a moment as this, to the cause of the people?

In feeble health, Lamennais, with his two companions, proceeded on his journey. Italy, with its blue breadths of sea, and various shore, and wealth of fertile valley, and rich ravine, was too smiling and fair a land to possess itself of his love: he thought with regret of his native Armorica, "its tempests, and granite rocks beaten by the grass-green waves; its reefs white with foam, its long, deserted strands, where no sound meets the ear but the dull roar of the wave, the shrill cry of the wheeling gull, and the voice of the sea-lark sad and sweet." At Rome a very different reception awaited him from that which he had been honoured with eight years before. A small number of distinguished ecclesiastics did not fear to take the pilgrims by the hand and welcome them. But for the rest, their isolation was complete. Diplomatic notes from Austria, Prussia, and Russia had preceded them, in which the Pope was urged to pronounce against the pernicious publicists who, in the name of religion, had excited the peoples to revolt. With difficulty they procured an audience with the Holy Father, and that only on condition that no allusion should be made to the business which brought them to Rome. Cardinal de Rohan, their opponent, the *bambino* cardinal whom Lamennais has sketched with so mischievous and sprightly a pencil, was present as witness of their silence.

Week after week passed, and the ardent, uncompromising, and fearless nature of Lamennais was first surprised, then pained, and at last violently repelled by the circuitous policy, the back-stair approaches, the worldliness, chicanery, and dastardly spirit of the Roman court. The old man who governed Christendom, ignorant alike of the condition of the Church and of the world, was surrounded by a body-guard of blind, imbecile, and greedy retainers. Weary of Rome, yet still not hopeless of obtaining a decision, Lamennais sought for repose and restoration of heart amongst the small religious houses in the country. We feel a relief and lightening of spirit when we escape from the pages of his book which disclose the corrupt life that crawled and crept in Rome, to those which mirror the peaceful and world-forgetting days of the convent. Let one picture be looked at out of several. "The Camaldolese occupy each a small separate house, which contains several rooms. We reached their dwelling-place towards evening, at the hour of common prayer; they seemed all of advanced age, and of more than middle stature. Ranged on the two sides of the nave, they remained, after the service was ended, on their knees, motionless in profound meditation. One might have said that already they had ceased to belong to earth. Their bald heads drooped under other thoughts and other cares: not a movement, not an outward sign of life; enveloped in their long white cloaks, they looked like those statues which pray upon old tombs."

At length, when there seemed no likelihood of judgment, favourable or the reverse, being pronounced, Lamennais, upon the advice of his Roman friends, decided to accept the Pope's silence as equivalent to a declaration that his opinions were not disapproved, to leave Italy, and resume his suspended labours. On a breathless and heavy evening in the month of July, his carriage crept along the heights above the Tiber, and while the fires of the setting sun shone upon the dome of St. Peter, the last of Rome was seen. Montalembert accompanied his friend; they delayed to visit Florence and Venice. At Munich they found Lacordaire; and the most distinguished writers and artists of the city received, at a public dinner, the three editors of the *Avenir*. "Towards the end of the repast," as Lacordaire has told, "some one came to M. de La Mennais and begged him to come out for a moment, and an envoy of the Apostolic Nuncio presented to him a folded paper, sealed with the Nuncio's seal. He opened it, and saw that it contained an Encyclical Letter from Pope Gregory XVI., dated August 15, 1832. A rapid glance at its contents soon told him that it was on the subject of the doctrines of the *Avenir*, and that it was unfavourable to them. His decision was taken at once; and without examining the precise import of the Pontifical Brief, he said to us in a low voice, as he left the room, 'I have just received an Encyclical of the Pope against us; we must not hesitate to submit.' Then returning home, he at once drew up, in a few short but precise lines, an act of submission, with which the Pope was satisfied."

On their return to France, the editors announced that their journal would appear no more, and that the "Agence" was dissolved. It was in many respects a happy day for Lamennais, when he could return with free conscience to a less troubled life. He had recently lost all that he possessed through an unfortunate connection with a Paris bookseller. Reduced to absolute poverty, but easier in mind than he had been for many a day, Lamennais withdrew to the privacy of La Chênaie, where a few young and ingenuous scholars surrounded him. One of these scholars since his death has risen upon us like a lucid and pale star, which exercises no sway over the lives of men, but attracts the love of some—Maurice de Guérin. Both in his diary and letters some interesting records may be found of the life in "the little paradise of La Chênaie," and of the relations which existed between the master and his disciples.* These were of the most tender and the most respectful kind.

It has been remarked with what unrestrained affection the young members of the *Avenir* staff wrote to their chief. The letters begin with the formula *Mon père, mon père, bien aimé,* and end with *Votre tendre fils, votre enfant;* and the contents of the letters show that these were not empty words, that the confidence of these friends was absolute, their attachment almost boundless. So was it also at La Chênaie. "I felt at first," says Maurice de Guérin, "in accosting M. Féli (so we call him familiarly), that mysterious shiver which always runs through one on the approach of divine things or great men; but soon this trembling changed into *abandon* and confidence. . . M. Féli has, so to say, compelled me to forget his renown by his fatherly gentleness, and the tender familiarity of his intercourse. Here I am in his hands, body and soul, hoping that this great artist may educe the statue from the formless block." And elsewhere: "Commonly enough M. Féli is believed to be a proud man, and passionately proud. This opinion, which has turned away from him many Catholics, is incredibly false. No one in the world is more lost in humility and self-renunciation." And once more: "In the evening, after supper, we go into the drawing-room. He throws himself into a huge sofa, an old piece of furniture in threadbare crimson velvet. . . . It is the hour for conversation. Then, if you were to enter the room, you would see low in a corner a little head, nothing but the head, the rest of the body being absorbed by the sofa, its eyes a-gleam like carbuncles, and pivoting incessantly on his neck; you would hear a voice now grave, now full of mockery, and sometimes long peals of shrill laughter—*c'est notre homme.*"

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* See Journal, Letters, &c., pp 19, 38, 39, 170—172, 175, 176, 179. 193—195 (Quatrième edition).

At this time Lamennais was occupied with the conception and elaboration of a philosophy which should resume all his views upon nature, man, and society, and base them upon an idea of God. But in his life peace was never to be of long duration. In May 1833, appeared a Brief of the Pope, in which Lamennais was spoken of as having failed to give the unequivocal pledges of his submission which had been expected. The demands now made upon him were an unqualified adherence to the Encyclical, which had condemned political freedom in some of its most essential forms, and the promise of absolute obedience to Rome in temporal affairs, as well as spiritual. It was at last clear to him that he had mistaken the principles of Catholicism, that no substantial union could be effected between the Papacy and Liberalism, and that a choice must be made between the cause of Rome and that of humanity. His past faith, the foundations of which had been gradually and inevitably weakened by the observations of the real world, and the reaction of the natural human heart, now at last sank under external pressure. As for his past life, so far as it was bound up with Rome, he cared only to leave it entirely behind him. A new life devoted to the same object—the renewal of society—and employing as its means a larger and nobler conception of Christianity was now to begin. For peace' sake he signed the declaration demanded by the Pope—a declaration which for Lamennais meant nothing, because he signed it with the reserve of his duties to his country and humanity, which meant all. That such was the sense in which he understood this act soon became apparent.

The letters written from La Chênaie towards the close of the year 1832, and in the early part of 1833, are remarkable for their imaginative fervour, and that intellectual grasp and decisiveness which passion gives. This was the time when Russia and Austria, with the approbation of the Pope, were joyfully hastening the death-agony of Polish nationality, and when the French Government was entering upon a period of violent reaction against the principles of July. The Church and the kings seemed leagued against Christ and the people. The heart of the prophet of La Chênaie was stirred within him; wrath, indignation, hatred, contempt, love, grief, and pity, and above all hope, growing brighter as the darkness grew deeper, made him their own, and a series of visions passed before him. These were written down in words resembling those of the Hebrew prophets, at first to be read only by a few, as they were not intended for publication.* But now, increasing national calamities, and the necessity of some act on his part which would clearly define his position in the eyes of all, and interpret rightly his submission to the Papal demands, left Lamennais no choice but to declare openly his political creed, "to cry aloud and spare not." An immense welcome greeted the "Paroles d'un Croyant." It was translated into English, German, Polish, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian and other languages. A hundred thousand copies were almost immediately sold. A lucky phrase of M. de Vitrolles defines accurately the "Paroles:"—"C'est un bonnet rouge planté sur une croix." But the cross was not one which could be acknowledged as such in the councils of the Vatican. A new Encyclical appeared, dated July 1834, which is refreshing to read for the vivacity of its language. There is now no apathy or languor at Rome. The Holy Father is seized with horror at this breach of faith, this prodigy of calumny, at the blindness of the author, at the transports of his fury, at his pernicious designs, at the fatal frenzy of his imagination, at his impious abuse of God's Word, at the propositions of the book, "Falsas, calumniosas, temerarias, . . . impias, scandalosas, erroneas."

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* Mickiewicz's "Book of the Polish People," which was translated into French by M. de Montalembert, suggested the style which Lamennais adopted in the "Paroles."

If anything was needed to complete the liberation of Lamennais from the Church of Rome, this Encyclical supplied it. Perhaps one thing *was* needed—a logical means of escape from his own arguments of past times. Heretofore his severance from Catholicism had been effected by a scrutiny of the facts of the political world. and the simple action of the moral sense. To destroy on the earth the reign of force, and to substitute that of justice and charity—in other words, to spiritualise material power—such seemed to him the one thing needed by society, and such also seemed the tendency of Christianity. But Rome had deliberately taken the side of force against justice and charity. So much he had seen. Still there were the old arguments of the "Essai"

—what of these? At this moment appeared the Encyclical, and fortunately it did not confine itself to denouncing and reprobating the opinions of the "Paroles," but went on to condemn in strong terms the philosophy of the Common Reason, which a few years before had been the most orthodox of beliefs. Thus the Church destroyed the philosophical basis upon which, as conceived by Lamennais, it rested. And now appeared, what surely ought to have been discovered before, that if the Common Reason is the basis of the Church, its authority is antecedent and superior to the authority of the Church, and the Church has a judge on earth outside itself. Here, too, the doctrine of the development of religion came in powerfully to aid the liberation of Lamennais. As at present conceived and organised, religion had ceased to influence the world for good—it had rather set itself against all that was most admirable in the individual and in society. Had not the time come for the appearance and reign of a new conception of religion?

VI.

It is the singular fate of Lamennais that in almost all which has been written upon his life and works, much attention is paid to that portion of them which he himself rejected and left behind; little is said of the action and thought upon which in his maturest years he would have laid his chief claim to remembrance among men. The present study is no exception to this rule. Having brought thus far our account of the history of Lamennais's mind, we can only indicate briefly the direction in which he subsequently moved, and say that much remains necessarily untold. On political questions he steadily adhered to the principles of democracy.* In April 1835, he was invited by the members of the committee for the defence of the accused who took part in the abortive revolutionary movements at Paris and Lyons, to co-operate with them, and he joyfully consented. Five years later he was himself a prisoner in Sainte Pélagie, and there passed twelve months at the age of sixty-one, condemned for the publication of a pamphlet entitled "Le Pays et le Gouvernement," in which he had violently inveighed against the pacific policy of Louis Philippe, the fortifying of Paris, the system of preventive arrests, and measures against the workmen which seemed to him oppressive. In 1848 he appeared as a representative in the Constituent Assembly, and was a member of the *Comité de Constitution,* where he presented his colleagues with a scheme of social and political organisation *(Projet de Constitution),* to which he attached great importance, but which found little favour with others. With the Constituent Assembly his political career ends. Lamennais, it has been said, lost the originality of his part amongst political actors when he renounced the leadership of the party of Liberal Catholics. The truth of this remark may well be questioned. What was most peculiar and essential in his political creed remained the same through every change—the opinion that all real society, all society which contains a principle of stability, must be founded upon a religious faith. To spiritualise the democracy was to the last the object of his most earnest endeavours, and "a spiritualised democracy" is not so remote a translation of the old watchword, a "Catholicised Liberalism."

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* It may here be noted that from the year 1834 he usually wrote his name F. Lamennais, instead of the aristocratic *de* La Mennais.

During these years the religious opinions of Lamennais underwent important changes. At first, after his departure from the Catholic Church, he looked forward, as we have seen, to a new development of religion, but such a development as would leave untouched the supernatural facts of Christianity, or would at most render it possible to conceive them in a nobler way. Looking, however, into Christianity, and looking at the same time upon the face of the world, and considering how far Christianity contained elements which might effect the regeneration of society, he found things beginning to take a new appearance. Christianity, with the best intentions, seemed powerless, and its voice was like the remote and ineffectual voice of a shade. A spiritual society stood over against a natural society, but the spiritual refused to penetrate the natural, the Church remained separate from the world. On searching deeper, the cause of this became apparent. Emerging from Judaism, which had made God everything, and made man and nature nothing, or but the small dust of the balance, and reacting against the dominant sensuality of the time. Christianity had thrown itself into an excessive spiritualism, out of nature and (under the influence of the idea of the "Fall") even opposed to nature. Hence a false conception of God, which put a gulf between the Creator and the creation, and represented the former as something other than Infinite Being; hence a false conception of religion as belonging to a supernatural order of facts, a fruitless attempt to establish man in a supernatural condition, a condition out of nature, and even opposed to it; and hence also, as has been observed, a mistaken theory of society.

Lamennais's own theory in its latest form is given in the remarkable preface to his translation of Dante's "Divine Comedy;"* the reader will perceive how far it is removed from that of Catholicism:—

"The spiritual power, although connected with the temporal, which it ought to direct, does not from its very nature admit of any organisation analogous to that whose action is resumed by the temporal power; just as the mind, though connected with the body, cannot be conceived under a mode of bodily organisation. What it is in man it is likewise in society—something above the senses—thought, reason finite and progressive, subject to error, but always penetrating further into the truth. In society, then, the spiritual power, foreign to the organisation of the social body, or of the State, apart from it, superior to it, is but intelligence, reason free from every bond; whence, by the unrestrained communication of thoughts which modify one another, arises a common thought, a common will, governing, when once formed, all private thoughts and volitions; so that with no means of constraint, no political or civil jurisdiction, the free, impersonal, incorporeal reason constitutes the spiritual power in which resides the supreme power of government."

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* A translation of a great portion of this preface appeared as an article in the *Westminster Review*, Oct. 1866, but this passage—the most remarkable in the work—was omitted.

While such thoughts as these were possessing themselves of the mind of Lamennais, the significance of the scientific movement had been growing greater and greater in his eyes; but he believed that the tree of science had its roots in the idea of God, that atheistic science was doomed to perpetual sterility. Finite Being is but infinite Being in a mode of limitation; its laws, therefore, can be no other than the laws of infinite Being, modified in each creature according to the mode of limitation which determines its peculiar nature. Thus, by a process of *levelling-up,* Lamennais made the supernatural, in the ordinary sense of the word, disappear. Miracles became incredible, and, indeed, impossible to conceive. "A new synthesis," wrote Lamennais in his book on the "Past and Future of the People," "is in process of formation which, uniting Christian spiritualism and scientific naturalism, the Creator and the creation, and the laws of both, will complete the ancient dogma, and will constitute in this sense a new dogma, the character of which will be the negation of a supernatural order of things, of an order intermediate between God and his work, and the determination of the properties of absolute Being, without which the persons [of the Trinity], as determined by Christianity, are but logical abstractions deprived of true reality."

All that Lamennais meant by these last words will be understood only by one who is acquainted with the chief literary performance of the second half of his life, the "Esquisse d'une Philosophie." Of this remarkable piece of transcendental science no account can here be given, but attention may be directed to the chapters upon art (which have been republished in a separate volume under the title "De l'Art et du Beau"), as containing brilliant surveys of historical periods and national characteristics of art.

We hasten to the end. In January, 1854, while engaged upon his introduction to Dante, pleurisy seized him, and on the 16th of the month he was obliged to take to his bed. The illness at first made rapid progress. It was rumoured in Paris that Lamennais was dying. A few dear friends of the Liberal party were with him, and while the sick man lingered in life week after week, by them his house was defended from the attempts to force an entrance made by those who longed for the triumph of a death-bed recantation and submission at the last moment to the Catholic Church. Strict orders were given by Lamennais to admit no priest, whoever he might be. During his illness his thoughts were concentrated, absorbed in the one thought of God, and, thanks to those who rigorously fulfilled a duty which exposed them to much invidious criticism, his dying hours were unvexed by controversial brawls. While the pale winter sun was rising through the vapour of a February morning, the 27th of the month, the great life ceased. To some of those who stood by now for the first time the majesty of Lamennais's face was fully visible, as the head, usually drooped forward upon his chest, lay back upon the pillow. "Never," says M. Forgues, "did contour and lineaments so energetically translate before my eyes an abstract idea —that of victorious will."

Lamennais had wished that his body might lie in the peaceful solitude of La Chênaie, but he determined, some weeks before his death (perhaps much earlier), that a solemn confession of his faith should be made at the last. Instructions were left that he should be buried in the midst of the poor at Père La Chaise, and as the poor are buried, that his body should not be presented at any church, and that his death should be announced only to his niece, and to MM. Béranger, De Vitrolles, Forgues, and two other friends. "On February 29th an immense gathering of people was in motion from the Rue du Grand Chantier to the cemetery of the East. The silent crowd uncovered respectfully before the coffin placed in the hearse of the poor. The police had made a great demonstration of strength. Only eight of us entered the graveyard, the others were dispersed. M. Béranger joined us there; he walked with difficulty, leaning on the arm of M. Jean Reynaud. He had been recognised and saluted with warm greetings. The coffin was lowered into one of those long and hideous trenches in which they bury the people. When the earth was filled in the grave-digger asked, 'Is a cross to be put up?' M. Barbet answered, 'No.' M. de Lamennais had said, 'Put nothing over my grave.' Not a word was pronounced at the tomb." *

The imperial police dispersing the people, and the coffin of Lamennais disappearing underground—this is a

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* "Essai Biographique sur M. F. de la Mennais," par A. Blaize, p. 180. I may refer the reader who is interested in Lamennais especially to the correspondence edited by M. Forgues; "Œuvres Inédites" (chiefly letters), publiées par A. Blaize; "Affaires de Rome;" "Discussions critiques," &c., in the "Œuvres posthumes," edited by M. Forgues; the articles in M. Ste.-Beuve's "Portraits contemporains; M. Renan's article in "Essais de Morale et de Critique;" and the long article signed E R— –n (E. Renan ?), in the "Biographie Universelle"

melodramatic tableau on which the curtain drops. The piece, however, was not a melodrama, but a tragedy; or rather, no play of any kind, but a severe reality which may serve better than a tragedy to purify the soul by terror and pity.

(Michaud); M. Jules Simon's review of the "Esquisse," in *Revue des deux Mondes*, 1841; and M. Louis Binaud's articles on De Maistre and Lamennais in the same review, Aug. 15, 1860, and Feb. 1, 1861.

Since this essay was written, I have ascertained from an unpublished letter of Lamennais that his Irish Ancestor was named Rosse, and that he settled at Saint Malo in the time of James II.

1869.

EDGAR QUINET.

There are some men who, more than whatever else they may be, are part of the conscience of a nation. Their gladness and strength imply the purity and energy of a people's soul; their mournfulness and anger are witnesses to its moral declension or defeat. Its highest dreams of justice are their thoughts; in them its traditions of virtue are summed up; they are the guardians and chief heirs of what has been bequeathed to a nation by the most vivid moments in its past of fervour and of light. When it betrays its own better nature, they remain faithful, but isolated, and their voices are heard in grieved protesting; when it would finally quench the spirit by a deliberate act of the will, these men become its castaways, scattered abroad in exile.

Edgar Quinet was illustrious as poet, historian, political writer, exponent of literatures and religions, and he added to his titles of distinction that of theorist in physical science. In so many characters did the man appear; but the man himself was first and chiefly part of the conscience of France. Such was the permanent basis which underlay all apparent changes in the nature and direction of his activity; this it was which gave unity to the manifold labours of his life: and the singleness of impression which his works, so various in their subjects, leave with the reader, results from the felt presence of a nature always at one with itself and with the moral order of the world, and always communicating to others a share of its own wholesome warmth and pure light. And thus in days of much doubt and distraction, of half views and half beliefs, and the half action of studious compromise, in days of hesitating advances, followed by hasty and confused retreats, Edgar Quinet had the highest happiness possible in such a time—not glad oneness with a nation illuminated by just and clear ideas, animated by noble passions, and advancing irresistibly to great ends, for that was impossible in France of the present century, but union at least with himself, constant progress in his assigned path, and a spirit so attached to what is real and abiding as to be secure from illusions and their loss.

" I have passed my days in hearing men speak of their illusions, and I have never experienced a single one. . . . . No object on the earth has deceived me. Each of them has proved itself precisely what it promised to be. All, even the most paltry, have made good for me what they announced. Flowers, odours, the spring youth, the happy life in the land of one's birth, good things desired and possessed, did they pledge themselves to be eternal? . . . And it has been the same with men. No friendship of those on which I counted has failed me, and misfortune has given me some which I had no right to expect. No one has deceived me, no one betrayed me. I have found men as constant to themselves as things. . . . . Where is deception, if I am precisely in the place to which I always assigned myself? Where is illusion, if all that I feared has come to pass? Where is the sting of death, if I have so often felt it beforehand? What I have loved I have found each day more loveable. Each day justice has appeared to me more holy, liberty more fair, speech more sacred, art more real, reality more artistic, poetry more true, truth more poetical, nature more divine, and what is divine more natural." This confession, not the least remarkable of our time, and unlike most others, was written after seven years of exile. The brightness and serenity of the words are yet of an autumnal kind. We feel the presence in them of a breath like that which makes bare the trees, and sets a limit to the pleasure of the year. We become aware by the very tone of their cheerfulness of the working of "kind, calm years exacting their accompt of pain," which mature the mind.

In any sketch of the life of Edgar Quinet there will be inevitably a good deal of disproportion between its parts. He himself related, with minute and affectionate fidelity, the incidents of the first twenty years of his life, and the charm which belongs to such a narrative tempts one to linger too long among the idyllic scenes of his childhood, and the days, filled with loves and with learning, of his youth. A record of some years of a much more recent date is supplied by the "Mémoires d'Exil" of Madame Quinet, the enthusiastic partaker of her husband's political ideas and accepter of their consequences. But the long period intervening between 1823 and 1858, and again the period of life in Switzerland from 1860 to 1870, can be sketched at best in outline, and even the outline breaks here and there, and leaves a blank. It is not here intended to attempt a complete survey of his career.

Fortunately many of Quinet's works, although containing little that is directly personal, proceed obviously from the circumstances of his position, and supply a kind of undesigned autobiography.

Edgar Quinet was born February 17, 1803, at Bourg, in Ain, that department of France which borders part of the west of Switzerland. The household of which he was a member was made up of strange contrasts and resemblances, full of pleasant lights and shadows, with much of what may be named moral picturesqueness. The father, Jerome Quinet, a *commissaire des guerres* under the Republic and during the first years of the Empire, was an austere man, undemonstrative, somewhat exacting, impatient of contradiction, one who did not receive or give caresses, and who kept his children at a distance from him by his looks, and words, and bearing. The gaze of his large, blue eyes imposed restraint with silent authority. His mockery, the play of an intellect unsympathetic by resolve and upon principle, was freezing to a child, and the most distinct consciousness which his father's presence produced in the boy was the assurance that he, Edgar, was infallibly about to do something which would cause displeasure. A just, upright, and humane man, of a strong and penetrating intellect, passionately devoted to the study of science, and much occupied about a great work on the Magnetic and Atmospheric Variations of the Globe, of which only the preface ever came to be written and published. To a child such an austere personality is at least an impressive spectacle, though its meaning cannot be truly interpreted until later years.

Jerome Quinet was not much more than a spectacle to the children, The education both of head and heart he entrusted wholly to their mother. And in so doing he acted wisely. Madame Quinet was a person of a rare and admirable nature. From the eighteenth century and French society of the old *régime* she inherited her clear and lively intelligence, curious and intrepid in the world of ideas, her instinctive elegance, her gaiety and graceful archness. A Protestant education at Geneva had strengthened her understanding and established her principles; and if, being born in a time when every one did not find it essential to his particular happiness to possess "the Infinite," she could not fully enter into the new passion for reverie, melancholy, and despair, she nevertheless gave away her heart in sacred enthusiasm to whatever in the world was great and honourable. Is there any happiness or good fortune for a child comparable to the presence of such a woman?

A third important figure in the household was Edgar's paternal grandmother. In her rigidity of character she resembled his father. Many of her early years had been passed in a convent, and when she left it she brought away with her an unlimited faith in severe discipline. It was a domestic regulation instituted after her marriage, that twice a week one of the *gardes de ville* should pay a domiciliary visit to chastise the three children; if they had not been naughty the punishment might be referred to the account of future crimes. Jerome Quinet had run away from this disciplinarian home, and enrolled himself among the volunteers of '92. His Protestant bride did not please her mother-in-law, and when the younger Madame Quinet called after the wedding to pay her respects, and chanced to inquire the subject of a picture of Christ which hung where it could not be very clearly seen—"It is a God, madam, with whom you are not acquainted," replied the inflexible voice of the elder lady. Edgar's birth effected the reconciliation which this severely orthodox speech had rendered necessary. But the terrible grandmother was vulnerable upon one side; she had an exquisite sensibility to beauty. No servant could hope for an engagement under her, whose face did not possess at the least a regular outline. She was eager in her interest about paintings and engravings; and the quintessence of beauty in words, some pure and perfect chrysolite of speech, would compel sudden and abundant tears. Goethe in his old age declared that he had ceased to be able to weep for the sorrows of men, but that in the presence of anything supremely beautiful he could not maintain his composure.

A little sister, younger than Edgar Quinet, something feebler than himself, something to protect as well as love, and an aunt (sister of Jerome Quinet), completed the home circle. Their mother's strictness had produced upon this aunt and upon her brother results precisely opposite. With her it was a matter of conscience to spoil all children, and her nephew in chief. She had discovered that children are always good when they get everything they ask for, and are allowed to do everything they like. It was her ambition to be the boy's playfellow, or rather plaything, and when, after having as ox in harness ploughed her tyrant's little piece of land, she would come and inquire, "Do you love me?" the answer "People ought to love everybody," made her entirely happy, and was cherished by her as adorable.

In such an environment of various human influence, the child grew. Out-of-doors there was another influence, constant, penetrative, and enveloping him on every side. Quinet, in his first period of authorship, a disciple of Herder, and at all times ascribing to the surrounding external nature a preponderant share in the determination of a people's highest thoughts and feelings, himself experienced in sovereign degree the dominion of these natural forces. From Bourg, the family moved to a country property which had been for three centuries in their hands. To the west of Certines spread extensive forests of oak, and great ponds, over which the mists would linger; eastward the sun rose above the first range of the Jura and the Alps, distant not a league; between the mountains and the forests spread a great plain, cultivated in some places, but for the most part wilderness, where nature had her way: "a horizon of peace, eternal silence; an air—that of the Maremma—full of languor." Upon a rise of ground in the midst of this ocean of grass, and broom, and brushwood, stood the house of the Quinets, a very old house, hidden like a nest in the centre of apple-trees and cherries, walnuts, poplars, and acacias—one of the secretest spots in France. The summer sun beat fiercely on the open plain; after harvest and the early autumn rains, the air was full of a dull suspended poison, and annually came the fever, which, with the children, was quickly recognised as a presiding power or *numen* of the place. "The first time

I saw a butterfly trail upon the ground with quivering wings, I cried aloud, believing it had the fever." There was a charm of desolation around, which affected the imagination more than could the well-to-do cornlands and fat pasturage of a more favoured region. Nature stood naked in her primitive poverty making her appeal: nor could she fail to gain a power over the heart by her mere importunity of woe, her beseeching sadness, together with her curious refinement and beauty, which showed through the beggar's weeds. "They accuse me," writes Quinet, "of vagueness, of Germanism. Why do they not also accuse places and things, uncertain sounds, the boundless sweeps of land, the mists and clouds, those veiled and wandering daughters of our subterranean lakes? These were my true accessories and accomplices. It was much that I escaped without a sick and dizzy brain."

The boy did not remain an altogether passive denizen of this primitive nature; he went forth with his father to subdue the land. But the utilitarian prospects of draining operations were too remote from his childish faculty of vision to engage him with much ardour in the work, and the oxen, with their patient resoluteness of toil, seemed nearer to him than his father, the superior alike of him and them. Much, however, was to pass into him, and abide with him on spring mornings from his mother's presence moving graciously among her flowers, and hives, and blossomed fruit-trees. "I hear it day after day repeated that natural religion cannot be a living religion, that it leaves human nature without support or stay. I at least may say that I have seen a very real exception." From his mother, with no dogmatic system of instruction, he somehow received the idea of an Almighty Father, who always sees us and watches over us. "To obtain wisdom it was necessary to pray to him, and we prayed together, my mother and I, wherever the occasion arose, in the fields, in the woods, in the garden, in the orchard, but never at fixed periods. . . . These prayers were conversations in the presence of God, upon all that concerned us, her and me, most nearly. It was our daily life each day laid bare before the great eye-witness." The religion of his mother remained to the end the religion of Edgar Quinet.

Racine, as might be expected, was a favourite with Madame Quinet, and upon his return from the fields, her little son would recite Eliacin to her Athalie, whose tirades she delivered with terrible seriousness. Rousseau and Châteaubriand she disliked and feared; the sentimentality of the one repelled her, and her luminous good-sense could not away with the romantic theology of the *Génie du Christianisme.* When the boy inquired of his mother who was the cleverest person in the world, she answered with no hesitation, "An old gentleman named M. de Voltaire." Him like the light she loved, and mother and son studied him together. Here, again, to her rightness of perception was due an early impression which Edgar Quinet's subsequent studies and meditations made permanent. It has constantly been his endeavour to preserve unbroken the tradition of French literature. His article, "Des Epopées Françaises Inédites du XII^e Siècle" (which originally appeared in the year 1831, in *L'Avenir*, the journal conducted by Lamennais), is acknowledged to have been that which gave the first impulse to the movement of inquiry into the *trouvère* poetry, which has since been prosecuted with so much zeal and with results so precious. His "Merlin," a modern epic of ideas in the same copious style as the old epics of events, connects the literature of the present with the poetry of the twelfth century.

But although belonging as a poet essentially to the romantic school in its assertion of the new powers, and rights, and immunities of art, and thus owning no allegiance to the sovereignty of Boileau, the author of "Ahasuerus" and "Merlin" never joined the romanticists in their repudiation of the ancestral glory derived from the age of Louis XIV. In that age he found revealed "the very genius of France." The poetical faith and practice of Racine, Corneille, Molière, and Boileau effected a revolution, which abolished the feudal and ecclesiastical art of the middle ages long before the revolution of 1789 came to complete the overthrow of mediæval institutions, political and social. He looked upon the men of letters of the classical period, eminently monarchical though they were, as fellow-labourers for France with the men of the republic and with himself. He held that the romantic school of the present century, if indeed faithful to the past, was bound to be neither mediæval nor monarchical, but modern. And as Quinet thus strove to save the tradition of French letters, so in matters of thought it is his high distinction that, while belonging entirely to the spiritualist rather than the sensualist school, he never decried the eighteenth century, nor failed to perceive, as so many failed, that our own age is in the truest sense daughter of that which immediately preceded it, that there has been development indeed, but no breach of continuity. Profoundly opposed to Voltaire in some of his most central articles of faith—referring, for example, religions for their origin to the total of man's nature turned in a certain direction, whereas Voltaire referred them to its most superficial and ignoble parts—he nevertheless always continued to share his mother's high esteem of the "old gentleman M. de Voltaire," honouring him as the defender of a faith more catholic than that of Catholicism, more Christian than that of any then existing Christian church.

The name of Napoleon was never uttered by the elders of the Quinet household. The *ex-commissaire des guerres,* a man of the revolution, proud, possessed of an unbounded faith in his own power of will, and yet for long a very reed in the hand of the Emperor, could not forgive him for his resistless exaction of obedience; "he detested him as a free soul might detest destiny," and he even grew to despise him. To his wife Napoleon appeared as the ruiner of her country's liberties, and she had further a special womanly grudge against him for his banishment of Madame de Staël, whom she had known in her youth, whose writings she much admired, and whose exile she resented as a personal injury. But it was impossible that the boy should not hear of Napoleon, and to hear was enough to fire his imagination, and transform him forthwith into a Bonapartist. All he ever got by his Napoleon-worship was the honour of being the one to furnish a tricolour cockade to the leader of a body of soldiers, who had refused to follow their officers against the fugitive from Elba. Perhaps a boy's pride and joy in such a moment may be equivalent to the sorrow of such nineteen years of banishment as those which Quinet suffered at the hands of Napoleon's nephew. His parents judiciously abstained from fanning the flame of this childish enthusiasm by combating it; but they sought in every way to inspire him with an ardent love of freedom. By degrees the *cult* of Napoleon became less constant and less devout, the critical faculty began to play upon the Napoleon legend; liberty became every day more clearly worthy of a man's supreme devotion, and at last the image of Napoleon faded out of sight, until after many years it reappeared first to the imaginative vision, when the legend was accepted as the subject of a national poem, and again to the scrutinising gaze of the historian, when Quinet, moved on behalf of the honour of Ney, and a resident in the neighbourhood of the last scenes of the Emperor's public career, wrote his admirable "Campaign of 1815."

Suddenly, through a moral crisis, and one act of strenuous and continued self-control, the boy became a man. Quinet confesses that he can no more assign a date to his first love of woman than to his becoming aware of the being of God. A train of enchanting forms moved amidst his memories of childhood, until the remotest figures fade into the dawn of infancy. Early among them was that unapproachable rope-dancer, whom he had seen performing perilous equestrian feats. Near her appears an Iphigeneia, whom fate for a time compelled to be one of the interpreters of Racine among a company of strolling players, not less inaccessible than the *danseuse,* nor less an object of wonder and of worship. Later came a schoolfellow's sister, the counterpart of Raphael's *belle Jardinière,* loved with a perfect love, which for its period of two years needed no sustenance but the consciousness of unimagined self-surrender. But these passions, with no pain in them, were to give way before a tyrannous desire which it was a matter of life or death to yield to or subdue. In the neighbourhood of the Quinets dwelt a family allied not remotely to a royal house, but fallen into circumstances which were the reverse of affluent. The head of the house was a young man who had seen something of the world, but who found his purest happiness in the solitary study, favoured by this provincial retirement, of his favourite Greek authors. His two sisters were aged respectively eighteen and sixteen. "The younger was in features and in form of correctest symmetry, with the beauty of an antique statue, a profile altogether Roman, eyes that did not move, but gleamed under heavy lashes; a brow somewhat low, laden with hair black as ebony, the tresses of which were coiled and knotted in sculpturesque masses; the head of an Agrippina, created for a diadem, large rather than small; the neck of a swan, a proud bearing, her complexion sombre, and like that of a foreign person. Her name, Roman like herself, signified *beauty.* . . . . . She inspired me with a kind of terror, as if I had seen a statue move." It soon appeared that there was little moral resemblance between Edgar and this Roman beauty. Nevertheless, as the statue of one of the fallen gods might have compelled to idolatry some Christian of the second or third century, her mere beauty tyrannized over his feelings. He perceived that he could never freely and joyously bestow his love upon her; he resolved that he would deliver his soul. A long and obstinate struggle ensued, and when he had achieved his freedom, he knew that he was no longer a boy.

Towards the successful issue of this struggle, absence at the Collége de Lyon, and solitude occupied with hours of earnest study, rendered opportune assistance. There, in a tiny closet, of which he was fortunate enough to obtain sole possession, Quinet devoured every piece of Latin literature and history upon which he could lay hands. Tacitus and Gregory of Tours had an interest for him superior to that of all other prose writers. "It was not only on account of that which is ordinarily sought for in Tacitus, the secret of a tyrant's soul. I found in him something which touched me more nearly —the recital of what I myself had witnessed—the catastrophes and falls of empire. . . . The Hundred Days reappeared in the rapid lives of Galba and of Otho." In Gregory he saw again Attila, the Goths and Visigoths whom he had seen before in the invasions of 1814 and 1815, and who had dared to set on fire a portion of the buildings at Certines.

The call to authorship in Quinet's case, as in many others, was heard at first somewhat faintly and uncertainly; but it was heard, and in due time faithfully obeyed. He has described, in a remarkable passage of his incomplete autobiography, the condition of letters in France after the fall of the empire, and before the new ways in literature and philosophy had been opened. On every side, in poetry, in philosophy, there was a great void. The spiritual world seemed to have grown sterile; in reality there was a stirring underground of pushing roots and buds, an obscure but abundant vegetation. "I was then grievously distressed by my own impotence, and, I may add, by the impotence of the time; for nowhere around me could I see a guide in whom I could trust, nor even any companion in the path upon which I feared and longed immediately to set forth. . . . My own ailment and that of the time was the very reverse of lassitude and satiety. It was rather a blind eagerness for life, a feverish expectancy, a premature ambition towards achievement, a kind of intoxication caused by the new wine of half-conceived ideas, an ungovernable thirst of the soul after the desert of the Empire. All this, added to a consuming desire to produce, to create, to do or make something in the midst of a world still void. Those whom I have questioned concerning the years of which I speak, have assured me that they experienced something like this. Each believed himself, as I did, to be alone."

Never was this sense of solitude more happily removed than it was from the heart of Quinet; not merely by the general stir of intellectual life, which quickly made itself heard, but by the commencement of a comradeship with one whose beliefs were the same as his, who loved and hated the same things, and who was pushing forward with equal eagerness in the same direction. It was at the house of Cousin that Edgar Quinet, at the age of twenty-two, first made the acquaintance of Michelet.

The friendship, altogether noble, which had its beginning in 1825, never experienced interruption. It is a circumstance worth observing, that the entrance into the literary world of each of these distinguished writers should have taken place in the same year, and under circumstances almost identical. Michelet appeared as the translator of the Italian Vico, the thinker who first attempted to rise from the crude theological dogma which Bossuet and others had applied to universal history, to something like a scientific treatment of the subject. Quinet appeared as the translator of the German Herder's ideas upon the philosophy of history. The capital idea of Vico, that the conception of God is the formative principle of society, and that the peculiarities of that conception determine the peculiarities of civil and political institutions, underlies much that Quinet has written, and explains his often-expressed dissatisfaction with all political revolutions which are not preceded by, or accompanied with, revolutions in religion. In Herder, "the Herodotus of universal history," as Quinet has happily styled him, he found an interpretation, made in the interests of philosophy, of his personal feeling acquired at Certines with respect to the dominant influence of the phenomena of external nature—the *milieu* in which man finds himself, and to which his conceptions instinctively adapt themselves—in determining the forms of thought, emotion, and imagination characteristic of individuals and of races. Prolonged intimacy with Herder's ways of thinking, such as the translation of a large work necessarily implies, was doubtless not without its effect in developing Quinet's natural tendency towards comprehensive views of things, which, while keeping under observation details, so that any one of them may at will be interrogated, regard as primary object the large totality, and value the part less for its own sake than because it is a fragment of the whole. These *larges pensées d'ensemble* not only preside over the most remarkable of Quinet's prose works, but assign to his poems their peculiar position in French literature of the present century. There is much in them that might be described as the philosophy of universal history rendered into the forms of the imagination.

This sketch of the life of Quinet, which has had more reference to the growth of his ideas than to the external incidents of his career, has reached a point beyond that at which his fragment of autobiography closes. From the publication of the "Herder" onwards, his life is not hidden; it lies exposed in a score of volumes, which in his case we name, with an application of the word more precise than in most other cases, his *works.* For record of events apart from these, let the following briefest note suffice.

In 1827, the year in which his "Herder" appeared, we find him at Heidelberg, in close connection with the most celebrated men of the University, with Creuzer in particular, whose interpretations of the symbolism of ancient religions possessed for Quinet the deepest interest. A tour in Greece undertaken shortly after, as member of the scientific commission which accompanied the French army, gave occasion to his "Grèce Moderne et ses Rapports avec l'Antiquité." This was the first of an important portion of his writings, consisting of works produced at distant periods, but all having the common object of determining the true character of the nationalities of Europe, and of arousing to quicker life the consciences and wills of kindreds of men whom blood and country had made one. Quinet's democracy is never in conflict with his feeling of nationality. In her vain striving after cosmopolitanism, first through her Pagan Empire, and again through her Christian Papacy, he recognised the secret of Italy's decrepitude. All his hopes for her were centred in the rare and hurried throbs and the sudden hectic flushes of national life which were still at times discernible. The rights of man, he never failed to perceive, were massed and consolidated in the rights of nations. The years from 1830 to 1838 were fully occupied with the production of a series of poems, criticisms of literature, essays on the philosophy of religions and societies, and occasional political pamphlets. In 1838, Quinet was appointed Professor of Foreign Literatures of the Faculty of Letters at Lyons. Lectures delivered in that city formed the material out of which he afterwards constructed his "Génie des Religions." Three years later, he was advanced to the chair of Southern Literature in the Collége de France. His friend Michelet and the Polish poet Mickiewicz were among his colleagues. Free handling of Roman Catholic dogmas and institutions, more especially in his course of lectures upon Ultramontanism, and that entitled "Christianity and the French Revolution," in which he courageously demonstrated the irreconcileable opposition between Catholicism and the principles upon which modern society is founded, led to a struggle with the authorities, terminating in Quinet's resignation; and, on the part of the students, in a demonstration in his favour of the most enthusiastic kind.

These events took place under the government of Louis-Philippe. Quinet never loved the ascendancy of the Paris *bourgeois*, and the great god, Capital; and when 1848 arrived, he was one of the first, musket in hand, to enter the Tuileries. Almost immediately after the revolution he was restored to his professorship, and was sent by his native department to the National Assembly. During the sessions of the Constituent and the Legislative bodies, he especially concerned himself with the questions of religion and public education, and that of the enfranchisement of Italy. In December, 1851, Edgar Quinet became an exile. He bore away with him to Brussels the manuscript of his drama Les Esclaves, perhaps the most artistic of all his poetical writings, and henceforth his days and nights were devoted to uninterrupted study. First in Belgium, and afterwards in Switzerland, at Veytaux, hard by Chillon, Quinet dwelt. His chief works, "La Révolution," "Merlin," and "La Création," are among the fruits of exile. Watching with a gaze of unceasing concern the progress of events in France, at length he saw the day of deliverance come. Upon the downfall of the third Napoleon, Quinet, with Hugo and others, hastened to Paris. During the five months of the Prussian siege, he endeavoured to breathe a spirit of enthusiasm into the defenders of his country. Subsequently, as a member of the Assembly, his energies were devoted to sustaining and directing the Republic in her days of weakness, while in the region of thought he found a new German invasion to resist—the pessimist philosophy of Schopenhauer and E. von Hartmann. Quinet died in May 1875, and his funeral had something of the character of a political demonstration. The monument which his admirers have decided to erect to his memory is a complete national edition of his writings, and two interesting volumes of letters addressed to his mother have already appeared.*

The first word of criticism which the poetical works of Edgar Quinet suggest,—a really important word, although to utter it does not imply profound critical insight,—is, that they are very large. "Ahasuerus" would have supplied a mediæval guild with performances for many days. "Merlin," with its twenty-four books, and nine hundred pages, rivals in copiousness the *trouvère* romances. "I feel lost in my work," said its author, speaking of this poem, "like a bird in a cathedral." And the reader also feels sometimes lost. Like the cathedral, to which Quinet happily compares it, the romance possesses, no doubt, a definite plan; but as the feeble human creature, with sense of diminished size, wanders from aisle to aisle, and chapel to chapel, and sees overhead a world of clasping columns and foliaged tracery, it strikes him as a plan capable of indefinite extension. Everything centres confessedly around the God-man created on the altar; but it does so rather to the eye of faith than of sense. In the present century,—this sad, distracted age, which, according to the theory, cannot possibly find musicallest utterance, but which, according to the facts, has had more of genuine song in it than any other age known to literary history,—that a poet should not have written lyrical poetry is itself something distinguishing. And certainly, it is a distinction which does not help to popularity. We find it pleasant to be lured on by flying song, which begins, and ceases, and begins again, into the heart of a poet's world of fancy. He who bids us gird up our loins for the serious undertaking of a lengthy epic or drama upon simple faith in his promise of reward asks a good deal. Quinet has written nothing which is a song and no more. A certain lyrical gift he undoubtedly possesses; passages of the "Prometheus" and the "Merlin" decisively prove this. But on the whole, his preoccupation with ideas is excessive. He does not

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* For a more detailed account of the events related above in brief summary, see "Edgar Quinet, sa Vie et son Œuvre," by M. Chassin. The analyses, in the same volume, of Quinet's works are readable, and entirely trustworthy.

> "Sing because he must,
> And pipe but as the linnets sing."

He has a great company of thoughts, and requires space to deploy them; he has a view to present; he is not quite free from the bondage of a theory; he generally knows too well what he means; one has an uncomfortable suspicion that one has to do with a doctrinaire poet. Yet Quinet's instinct or deliberate judgment determined rightly his choice and treatment of the subjects of poetry. He has succeeded in occupying a province of his own. As a lyrical poet he would have failed to make his voice heard by a generation whose ears were filled with the strong harmonious clamour of Hugo's chords, and the charm, vague yet not without a power of sweet coercion, of Lamartine's tender elegiac strain.

The ode and the elegy Quinet found already made their own by these and other masters of verse. The drama of action and conflicting individual human character was also theirs. What remained? The modern epic and the drama, not of action but of ideas. The romantic school had restored to French literature, and renewed the tragedy and the ode; the types of these in the past they left to the past. "Cromwell" was far removed from "Phèdre;" the ode of Lamartine was not the ode of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau. Quinet conceived that, in like manner, the epic should reappear in a new form. It was sown a natural body, it should be raised a spiritual body; previously it had celebrated the achievements of a hero or a people, and represented the civilisation of a definite period; now the human race itself must become the hero, and its achievements in all time the epical action. Such, it seemed to Quinet, must be the epic of a democratic age. In a great democracy the aristocratic ideal is replaced by one different, but not less truly an ideal; no single person is pre-eminently interesting or important, and therefore no individual hero can be the subject of a poem; the entire nation, or humanity itself, becomes the central figure, around which the forces of the past and of the future group themselves as allies or antagonists. Thus it is with Quinet's poems; and in this respect, and in the forward gaze into coming time, which is discernible in them, they possess characteristics of the art which is proper to a democracy. What we miss in some of them is *reality*. They seem to proceed less from a near and real fellowship with the people's life, less from the democratic instincts and ardours, than from certain philosophies of universal history, and certain democratic views and theories. The singing robes of the poet somehow show beneath them the lecture-gown of the professor.

But how is this hero, the human race, to be poetically represented? By an imaginative type or symbol. In "Ahasuerus," the familiar figure of the wandering Jew, weary traveller throughout all lands, throughout all ages, is seized on as an appropriate representative of mankind. More than three thousand years have passed since the trumpet sounded for judgment in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The Eternal Father announces in heaven his intention of creating a new earth, possessed by a race of new beings, formed of better-tempered clay. The saints, by virtue of their long experience of good and evil, are to be appointed its guardians. But first, that they may grow in knowledge and wisdom, they shall see played before them, as a four-days' mystery, the whole story of the old earth, which they once knew. This mystery, which is performed by the seraphim, is the poem "Ahasuerus." It is a vast design; all persons, and things, and times, and places are at the poet's disposal, to be made use of as he wills. It is, as M. Chassin has named it, the epopee of Progress. The mystery is followed by an epilogue. Christ, grown old, and doubting who or what he is, lies down beneath the vault of heaven, about to expire. "It is finished," is again uttered by his lips. He is once more placed in the sepulchre; and, as the drama closes, Eternity abides alone. This epilogue, which has been pronounced by some critics the last word of despair, is precisely the contrary. Christ is indeed in the tomb, but we are not left without a prophecy that a morning will come of resurrection, when Christ shall rise greater in stature by twenty cubits.

The same thought which is uttered in the last words of "Ahasuerus" reappears in the "Prometheus," in more ambiguous speech. The Titan is again humanity, but humanity in its religious aspect. He who has created and breathed life into a new race, who has possessed himself of sacred fire, who is filled with an enthusiasm of love, and who sees into the heart of future years, is made captive by the unjust strong gods of circumstance. Chained to the rock, at first his resolution is that of faith; a faith in his own visions of things to come, for has he not beheld the image of another great One, crucified, not on Caucasus but Calvary, before whom the gods of Olympus shall perish? But, as ages roll by, and he is forgotten of all men, and still the chains are strict and the vultures cruel, Prometheus sinks into a resolvedness of dull despair, and neither sees the future, nor can remember the greatness of his past, nor anything of what he was. When the times have been fulfilled, Michael and Raphael appear to release the ancient saviour of mankind. The Christ is come. The old gods appear before Prometheus, and are dismissed, howling, into night. But the Titan—is it weariness, or is it a questioning hope?—even on his way to the presence of Jehovah is not as the archangels are, all radiance and love; he who has known the former rulers of things, and has seen the heavens unpeopled, cannot be entirely sure that the dynasty of God and his Christ is the last.

One great figure, who shall be the utterer of the author's thoughts and feelings, his beliefs and doubts, his fears and hopes, stands central in each of his poems, "Ahasuerus," "Prometheus," "Merlin." It will be surmised that the hero of his last and largest poem is other than the Merlin who was counsellor of Arthur and the beguiled of Vivien. In the forefront of his work Quinet announces that in this romance he has attempted to open "new routes for the imagination," and that in no other work has he put so much of himself. It could not be the bard and wizard of the mediæval tales whom he made the companion of seven years. "Merlin," if in many parts the delight of the reader, is certainly the despair of the critic. It is a vast invention, allying itself to the whole world of reality and of imagination. The variety is equal to the vastness; one looks back upon it as an old man looks upon a busy and changeful lifetime. The symbolism is of a Protean kind; we lay hold of a snake or pard, and sudden water glides from between our fingers. What is Merlin? The human soul, and that which is highest in it, imaginative genius; the world's enchanter and prophet? Yes, but he is also the genius of the French nation, and moreover he is sometimes Edgar Quinet. What is signified by his imprisonment in the magic tower of Vivien? Many things which it were not wise to name too definitely, and one thing for certain—the disappearance of the poet in the great grave of exile, where yet he lived and wrought his chief enchantments. "Do not exhaust your brain in searching for riddles," advises the author; but he flashes his meaning in the reader's eyes, and withdraws it, and flashes it again, in a way most certain to pique his curiosity.

M. Émile Montégut assures us that "Merlin" is an essay towards "ideal history;" the history, that is, not of events as they actually were, but of the powers and tendencies of which events have been only the inadequate expression. This is no doubt true, but the romance is also an ideal autobiography, written directly out of personal experiences. It is certain, as Quinet has said, that this work contains more of himself than any other. "Merlin" is the legend of all his thoughts. In the earlier poems he is grave; he approaches his own ideas with an air of exaltation and lofty responsibility; his utterance is elevated, and in the "Ahasuerus" we feel that its monotony of measured prose is sometimes disagreeably artificial. In "Merlin" the writer is grave and playful by turns; he approaches his ideas with an air of familiarity; the style is many-coloured—elevated or easy, plain or fantastic, narrative, lyrical, descriptive, as suits the occasion. And this familiarity with his ideas, and the casting-off of too curious responsibility, makes it possible for him to set before the reader not only his assured convictions and carefully verified views of things, but to play, as Goethe does in his second part of "Faust," with every imagination of truth, every surmise, and anticipation and half-hope or fear, every conceit that may turn out a law, every dream which may be proved a prophecy, every faint reminiscence which may be a fragment of history.

One of the immense designs of Quinet had been to write an universal history of religious and social revolutions. It was not to be expected that such a design could be accomplished as a continuous work; but the conception of it served to import a wider tendency, and fuller significance than they would otherwise have possessed, into many writings which treat of particular periods and groups of events. "Le Génie des Religions," "Les Jésuites," "L'Ultramontanisme," "Le Christianisme et la Révolution française," "Marnix de Sainte-Aldegonde," "Examen de la *Vie de Jésus*," and, finally, his great work, "La Révolution," may be considered fragments of an unfinished whole.

One central thought controls and directs them all—that the principles of civil society, and of religious society, are not, as Montesquieu represents them, correlative principles upon an equal and independent footing, and exercising upon each other no influence of a constant and regular kind, but that, on the contrary, the religious idea underlies and gives its peculiar character to the political and social idea. Quinet, however, does not fall into the error of accepting the creeds and the churches as interpreters of the religious idea, in periods when they failed to express the highest thoughts of man, and the most ardent longings of his soul. He hopes little for Europe of the present day, until there be effected an absolute severance of Church from State; because religion—the noblest desires and best ideas of men—has been driven from the Church to take refuge in the world. Not "the holy Catholic Church, . . . the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting," are the objects of our highest spiritual hopes, and matter of our wisest thought, but rather justice as the rule and principle of all arrangements of society, and charity to be incarnated in the real world—a materialising and organisation of the sentiment of the brotherhood of men As it is prophesied of the Christ in the epilogue to "Ahasuerus," so in actual event, the Christ buried in the tomb of the eighteenth century rose in 1789 greater by twenty cubits. Shall we weep above the napkin and linen clothes, or come forth and, rejoicing with fear, watch the breaking of the Easter Day?

Through all Quinet's studies upon religion, nothing is more observable than his power of soft and sure penetration, like that of serene light, through the letter to the spirit, from the form to that which the form indeed signifies. His own genuine spiritual nature has a natural affinity with spiritual truth; it seems as if he could go wrong only by denying part of himself. For him the religions of the past do not consist of idle mythologies and insignificant ceremonial; they are quick and moving thoughts of men, and worshippings in spirit and in truth. He arrives at his results less by an application to the past of the modern intellect and erudition, than by seeking within himself, and finding there the moral basis, still present and not lifeless in each of us, of the ancient faiths. This power of pressing gently and surely inward to the heart of things spiritual, serves no less for the discovery of evil than of good. Through bland faces of fraud he sees the foul soul within, and its eager and pitiless outlook; through chanting of holiest creeds and prayers he hears the wolfish cry of blind mouths for human flesh and blood; through the robes of the doctor who teaches wisdom higher than that of this world, he sees the fingers holding tight the key of knowledge, which they have taken away that no man may enter in. Quinet, it has been said, was part of the conscience of a nation; before him the outward shows of things moral parted away on this side and on that, and the living substance was laid bare.

"La Révolution" is Quinet's largest and, upon the whole, his most valuable literary achievement. When a boy, at the little town, Charolles, he had grown familiar with the presence of a person who long continued somewhat of a mystery to his childish apprehension. It was Baudot, a sometime member of the Convention, and one of the Mountain party. He had been Saint-Just's companion on his mission to the lines of Wissembourg, and the happy discoverer of Hoche. He usually spent a couple of hours each day at the house of the Quinets. He never spoke of the Revolution; but one day the boy heard him utter strange words, which left a deep impression—"Others have a fever of four-and-twenty hours; mine, madam, lasted ten years." What could this fever be? When he inquired, they answered in a hushed voice, "The Terror." In the year 1838, Quinet sat by the deathbed of this venerable representative of the Republic. He said that before he died he wished to confide to Quinet the volume of his memoirs, in which would be found a commentary on the acts and most private thoughts of the several parties of the Convention. "Grasping me by the arm, and gathering all his strength into one last gaze, he said, 'Trust me, the first word of our history has not yet been written. Saint-Just and I fired the batteries at Wissembourg. We were supposed to have deserved much by this. In fact we did not deserve anything; we knew perfectly that bullets could do nothing against us.'" Whereupon he was silent, and Quinet took a last leave of him.

The history of the Revolution, long meditated, and embodying the results of ten years' active study of the subject, did not appear until 1865. It is a history which faces two ways; on the one hand it is what may be named, using the word in an honourable sense, a *doctrinaire* history; that is, the product of ideas. On the other, it is in the highest degree human, a history of persons, in which a studious effort is made to restore the real individuals to the places too long possessed by the legendary figures of the Revolution. Quinet has shown at all times a just sense of the importance in literature, in art, in religion, of personal character. This in great part it was which moved him to attempt a reply to the theory first propounded by Vico, and to which at a later time Wolf gave currency, respecting the authorship of the Homeric poems, and it was this also which called forth his "Examen of Strauss's Life of Jesus." We have now got into the habit of speaking of the legend of Napoleon. There was also in France a legend of Robespierre, a legend of Danton, a legend of the Girondins; and these legends escaped criticism by the ascription of all acts at variance with the popular conceptions of their several heroes to certain convenient abstractions, the Republic, the Terror, the Democracy. It has been Quinet's endeavour to attribute to each person the actions for which that person is himself responsible, to apply the scientific spirit to the revolutionary hero-worships and supernaturalisms, and to avoid taking for granted that, after the manner of the personages of a stock-piece of classical tragedy, the same individual must utter the same sentiments in the same style from the beginning of the great drama to its closing scene.

Thus, by his inveterate truth-telling, the author of "La Révolution" contrived to offend and alienate not a few of his admirers of the Liberal party. Indeed, the distinguishing characteristic of the book is this: it is the endeavour of one who has faith in the principles of the Revolution to show why the Revolution was a failure. Nothing could be more valuable than such a piece of searching self-criticism, and nothing was more certain to be unintelligible to many men. "What!" they exclaimed, "profess himself a man of the Revolution, and destroy the solidarity of the movement! Accept this portion and reject that, as if the Revolution were not one great whole, a single stupendous fact?" Quinet perceived that it was a combination of several facts, some of them facts of a very unlucky kind for the Republic. Another accusation of an extraordinary nature was made. A work, one chief object of which was to point out the causes which led to the break-down of the Revolutionary movement, could hardly fail to consider the position in which the men of 1789 and 1793 found themselves with reference to religion. Quinet, with his established conviction that a political revolution, if it is to be successful, must, of necessity, be founded upon a religious revolution, certainly could not avoid the consideration of this subject. He has discussed it with entire freedom and candour in two books of his history. He had long since satisfied himself that no treaty of alliance can appease the mortal antagonism which exists between Catholicism and the principles of modern society. And now he dared to say articulately that a system of policy which is suicidal is self-condemned; at the least, if Liberalism be bound by a fine sense of honour to apply the aspic of Tiber to its breast, Liberalism must die; the worm will do his kind.

So much Quinet maintained, and he ventured to add that the logic of the Terror was unsound; it rejected the necessary condition of success. The scaffolds of '93 were sterile, because the men of '93 had not learned the secret of their own system, which secret is this:—persecution to be successful must be complete. If the barbarities of the sixteenth century were to be restored, why reject the advantages of the sixteenth century by proclaiming liberty of worship? If liberty of worship were to be allowed, why return to barbarities? The Revolution became foster-mother of the counter-revolution. Robespierre had no courage to be greatly intolerant. It was Vergniaud who declared that the time for religious liberty was passed.* Naturally, but not the less unfairly, a cry was raised against Quinet that he had appeared as advocate of persecution in the name of freedom. This would have been strange indeed. Quinet had worked out the problem of the Terror to a consistent result; but the result was one which disproved the hypothesis from which it was deduced. The only solution for our times of the religious difficulty lies in the separation of Church and

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* See the memorable words of Vergniaud, quoted by Quinet, "La Révolution," vol. ii. p. 92.

State. Three hundred years ago another solution would have been possible, and if the men of the Republic returned to the methods of three hundred years ago they were bound to derive from those methods all advantages which they afford.

A good while before his history of the Revolution had approached completion, Quinet was projecting a new undertaking of magnitude, and was already engaged in collecting materials wherewith to carry it out. When in the seventh year of his exile he moved from Belgium to Switzerland he was for some time entirely cut off from the world of men, and lived in absolute solitude. But the mountains were with him. At first the presence of the Higher Alps produced a kind of stupor; the senses were overwhelmed; it seemed beyond the power of human faculties to compass the vastness of those gigantic heights. But by degrees this first impression gave way to one entirely different. The mind recovered its independence and energy. Instead of expecting passively the incursion of overmastering sensations, it went forth to encounter the objects, and subdue, or at least come to terms with them. In this case the mind was that of a historian of men, and it soon appeared that mountains also had their history, and were willing to be gracious to one who would do them the justice of faithfully recording it. Nothing could be more delightful to Quinet, nothing more health-bearing to mind and body. Whereupon a treaty of alliance, with engagements of mutual service, was concluded between the Alps and their new denizen. "La Création," published in 1870, was the outcome of this alliance.

The verdict upon a scientific work must be left to men of science. It may be surmised that there is much in Quinet's work which they will set down as hazardous conjecture, or even illegitimate fancy. The lay understanding, without considering particular matters likely to occasion dispute, has an uncomfortable suspicion that an intellect trained in historical methods is hardly likely to accomplish much in a field of observation and thought so remote from its own as is that of the physical sciences. But this is precisely what Quinet was most concerned to deny, and that apart from all reference to himself, upon the ground of a general principle, which is the capital idea of his treatise. Is not man also a part of nature? Does society exist and progress by caprice or by ascertainable laws? Is not history political, social, religious, a branch of natural history? Why should not the methods of inquiry in the study of the lichen, and the mollusc, and the man be identical? Why should not the laws which govern the different provinces of nature, if more complex in some instances than in others, contain identical elements, and be capable of affording illumination one to the other? Why should not history assimilate the results of science, and science the results of history?

In "Merlin," Quinet considered himself an initiator attempting to open "new routes for the imagination." In "La Création" he attempted to open new routes for the intellect. It seeks first to establish the possibility, and then to ascertain some of the principles of a new science founded upon the parallelism of the two kingdoms, of nature and of man. The laws of society are used as instruments for the discovery of corresponding laws of natural history, and *vice versâ.* How far Quinet succeeded, how far he failed, cannot be determined here. But one thing may be assuredly said, that he did much to elucidate the indirect, but none the less important, relations of the scientific movement to contemporary modes of thought and feeling. Such indirect relations are probably perceived more readily and more clearly by a man of letters than by a man of science, concerned as the latter is with the attainment of certain definite truths, rather than with the effects which proceed from the coalescing of those truths with the general mind of society. In the seventeenth century the men of science may not have looked very far beyond the establishment of the Copernican system of astronomy as the result of Galileo's inquiries. Those who imprisoned Galileo knew better how dangerous to old modes of thought was his revolt against authority, and how old ways of looking at things must give place to new, if the earth were reinstated in the heavens from which it had been exiled, raised to an equality with the skies in which God lived, and made an equal, but no more than an equal, with each of its company of brother-spheres. The indirect results of Darwin's speculations upon our views of morals and religion can hardly be less important than the results of Galileo's inquiries two centuries since. The intellect of Quinet was admirably constituted for perceiving and comprehending these indirect tendencies of science.

1871.

ON SOME FRENCH WRITERS OF VERSE, 1830-1877.

Théophile Gautier, writing about ten years ago, compared the reader of contemporary French poetry to a wanderer at spring-time in a wood:—"In the grass, trodden by few feet, a slender path is discovered; we follow its first windings; upon its edges, below the oaks and half hidden under last autumn's withered leaves, we divine by a dim perfume the presence of violets. From among the branches, through which the wind moves with a vague murmur, we hear the song of an invisible bird. It flies at our approach to gain a remoter covert with sudden stroke of wings. We pluck a few violets, and muse on the song of the bird, and go forward. But presently the little wood changes to a forest; glades open, carpeted with grass; rivulets babble around mossy stones, or lie in rocky basins into which the deer gazes at his mirrored form. The violets become less shy, and offer themselves to the hand that gathers. Our tiny nosegay grows to a sheaf with added lily of the valley, the wilding rose, and all the tangled bloom of the woods. From trees, shrubs, thickets, from the forest depths, rise a thousand voices, which ring together—finches, redbreasts, the titmouse, the thrush, the blackbird—while in hurried notes noisier than the rest some jays and magpies jargon, flinging down their dissonance in midst of the general harmony." *

It must be confessed, however, that if the singing birds are many, there are few of sovereign note, and that rarely is any supreme song audible which makes for itself a central space of silence. The contemporary poets of France, setting apart Victor Hugo, are each like one faculty or one fragment of a great poet. We feel how absurd it would be to expect from any writer of their kind a modern "Divine Comedy," a poem rendering into imaginative form all science, all theology, the best contemporary tendencies of art, the most fervid political passion, the most exalted human love, the clearest vision of human life, the highest hopes and prophecies of the future, and at the same time the completest culture and guidance obtainable from the past. On the contrary, each writer lives and sings by virtue of some peculiar strength or grace, and runs the risk of becoming a specialist in *technique.* The poets are ready to complain that the public are indifferent to poetry (though such is in fact far from being the case); some affect to despise the people and to care only for the judgment of amateurs, some acquire a genuine disdain of popularity, and each one ends by writing for a coterie. The coterie consists of a group of persons who, by exclusive attention to certain qualities of a work of art, have come to admire those qualities extravagantly; the artist who labours for them abandons the effort toward universality, accepts his province, and where he has succeeded there he remains.

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* "Rapport sur le Progrès des Lettres. Publication faite sous les auspices du Ministère de l'Instruction Publique" (1868).

He is tempted to become an imitator of himself, to reproduce his special effects, to accentuate his peculiarities of style. One elects to found his fame upon melody and colour, one upon his plastic quality, one upon fidelity to the idea; this writer excels in sonnets, and that in triolets; one is the poet of despair, and another the poet of joy. In each there is something set, something prepense, something of *parti pris:* it calls for some manliness of character not on all occasions to pose oneself in the admired attitude.

Victor Hugo alone is a master artist—a master artist with gigantic faults—in all departments. We are sensible in every line of his that it has been uttered to an audience of all France, and more than France. His are the large effects, and spaces, and freedom; and when he poses himself it is not with a dainty attitudinising, but with an extravagance of posture which expects to justify itself to the sympathy of a vast and excited crowd. His is the liberal hand which will not be curbed. Fresco pleases him, nor are the most exquisite refinements and delicate felicities unsuitable to the artist of large designs. He works suspended in the dome with fiery eagerness for the upgazing throng below, the sound of whose voices and impatient footsteps reaches him only in a confused murmur. His faults, as well as his excellences, correspond with his position as of one who is in presence of a sympathising and credulous multitude; when he is not grand he is grandiose; sometimes he reminds us of Tintoretto, and sometimes of the Musée Wiertz; when he is not a true prophet he is a false one, but still a prophet:—

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!
Theirs the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,
Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.

Victor Hugo has been and is an enfranchising power in French poetry. After studying the fine mechanism of those Parisian toys turned out of the workshops of celebrated verse-makers, we lift our eyes and see the great Alexandrine of Victor Hugo surging and springing, alive and ashine from crest to hollow, and our pride of petty perfection is abated : we know ourselves to be encompassed with the beauty and mystery of life.

No poet has appeared in France since 1830 who has been able to exercise undisputed sway and bend to his will the imaginations of all men. At that time there was a truly national movement in literature, a movement which brought into harmonious relation qualities so various as the gracious refinement of Alfred de Vigny and Hugo's strangeness of splendour, the vague spiritual reverie of Lamartine and all that was sensuous and all that was passionate in the heart of Musset. It was an unlucky name which got attached to these writers and their fellows—"the Romantic school." There had been a Romantic school in Germany, which, unable as it was to win the solid prizes of the world by wrestling for them with the real forces of nature and of society, had retreated to a fanciful realm where imaginary treasures were abundant—treasures of spurious sentiment and facile marvels of imagination. Some members of the school had gained a pale aureole around poetic brows by yielding themselves as sentimental-æsthetic converts to the Church of Rome. They died and left no seed.

Heine, the last of the Romanticists, the first of the moderns, adorned the crosses of their graves with wreaths into which flowers of mocking significance were woven, and strewed blossoms to their memory which held each for honey in its cup a drop of corrosive irony. Thus the German Romantic school was impotent, and its fate was a little piteous. It was by a critical misnomer that the French movement bore the same name. There was, it is true, a certain predilection on the part of Hugo and others for subjects taken from the Middle Ages; there was at first no direct antagonism to the Catholic Church, but rather the contrary, and the author of "Odes et Ballades" delighted to celebrate the baptism of a duke or the consecration of a king. But these traits were superficial. The Romantic movement in its essence was a return to nature and to reality.

In the great age of the Renaissance, in Italy, in England, in Flanders, an unbounded interest was manifested by the artists and by their public in classical mythology; but Michael Angelo and Titian, and the English dramatists and Rubens, handled classical mythology with entire freedom, so that in many respects no art is less like that of Greece than the art of the Renaissance. In like manner the mediævalism of the French Romantic school was, in the main, not archæological nor sentimental, but modern, passionate, and vital. The new demands upon art were made in the spirit of frank self-pleasing. Verse, declared the Romantic leaders, was no longer to be pronounced good or bad according to the degree in which it conformed to certain rules that formulated the pleasures of courtiers and persons of quality whose skulls were filled with the dust of two centuries. New desires have arisen, and it is right that they should be gratified. Freedom of movement, large chromatic effects, limitless variety of forms, novel and rich rhymes, spaces, and colour, and animation delight us, and modern verse must give us these. Self-contemplation is a habit of our minds; we love to utter to ourselves our joys and griefs, our hopes and fears, our pieties and sensualities, our aspirations and our declensions, our loyalties and our treasons, our faiths and our scepticisms, our heroisms and our weaknesses, our illusions and our disillusionings; the ode and the elegy must expand to receive all these. Our imagination is capable of audacities; we as well as Shakspere's generation can hurry in two hours from event to event through the crowded incidents of a lifetime, can pass from city to city and from land to land; the drama must recognise such a fact as this, and must modify itself accordingly.

Such was the spirit of the Romantic movement, and because, notwithstanding some feverishness and extravagance and folly, it was upon the whole a sane and vigorous spirit, the Romantic movement throve and bore fruit. The subsequent lives of the foremost men of that movement illustrate by undesigned coincidence its true character. The plaintive lover of Elvire became the standard-bearer — somewhat consciously chivalrous, it may be—of the tricolour in 1848, champion of what supposed itself to be the advanced party of order in opposition to anarchy on the one hand and reaction on the other. The royalist odes of Hugo ceased to be written, and by a strange series of metamorphoses his poems became the brief democratic epics of "La Légende des Siècles." And Sainte-Beuve, ever the one same personality, yet never in the same position for two successive years, the sometime disciple of Lamennais in his neo-Catholic period, and inoculated with fervour and elevation, afterwards the genial sceptic with certain faiths of his own—Sainte-Beuve preserved his identity by nothing so truly as by his capacity for assuming Protean diversities of form, and no day of his life passed without adding something to his store of erudition, something to the range and flexibility of his sympathies, to the refinement of his perception and the sureness of his tact and taste; a man framed for enjoyment, and for toil, to whom every moment of life was a moment of growth. The leaders of the French Romantic movement, after their period of impulsive youth, were still vital and progressive; they did not shrivel and harden; they were not disembowelled, and embalmed honourably, and swathed in the mummy cloth.

"They all come from Chateaubriand," was Goethe's remark to Eckermann with reference to Victor Hugo and other French poets of 1827. They all resembled Chateaubriand at least in this, that in a greater or less degree all, like him, were sufferers from—or shall we say enjoyers of?—the characteristic melancholy of the nineteenth century (*la maladie du siècle*), and all, like him, were prone to self-confession. When Hugo's chords clashed with less impetuous sound, as when he sang his Songs of Twilight, the undertone of sadness could be distinguished. The soul of Lamartine wasted itself in vague yearning for something which should be satisfying, something beautiful but unattainable as the stars. Musset cried because his wounds smarted, and because he was frank and like a child. Sainte-Beuve studied his ailment with curious interest, and tried all remedies in turn. Each of these men was healed of his disease—Lamartine by political activity and ambition, Victor Hugo by his democratic faith and fervour, Musset by death, Sainte-Beuve by indulgent time, by manifold pleasures enriching his nature, and by the happy consciousness of faculties ripening hour by hour.

The self-confession which was the poetical habit of the Romantic poets in their earlier period was a result of the expansive character of the movement, which in this respect carried on the tradition handed down through Chateaubriand from Rousseau. The greater part of the poetry which was not strictly dramatic was personal. The poet was himself the central object of his art; he caressed his own emotions, he nourished his reverie, he lingered long in the company of his sorrows, he was endlessly effusive. In the ode, the elegy, the sonnet, he sang himself through all his varying moods. The excess of this manner, the affectations it induced, and, after the style had been much cultivated, the banality of these poetic sorrows and aspirations, inevitably resulted in a reaction. When the expansive movement had reached its limit, a movement of concentration, not so powerful but as real, commenced. Gautier, by his natural disposition, was less effusive than the rest; he was less an emotional egotist, and this circumstance had unquestionably a share in delaying his popularity as a poet until the influence of Musset was on the wane. To Gautier and to Baudelaire there appeared to be something feminine in Musset's sensibility and his eager demand for sympathy. They discerned in what was called the poetry of the heart a certain disorder, an absence of superintendence, which are contrary to the true spirit of art. It is the imagination, not the emotions, which possesses plastic power. Full authority had previously been given to passion, and it had been represented as infallible; now it was asserted that the heart is a secondary and subordinate organ in the artist's nature. "The heart," says Baudelaire, "contains passion; the heart contains devotion, crime; the imagination alone contains poetry." "Sensibility of the heart is not absolutely favourable to the work of a poet. Extreme sensibility of heart may even be injurious to it. Sensibility of the imagination is of another kind; it knows to choose, to judge, to compare, to avoid this, to seek that, rapidly, spontaneously."

Naturally, as a part of this movement of concentration, an increased value was set upon the workmanship of verse, and strict metrical forms—forms not of the old classical types, but rich, varied, and subtle—began to replace such nebulous luminosity as was diffused over many of the pages of Lamartine.

Point de contraintes fausses!
Mais que pour marcher droit
Tu chausses,
Muse, un cothurne étroit.

The pole opposite to Musset and the poetry of the heart was reached by neither Gautier nor Baudelaire, but has perhaps been touched by the one poet who in recent years has been accepted by a circle of élite readers as a master, and who is certainly the creator of a style —Leconte de Lisle. In real life a *spirituel* irony suffices to protect his heart; in his verse, if once and again a cry for escape from the turmoil of existence into the irrevocable peace, the great night and silence of death, forms itself upon his lips, for the most part they are closed with stoical compression against all utterance of personal feeling, while with an enforced calm he proceeds to make his imaginative studies of thoughts and things.

It is noted by Charles Baudelaire that upon the one side Gautier continued the great school of melancholy created by Chateaubriand, and upon the other side "he introduced into poetry a new element, which may be named 'consolation by means of the arts.'" From Gautier's latest poetry the melancholy has almost disappeared; the genius of art has subdued the demon of pain. Thus an escape was effected by him from *la maladie du siècle*. Gautier's nature was indeed one framed for a rich enjoyment of life, but such a nature is not out of the reach of a nameless enervating sadness. Gautier, however, possessed an amulet virtuous to repel the invasion of despondency. If happiness is nowhere else to be found, it is to be found unfailingly in the presence, and still more in the creation, of beauty. Let the world go its way, and the kings and the peoples strive, and the priests and philosophers wrangle, at least to make a perfect verse is to be out of time, master of all change, and free of every creed. Though Gautier's was a very positive imagination, there is something almost of the mystic's passion in this devotion to art. It includes the infinite and absolute of plastic perfection, of flawless workmanship, which, if endlessly pursued and never attained, leaves the heart as empty and yearning as was that of Lamartine in his religious musings. The combat with rebellious matter, the struggle to impose upon its shapeless anarchy the pure idea of the imagination, has the glory of a combat *à outrance.* To pursue an outline and never wrong its delicate, immortal beauty is a kind of religious service; to be the guardian of pure contour is to purchase to oneself a good degree. In the contemplation of a curve, as in the contemplation of a dogma, it is possible to find oneself at the last led up to an *O altitudo!*

Still this devotion to beauty, to beauty alone, or if not alone yet above all else, was a part of the movement of concentration. It was a kind of hedonist asceticism. A cloistered monk engaged in his round of devotions and mortifications is not more remote from the ideal of sane and complete manhood than was the cultured master of the school of art for art, who could isolate himself from the fears and hopes of his country in her hour of extreme peril to fuse his enamels and cut his cameos. It is certainly well, in a period from which great ideas and large ardours are absent that the æsthetic faculty should keep itself alive, even if not conscious of its highest functions, by the pursuit of beauty out of all relation to conscience, to religion, or the needs and aspirations of a people. And unquestionably by limiting his range an artist can more readily approach to a miniature perfection, and can push certain qualities of his work to a higher degree of development. But the century succeeding the French Revolution, the century in which science rejoices as a young man to run a race, is not an age of Byzantine effeteness and sterility. Persons who do not receive an exquisite thrill from curious beauty and flawless workmanship have not a right to speak scornfully of these things; but it is possible for one who does receive such exquisite excitement to refuse himself, for the sake of better, larger, wiser things to come, some of these moments of refined delight.

> The shelves are crowded with perfumes;
> I breathe the fragrance myself, and know it, and like it;
> The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.

An artist who should fling himself abroad upon the great hopes and fears, the great strivings and sorrows, the great deeds and thoughts, of our century, might indeed suffer as an artist; his work might come forth as faulty as that of the early Christian painters, with other and less engaging tokens of immaturity than their naïve innocence and childlike trustfulness; but his work, like theirs, might prove a prophecy; and if the name of art were denied to it, such work might yet be a wind in our lips, a light in our eyes, more precious for our needs than anything which in our time can be brought to complete and flawless form by the plastic imagination.

The counter-tendencies which a young poet meets in Paris of the Revolution, which contains within it the Paris of "art for art," are amusingly illustrated in a recent prose confession of æsthetic faith by M. Raoul

Lafagette.* The young poet arrived from the provinces bearing letters of introduction to some great persons, among others to Eugène Pelletan and Théophile Gautier. On hearing of manuscript verses, the democratic deputy favoured his visitor with a *résumé* of his views on human progress, which reads like a chapter from the "Profession de Foi du XIX^e Siècle." "Why do you write in verse? No one cares for it now. It is little read, and not at all sold. It is a hieratic form destined to disappear. In the childhood of humanity verse had its *raison d'être*. . . The first songs are hymns, outbursts of terror or of enthusiasm. . . . But in our age of sceptical maturity and republican independence verse is a superannuated form. We prefer prose, which, by virtue of its freedom of movement, accords more truly with the instincts of democracy." Whereupon followed a demonstration of the same principles from the spectacle of external nature, in which the crystal is type of the strophe, and "the masterpiece which dominates this hierarchy"—woman—with her undulating grace, is the analogue of prose. M. Lafagette, enlightened but unconvinced, did not tear up his manuscripts, but carried them a few days afterwards, with a letter of introduction from George Sand, to the house of Gautier.

The exquisite jeweller of the "Émaux et Camées" received the young man with almost paternal kindness, but, when he had read the two pieces of verse submitted to him by the neophyte, spoke as follows:—"Your verses are forty years older than yourself. They are too old, therefore—that is to say, too young. Poets sang in this manner in 1830. Nowadays we desire a more compressed, more concrete, kind of poetry. Lamartine is a sublime bard, but his vague effusions are no longer to our taste. Musset is a great poet, but an exceedingly bad model. Read Hugo much, who is the true master. Read Leconte de Lisle and Théodore de Banville." "And Théophile Gautier?" timidly murmured the visitor. "And me too a little, if you please to do so," replied Gautier, smiling. "You see," he went on, "the arithmetic is in existence: we have not to invent it; we have only to learn it. One must learn to be at home in fugue and counterpoint, and render one's talent supple and limber by the gymnastic of words. Words have an individual and a relative value. They should be chosen before being placed in position. This word is a mere pebble, that a fine pearl or an amethyst. Do you read the dictionary? It is the most fruitful and interesting of books. In art the handicraft is almost everything. Inspiration—yes, inspiration is a very pretty thing, but a little *banale;* it is so universal. Every bourgeois is more or less affected by a sunrise or sunset. He has a certain measure of inspiration. The absolute distinction of the artist is not so much his capacity to feel nature as his power of rendering it. This power is a gift, but also a conquest. In genius there is as much of science as of instinct. Your verses are full of imagination and of sentiment, but they are deficient in composition. You are a poet, and must not abandon poetry. Only I advise you to make three or four thousand verses, and, before you publish anything, burn them."

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* "La Poésie: son Passé, son Présent, son Avenir" (1877). M. Lafagette's introduction to Gautier and Gautier's daughter is also described in verse in his "Chants d'un Montagnard."

It is impossible to refuse a certain tribute of admiration to a workman so loyal to his craft. One must needs sympathise with the ascetic of beauty as well as with the ascetic of holiness. Would it not be lamentable to see the author of the "Imitation" losing himself in a bustling philanthropy, or endeavouring, for the sake of wider culture, to acquire connoisseurship in the fine arts? And should we not have had cause to grieve if Gautier had taken to the politician's stump or the moralist's chair? When a man possesses a rare faculty, we like to see him jealously preserving it. It is good husbandry for the world to let a poet make verses, and to let a painter paint. There are indeed occasions—occasions which are the test of highest human virtue—when the precious vases of a cabinet might well be employed to feed men and women in a charity soup-kitchen, when a Regnault must offer his breast to the bullets side by side with a piece of commonest mortal clay, when all differences between men are submerged in the flood of our deep humanity: but such are not ordinary occasions. If Gautier grows poetical only in presence of certain objects, and poetry be his highest vocation, we applaud him for resolutely refusing to look at other things, how interesting soever to politician or philanthropist. But why did Gautier grow poetical only in presence of a few selected and comparatively trivial objects which he called beautiful? The answer is, because Gautier was Gautier, and not Dante nor Shakspere. His doctrine with reference to art expresses the limitations of his nature. It is pleasant to walk over the acre of the exquisite horticulturist, and useful to learn how perfect prize-plants can be reared in their charming little pots. But yonder are the mountains, the moors, the forest, the sea. That will be an evil day for English poetry when to the universality of nature and life and the great masters is preferred the provinciality of a Parisian *cénacle*.

King Solomon, while trying all experiments of life, gave his heart for a season to know madness and folly. Such an experimenter in evil holds his permanent self in reserve, and, whether he be worse or better, is not in the same class with the vulgar libertine. "I said in mine heart, 'Go to now; I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure:' and behold this also is vanity."

Such was the experiment made with his imagination by Charles Baudelaire, and his confession was that of the preacher, "This also is vanity." In him we have at least the comfort of dealing with no quacksalver who cries for sale some new antidote to the sorrow of the century; he acknowledges that he has found our disease immedicable, only adding, whether for our grief or our consolation, that the plague-spot is as old as the human race itself, though now, in this age of accumulated shames and poisonous fungus-growths above dead things, it may drive deeper a more cancerous sting. Baudelaire confesses failure, if not as frankly as Musset, yet with more decision. The two poets—both tasters of the fruit of the tree of evil—offer an impressive contrast. Musset's wound bleeds; the iron remains in Baudelaire's flesh, and no blood flows, but his face betrays the agony. Musset rebels against the cruelty of his fate; Baudelaire yields with stoical resignation, interrupted only by a short, involuntary iron cry. In Musset the sensibilities predominate; in Baudelaire the intellect. Musset accepts the chance enjoyment which lies in his way; Baudelaire (I speak of him only as seen in his art) chooses, discriminates, knows the artifices by which to heighten pleasure. The former was satisfied for the time by transitory gratifications, as a child's thirst in summer is quenched by a drink, and his sorrow is only disappointment. But Baudelaire, who never quite parts from a higher self kept in reserve, is not for a moment satisfied with the flowers or fruits of evil, and he is still haunted and waylaid by the ideal beauty and calm which by contrast become the sources of so much of his bitterness.

Baudelaire was in a distinguishing degree an intellectual artist. Unelaborated passion, he held, was unfit matter for poetry. The peculiar intensity—a masculine, not a feminine, intensity—of his most characteristic pieces was attained by the constringent force of the intellect acting upon vividly imagined passion. He looked with considerable scorn, as did Gautier, upon writers who proclaim their inspiration, and who do not precisely know whither their genius is about to take them. "He blamed himself whenever he produced anything other than what he had determined to make, even though it were a powerful and original work." * It would have been evidence of a juster intellect if he had recognised the truth from which proceeds the cant about inspiration. There is in every great artist a stored-up, inherited instinct underlying all that he consciously performs, and which only works the less surely and the less continuously when an attempt is made to turn the full light of the intellect upon its hidden operations. The greatest poets, painters, musicians, have known and have directly or indirectly acknowledged this. To Goethe it seemed to point to a weakness in Schiller that he did not go to work with a certain unconsciousness, but reflected on all he did. "Wilhelm Meister" the author describes as "one of the most incalculable productions," adding, "I myself can scarcely be said to have the key to it." "'Faust' is quite incommensurable, and all attempts to bring it nearer to the understanding are in vain." "Idea [in 'Tasso']!" exclaimed Goethe; "as if I knew anything about it. I had the life of Tasso—I

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* Th. Gautier, notice prefixed to "Les Fleurs du Mal," p. 72.

had my own life. . . . I can truly say of my production, It is *bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.*" * Where an unconscious energy unites itself in the artist with his conscious activity, and these interpenetrate one another, the work of art comes forth, as Schelling has stated it, possessed of the highest clearness of the understanding, together with that inscrutable reality by virtue of which art-products resemble the works of nature.† The enlarging, the enriching, the disciplining of his total character is that which produces the main alterations in a writer's style, down even to the arrangement of pauses in his verse. Allowing for all that can by deliberate effort be acquired in technical mastery, there is something which lies deeper than any conscious volition. In the last resort "all beauty comes from beautiful blood and a beautiful brain."

But Baudelaire loved with a peculiar and almost diseased passion what in the strictest sense is not artistic, but rather artificial, something which does not complete nature, but is contrasted with and opposed to nature. And he justified his preference for the artificial by a theory. With the youth of the world great and simple emotions have disappeared. Then was the dawn, then the breeze whose wings had never flagged, then the virginal horizons; then generous hope, and spontaneous faith, and piteous illusion, and natural affections, and the first thoughts that came, and frank self-utterance. But now life is complex, refined, curious, subtle. A thousand cross and counter influences shatter the primitive emotions into multitudinous fragments. Let us accept the facts of the world. "Literature," Gautier wrote, expounding the principles of his friend, "is like the day; it has a morning, a noon, an evening, and a night. Without idly discussing whether the dawn should be preferred to the twilight, one must paint during one's own hour, whatever that happens to be, and with a palette furnished with the colours needed to render the effects proper to that hour. The coppery reds, the greenish gold, the hues of turquoise melting into sapphire, all the colours which burn and decompose, the clouds of strange and monstrous forms, penetrated by jets of light, and which seem the gigantic ruining of an aerial Babel -- do not these suggest as much poetry as the rosy fingered dawn, which notwithstanding we do not mean to despise?"

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* The quotations are from Goethe's "Conversations with Eckermann."

† Schelling "On the Relation between the Plastic Art and Nature." See also some interesting remarks on this subject in Hartmann, "Philosophie des Unbewussten," bk. vii., and Ruskin, "The Mystery of Life and its Arts."

This apology for the "style of decadence" is admirably expressed, but, although the question may appear to persons of refinement a little *banale*, we must venture to ask, Is it true? In this round world of ours a sunset and a sunrise are for ever taking place at the same hour. In the sunset of the old religions appeared to such eyes as turned toward the springs of light that mysterious glimmer over the hills of Judæa; in the sunset of the empire, turbulent and rich with livid stains of decay, appeared the fiery morning of the barbarian races; in the twilight of feudalism the light was widening for a new age of industry, science, and democracy. A method by which it is possible to secure oneself against ever witnessing a dawn is that of self-seclusion in a little chamber illuminated by a single narrow window which fronts the west—some closet

> Long to quiet vowed,
> With mothed and drooping arras hung.

There let quaint odours now allure and provoke, and now lull the sense; let the lute be delicately touched, and if in the shadows the demon of *ennui* should lurk, let forms of curious beauty be present to embarrass him in his approaches. To be indifferent to science, to treat politics as "an affair for National Guards," to detest the vulgar feelings of the *bourgeoisie*, are habits of mind very favourable for the discovery that the "style of decadence" is the characteristically modern style. And in truth so much of cheap zeal and noisy claptrap have found their centre in the word "progress," so many millenniums have been announced, so often has the cry been heard "Christ is here!" with the counter-cry "Christ is there!" that it is hardly strange that a writer hating imposture, dreading delusions, and conscious of singular gifts should sever himself from the popular movement. Nor was it a luxurious quietism which Baudelaire sought; in all his work there is an active intellectual element. It is this which gives his poems that astringency which is grateful to a cultured palate. They possess some of the concentration and the keenness of logic, and, like a syllogism, compel assent. Dangerous the floating perfume of these "Fleurs du Mal" may seem at first, because its strangeness mounts to the brain and makes the senses swim; but presently we regain possession of ourselves, and do not lose it a second time; we examine with curious interest the exotic blooms, and taste the peculiar bitter-sweetness of their dews, and stroke the metallic veining of their leaves, and do not die.

It must also be insisted upon that Baudelaire was no devotee of horror, hideousness, and crime. These things exercised indeed a cruel fascination over the Romantic poet's imagination, but they were known as evil by virtue of an ideal of beauty and goodness which never deserted him. Baudelaire might deliberately send forth his imagination upon an analytic study of evil, but his intellect was not to be duped by sin. That which is hideous and detestable in Baudelaire's poetry is the offspring of a civilisation where the soil is fat and poisoned with decay. It is perhaps well that a poetical study of such things should be carried out with thoroughness, in order that, the "style of decadence" having been pushed to its extreme limit, men may estimate at the full value what it has to offer to them. The misery and ugliness of our modern life excited Baudelaire's curiosity, set his imagination abnormally to work, and made him miserable. And he sought a restorative not in simple delights, which seemed to him to belong to the youth of the world, but in sought-out pleasures; against the artificial he used the artificial as a lenitive, and nature retreated farther and farther into the distance.

Some of his English critics have spoken of Baudelaire as if he were the most eminent member of the school of form in French poetry. To the question, Does Charles Baudelaire belong to the school of art for art? M.

Lafagette answers, In no wise. The truth is that Baudelaire's power of vision was not circumscribed by the bounds of his own activity as an artist, and he perceived truths which he did not find himself individually able to put to use. While loyal in his devotion to form, and accepting his place, he had a melancholy consciousness that the movement to which he belonged, though perhaps provisionally needful, was incomplete in its designs, and if pushed to an extreme might prove dangerous—nay, even fatal—to art. At times he writes in a way which might even have contented Proudhon. "The puerile utopia of the school of *art for art*, in excluding morality, and often even passion, was necessarily sterile. It placed itself in flagrant contravention of the genius of humanity. In the name of higher principles, which constitute the universal life of man, we are warranted in declaring it guilty of heterodoxy." And elsewhere, "Literature must rehabilitate its powers in a better atmosphere. The time is not far distant when it will be understood that all literature which refuses to advance fraternally between science and philosophy is a homicidal and a suicidal literature."

To associate poetry fraternally with the higher thought of our own day has been part of the work of M. Leconte de Lisle. The effort of criticism in our time has been before all else to see things as they are, without partiality, without obtrusion of personal liking or disliking, without the impertinence of blame or of applause To see things as they are is the effort of Leconte de Lisle's poetry. Critical curiosity gratifies itself by the accurate perception of facts, and of their relations one to another. In like manner the imagination delights to comprehend after its own fashion the chief attitudes which the spirit of man has assumed in presence of external nature, of God, of life and death, to enter into the faiths of past ages and races while yet holding essentially aloof from them, to distinguish the main features of former societies of men, and to illuminate these without permitting our passions to disturb their calm. Baudelaire happily compared Leconte de Lisle to his distinguished contemporary Ernest Renan. "Notwithstanding the difference between their respective provinces, every person of clear-sighted intelligence will feel that the comparison is just. In the poet, as in the philosopher, I find the same ardent yet impartial curiosity with reference to religions, and the same spirit of universal love, not for humanity in itself, but for the various forms in which man in every age and clime has incarnated beauty and truth. Neither the one nor the other ever offends by absurd impiety. To portray in beautiful verses, of a luminous and tranquil kind, the different modes in which man, up to the present time, has adored God, and sought the beautiful, such has been the object . . . which Leconte de Lisle has assigned to his poetry."

Such poetry, it will be perceived, has close affinities with science, and yet it is in its essence the work of the skilled imagination. It possesses the ardour and the calm of science. One cannot look at the remarkable portrait of the poet by Rajon without recognising the aspiring intellect, the robust enthusiasm, the capacity for sustained effort, of Leconte de Lisle. The lifted head, with eyes which gaze steadfastly forward, might well be that of a sculptor contemplating the block in which he sees the enthralled form of beauty whose deliverance he is presently to effect.* The products of this enthusiasm possess a marmoreal calm; and it is the union of the highest energy with a lofty tranquillity which distinguishes the method of this artist. To persons who expect from poetry a shallow excitement, to persons whose imagination has not yet been nourished by the intellect, it is possible that Leconte de Lisle's chief poems may seem masterpieces of the *genre ennuyant.* It calls for some disengagement from self, and from the common preoccupations of our lives, to be able to transfer our total being into a world of thoughts and things remote and alien. The imaginative Pantheon of the average reader contains the familiar figures of the gods of Greece and Rome; it is embarrassing when house-room and welcome are required all at once for a throng of strangers of appalling aspect and names gathered from India, from Egypt, from Scandinavia, even from the Polynesian islands, and still more embarrassing to find among the antique gods certain well-known shapes arrived from Palestine which seek admission on equal terms with the rest. And it must be admitted that, after a trial of one's powers of sustained receptiveness by Leconte de Lisle, a trial which cannot be carried through without some fortitude of the imagination, we turn with a peculiar sense of relief to such lyrical sprightliness as that of Théodore de Banville, and find no small recreation for the eye in his mirthful antics upon the tight rope.

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* See also the portrait in words by Théodore de Banville, "Camées Parisiens," troisième série.

Yet Leconte de Lisle's poems are no mere works of erudite archæology. He too, although possessed of a social faith, is, like Baudelaire, ill at ease in the present time. At first upon making his acquaintance we say, Here at least is a man who has escaped the sorrow of our age, who has not known "the something that infects the world;" and we surmise that perhaps it is his Creole blood, perhaps the unvitiated air of his native Isle of Bourbon, which has left him sane and sound. But presently we perceive that this is not so. The stoicism, the impassiveness, the enforced serenity, the strict self-suppression, the resolved impersonality of his writings reveal the fact that he too has been a sufferer. These constitute the regimen by which he would gain sanity and strength. Are you unhappy? Then utter no cry, suppress the idle tear, forbear to turn the tender emotion upon yourself, place yourself under the influence of things beautiful, calm, and remote, resign your imagination in absolute obedience to the object. And if, after practising such discipline, your unhappiness still survive, the physician adds, Accept the inevitable. Is it so strange and bitter to be defeated? Or does not every law of nature fulfil its course indifferent to our joy or suffering? Bear your sorrow as you would bear the shining of the stars or the falling of the rain.

Thus, while Baudelaire studied with curious attention the evils of his time, and tasked his imagination to render an account of what was abnormal and diseased in the world around him, Leconte de Lisle turns away to seek for calm in the contemplation of nature in her virgin grace or her teeming maternal forces. and of man in states of society and under religious beliefs which possess for us an imaginative and scientific interest rather than the more pressing and painful interest of actuality. To Greece he is attracted as to the immortal patron of beauty; to the primitive peoples of the North, because among them he finds a massive force of passion and of muscle which contrasts happily with the trivialities of the boulevard; to India, because her sages had learned the secret that this turmoil of life is Mâyâ (the divine illusion), and that behind Mâyâ lies the silence and calm of "le divin Néant." We may prepare ourselves for a fashion of pessimism among our small poets of culture at an early date, and doubtless "le divin Néant" will be celebrated by many self-complacent prophets of despair. Leconte de Lisle is not a pessimist; for the race of men he sees a far-off light towards which it advances, and for his own part life is to be endured and rendered as beautiful and grand as may be with noble forms and the light of large ideas.

Among the poems of Leconte de Lisle his studies of external nature take a high place. When he sets himself down before an object resolved to make it his own by complete imaginative possession, he is not a mere descriptive poet. The great animal painter is not he who can most dexterously imitate wools and furs, but he who can pluck out the heart of the mystery of each form of animal life; and a like remark holds true of the painter of mountain or of sea. That which he seeks to discover is the ideal—that is to say, that part of the real which is the most essential as distinguished from the accidental, the permanent as distinguished from the temporary, the dominant as distinguished from the subordinate. He who by penetrative vision can discover the ideal in each thing, or, in plain words, its essential characteristics, may fearlessly go on to paint furs and wools to perfection. And such is the method of Leconte de Lisle. In his choice of subjects (for the poet chooses rather than is chosen by them) he is attracted by the beauty and the wonder of strange exotic things and places. Two moments of the day in the tropics seem to contain for his imagination the highest poetry of the four-and-twenty hours—the dawn, with its solitude, its freshness in the heavens, and light odours rising from the earth, its tender stirring in the foliage and the flowers; and then mid-noon, with the torrent of light, the oppression of loaded heat, the moveless air, and the languor of all living things. Life in the jungle at midday is the subject of a remarkable study familiar to all readers of Leconte de Lisle. The huge panther lies asleep, his belly to the air, his claws dilating unconsciously, his burning breath escaping as from a furnace, his rosy tongue lolling; around him perfect silence, only the gliding python advancing his head, and the cantharides vibrating in the transparent air:—

> Lui, baigné par la flamme et remuant la queue,
> Il dort tout un soleil sous l'immensité bleue.

In contrast with this poem, and others of the torrid atmosphere, we find all that is delicious in shadowy repose, in dewy freshness, in the light singing of streams, in the flowers of wan green places, present with us while we read "La Fontaine aux Lianes" and "La Ravine Saint-Gilles." "Le Manchy" ("manchy," the palanquin of the Isle Bourbon), so softly breathed upon by the sea-wind and impregnated with exquisite odours of the East, moves delicately forward like the rhythmical stepping of the Hindoo bearers. But of higher imaginative power than any of these is the short piece entitled "Le Sommeil du Condor." No study of the poetry of animal life is of more exciting strangeness and at the same time of more mysterious solemnity than this. Beyond the ladder of the precipitous Cordilleras, beyond the eagle-haunted mists, the vast bird sits :—

> L'envergure pendante et rouge par endroits,
> Le vaste oiseau, tout plein d'une morne indolence,
> Regarde l'Amérique et l'espace en silence,
> Et le sombre soleil qui meurt dans ses yeux froids.

And night rolls from the east over the wild pampas, putting to sleep Chili and the Pacific Sea and the divine horizon, and rises with billowy shadows from peak to peak :—

> Lui, comme un spectre, seul, au front du pic altier,
> Baigné d'une lueur qui saigne sur la neige,
> Il attend cette mer sinistre qui l'assiége :
> Elle arrive, déferle, et le couvre en entier.
> Dans l'abîme sans fond la Croix australe allume
> Sur les côtes du ciel son phare constellé.
> Il râle de plaisir, il agite sa plume,
> Il érige son cou musculeux et pelé ;
> Il s'enlève, en fouettant, l'âpre neige des Andes ;
> Dans un cri rauque il monte où n'atteint pas le vent,
> Et, loin du globe noir, loin de l'astre vivant,
> Il dort dans l'air glacé, les ailes toutes grandes.*

None of the most characteristic poems of Leconte de Lisle treat of social subjects which lie near to us in time and place. His poetry selects as its organs certain of his faculties, and rejects others. To express his political creed he would require to formulate it in prose. Christian and mediæval subjects are treated with the same aloofness, the same *hauteur*, and the same sympathy of intellect as those belonging to ancient Greece and Rome, or to the "barbarian" nations of Judea, of Egypt, of pagan Europe. But under this impartiality as an artist lie strenuous convictions both with respect to the régime of feudalism and the dogma of the age of faith, and, indeed, the impartiality at times impresses the reader who compares the poems with the author's prose confessions of belief as partaking somewhat of the nature of an imperturbable artistic irony. The commoner, more superficial irony is excluded from Leconte de Lisle's work as an artist, but it is made ample use of in the volume "Histoire populaire du Christianisme," a little treatise which, professing to represent Christian history as told by Christian historians, is certainly not distinguished by the judicial spirit or even by common historical accuracy.

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* "Le Sommeil du Condor," "Les Jungles," "Le Manchy," and the noble poem of melancholy "Le Midi," are given in the fourth volume of Crépet's *Les Poetes français*, an excellent introduction to modern French poetry as far as about fifteen years ago.

It is not to be wondered at that Leconte de Lisle should be regarded as a master by younger poets who aspire to be something more than mere singers of love and wine. He represents intellect, he represents science in connection with art; he has more of mass than Gautier, more of sanity, or at least serenity, than Baudelaire; he is distinguished by a rare self-regulating energy of the imagination; he owns a sovereign command over form, a severity and breadth of poetical style which is not to be found in the "Émaux et Camées," nor even in the

"Fleurs du Mal." But it is true that his subjects of predilection are too much subjects from the museum. He is not a mere antiquary; in his manner of aloofness and of intellectual sympathy he is essentially modern, and in the museum he remains a poet. Still we should like to know of love which was other than that possessed by a mummy; we should like to know of a religion which is not on show as a curiosity in a glass-case; outside we hear the throng in the streets of a great city, and wonder what the lives of our fellow-men are like, and what they signify to them; we think of the fields in which we ourselves were children, and which we did not study curiously, but so tenderly loved.

Within the last ten or twelve years no star of the second or third magnitude has quite succeeded in disengaging itself from the nebulous brilliancy of poetical reputations, which is made up by writers of a younger generation than those already glanced at in this essay. M. Coppée's poetry possesses elegance, but hardly in a high sense beauty; it possesses sentiment, but hardly passion; and its idyllic tenderness and refinement are those of the Luxembourg gardens rather than of the plains and hill-sides of the provinces. There is more promise of distinction in M. Catulle Mendès; but it cannot be said that he has, even in his more recent poems, certainly discovered his true direction. In the "Soirs moroses" he is still, in a measure, a pupil of Baudelaire. In the "Contes épiques" there is something of Leconte de Lisle united with something—especially in the treatment of the *dénouement* of each story—which has been obtained from Victor Hugo. In the earlier "Philomela" are pieces which could hardly have been written had not Théodore de Banville taught modern poets to unite lyrical impulse with the most delicate technical manipulations, and others which have, as it were, an odour acquired from lying among the verses of Théophile Gautier. Two poems of considerable length exhibit the highest attainment of the talent of M. Catulle Mendès. "Hesperus" is the story of a little old Jew of Frankfort-on-the-Main, a dwarf, persecuted by the children and living in misery, yet in his ecstatic trances and visions the possessor of treasures of joy and love. Brightness and gloom are brought together in this poem with as magical and fascinating a power as in some of Rembrandt's etchings; the subject is one which would have been treated with a passionate analysis by Balzac. "Le Soleil de Minuit" is a dramatic poem, the scene of which is laid among the ice-fields of the Polar world. Its human creatures are conceived as untamed animals possessed of fierce appetites and passions, not restrained, and yet already a little modified by the fears and superstitions which are the projections of the primitive conscience of mankind. It must be said that some of the impressiveness of the poem is gained by its entire disregard—a disregard which one is expected to accept as the artist's duty to his subject—of the reserves of speech that are recognised as human in our developed state of society, from which we have in some degree worked out the original man-bear and woman-wolf. M. Catulle Mendès belongs in the main to the school of "art for art," but he combines qualities which had been divided between its leaders, and he brings over to it some of the strangeness and splendour of Victor Hugo.

Two other young poets illustrate the reaction against the school of art for art, which might have been anticipated as inevitable, and which has already become apparent. In "Les Chansons joyeuses" Maurice Bouchor attempted to lead back French poetry to the spirit of facile mirth, the praise of youth and wine, of love and laughter. The Parnassians were to be pelted from their thrones with roses. His second volume—"Les Poëmes de l'Amour et de la Mer"—is written in a more grave and tender spirit; it is the lyrical confession of the sorrow of unfulfilled love, and from love the poet at the last turns for consolation to the fraternal comradeship of art. M. Lafagette puts forth a more ambitious programme. It is his aim to preserve all that has been attained for form and technical mastery of verse by the school of the Parnassians, and to employ this as an artist under influences proceeding from the political convictions of an ardent republican and a philosophical doctrine which it pleases him to term *un naturalisme rationaliste.* His earliest volume certainly confirmed the judgment of Gautier that his verses were deficient in composition, but M. Lafagette has diligently improved the quality of his workmanship, and in "Les Accalmies" he has for a season laid by his sword to take in hand the chisel and the burin; some of the sonnets and triolets—dated in Revolutionary style, "Messidor, an 83," "Floréal, an 82," might have been written in some luxurious studio under the Second Empire. Essentially, however, M. Lafagette's motto is found in the words of Victor Hugo; "De nos jours l'écrivain doit être au besoin un combattant; malheur au talent à travers lequel on ne voit pas un conscience!" One may trust that, whether or not in our own country a tendency exists to follow the leadership of the French masters of form, in France their influence is about to be reduced to just proportions. With M. Lafagette's devotion to beauty and to art mingles a social purpose somewhat akin to that which appeared in the school of Saint-Simon, and which served long since to inspire the writers of "Young Germany." But, apart from the consideration of the truth or falsehood of the faiths which lie at the basis of the art of M. Lafagette, it is a significant fact that writers who have been in the presence of the poetry of "art for art" brought to the most exquisite degree of refinement, should feel that this does not suffice, and that art, severed from a social faith, becomes, sooner or later, inevitably sterile.

Non, non, ton règne est clos, ô race veule et vaine !
  —Dans l'or pur nous savons bien sertir, comme toi,
  Des joyaux ciselés ; mais une mâle foi
Nous anime, et le sang qui brûle notre veine
  Nous voulons l'infuser à l'Art en désarroi.

Que la forme éclatante incarne la justice ;
  Songe que l'Art n'est pas un but, mais un moyen,
  Frère ! adore le Beau, car ce culte est païen,
Mais fixe-lui le Vrai pour éternel solstice ;
  Aime, hais, souffre, vis, sois homme et citoyen.

What social doctrine shall inspire the poetry of the future ? It is not meant here to attempt an answer to this question ; but one more French writer of verse may be named as illustrating the perplexities and hesitations of our age. Sainte-Beuve observed of M. Sully Prudhomme that he belonged to none of the schools of contemporary poetry. "His was rather the noble ambition of conciliating them, of deriving from them and reuniting in himself what was good in each. With much skill in the treatment of form, he was not indifferent to the idea; and among ideas, he did not adopt any group to the exclusion of the rest." This rightly defines the position of Sully Prudhomme. Like Leconte de Lisle, he is intellectual, but, unlike that master, he is tender; his intellect is not severe and haughty, but humane and sympathetic; and the sympathy which he gives is other than that which takes its origin from scientific curiosity. He does not traverse the world of ideas as an aristocrat who from his eminence of thought surveys and studies many things, of which none can succeed in mastering his reason or really gaining his affections. Rather he yields to this influence, and yields again to that, and is in danger of "losing himself in countless adjustments." He has perceptions of truth on one side and on the other, and can deny none of them. There is something in the pantheistic way of thinking which seems needful to his imaginative interpretation of the facts of consciousness; there is something in theism which corresponds with the cravings of his heart; yet he cannot deny a lurking doubt that after all the agnostic may be in the right. This is the burden which he bears, a divided intellect, for ever adapting itself to what appear to be diverse forms of truth. He is not angry with modern science or modern industry; he would, if possible, conciliate the real with the ideal. He loves the colour of Gautier's verse, the passion and vivid humanity of Musset, and can value the abstractedness, the aspiration, the Druidic nature-worship of Laprade; he would fain possess something of each; and his manifold sympathies leave him sad and restless.

Sully Prudhomme's unhappiness arises from the lack of a cause, a creed, a church, a loyalty, a love, to which he can devote his total being, knowing that such devotion is the highest wisdom. He is a born eclectic, and the only remedy he can apply to his malady is more eclecticism. He may serve as a pathetic witness to the truth that culture, as we too often conceive it nowadays, may lead to an issue less fortunate than that of asceticism. In Edgar Quinet's poetical romance "Merlin" the great enchanter traverses a vast desert to visit the abbey of the famous Prester John. The architecture of the abbey struck Merlin with astonishment. It was a composite style, formed of the pagoda, the Greek temple, the synagogue, the mosque, the basilica, the cathedral, without counting an almost innumerable number of marabouts, minarets, Byzantine and Gothic chapels. When Prester John appears, the magician beholds before him an august old man, with a beard of snow descending to his waist. "Upon his head he wore a turban enriched with a sapphire cross. At his neck hung a golden crescent, and he supported himself upon a staff after the manner of a Brahman. Three children followed him, who supported each upon the breast an open book. The first was the collection of the Vedas, the second was the Bible, the third the Koran. At certain moments Prester John stopped and read a few lines from one of the sacred volumes which always remained open before him; after which he continued his walk, with eyes fixed upon the stars." Prester John was Quinet's type of the eclectic philosopher, and he may equally well represent the modern man of spurious culture. Prester John's architecture is not a true conciliation of styles, nor Prester John's faith of creeds.

M. Sully Prudhomme, however, if he has dwelt for a while in the eclectic abbey, has not divided his heart between ideals of beauty and realities of shame. He is for ever returning to an aspiration after truth, after beauty, after simplicity of life, and yet he has never wandered far from these; and part of his moral perplexity arises from suggestions and checks to which a person of harder or narrower personality would have been insensible. There is in him something of feminine susceptibility and sensitiveness; and that a man should possess portion of a woman's tenderness is not wholly ill.

1877.

THE POETRY OF VICTOR HUGO.*

THE genius of Victor Hugo is wide and violent like a sea, and one hesitates upon the brink before venturing to plunge. But a timid approach—to dabble with the feet, and duck the head, is to remain unacquainted with this poet. A certain self-abandonment is called for, and for a time the surrender of one's safe and deliberate footing. When you are fairly borne away by some moving mound of water, when you are tossed and buffeted and bewildered, when the foam flies over your head, when you glide from dark hollow to shining hillock of the sea, when your ears are filled with the sound and your eyes with the splendour and terror of ocean, then you begin to be aware of the sensation which Victor Hugo communicates. But this is not the whole. Presently your bewilderment increases. This flood, is it a flood of water or a torrent of light?—for objects and forces are changing their aspect and direction. Have you plunged downward, or soared up? Are you in ether or on the earth? Have you been somehow drawn into the immense envelopment of a planet's belt or swift meteor? Where are the edges and limit of this environing brightness and gloom? Yet all the while a sense of security remains, and of the near presence of our green, substantial earth; for songs of birds reach us, and the chiming of the carillons of old cities, and the cries of children at play. We drop from Saturn with his moons and rings, and find ourselves by the fireside, or stooping over a cradle.

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* Victor Hugo's dramatic poetry is not considered in this essay.

But when we have rescued our imagination from the obsession of Victor Hugo's genius, how are we compelled to regard the writer and his work? This vast and vague luminosity, with its sound and splendour, its gloom and terror, has it any inward unity? has it any determined course? This cometary apparition, which throws out such stupendous jets, where lies its nucleus? and is its orbit ascertainable? What is Victor Hugo? And the answer is—He is the imagination of France in the century of trouble which followed her great Revolution—an imagination powerful, ambitious, disordered—a light of the world, though a light as wild as that of volcanic flames blown upon by storm; and he is also the better heart of France, tender and fierce, framed for manifold joy and sorrow, rich in domestic feeling and rich in patriotism, heroic yet not without a self-consciousness of heroism, that eager, self-betraying, intemperate heart, which alternates between a defiant wilfulness and the tyranny of an idea or a passion. The history of this imagination and of this heart is the history of Victor Hugo.

Intellect, which in the highest poets co-operates with the affections and the imagination, in Victor Hugo is deficient. With him it is never energy of thought which demands a passionate expression in art. Of a progressive process of thinking he seems incapable. Such emotional logic as Mr Browning brings vigorously into play, securing for the feelings as he advances each position which has been gained, is unknown to Victor Hugo. He is the seer, the dreamer, the prophet; not the athletic thinker nor the patient inquirer for truth. The eternal problems, which loom darkly before the mind of man, are to be captured, he thinks, if at all, by prompt assault. For the needs of faith he finds it more important to reinforce the will than to illuminate the intellect; he is one of the violent who take the kingdom of God by force. "Naked I will advance even to the terrible tabernacle of the unknown, even to the threshold of the shadow and the void, wide gulfs which the livid pack of black lightnings guard; even to the visionary gates of the sacred heaven; and if you bellow, thunders! I will roar."*

The passion of spiritual doubt has given a tremulous or a stern intensity to much of nineteenth-century poetry, and has uttered itself as a cry, as a moan, as a wild demand for pleasure, and also as a denial of personal joy, and a strict cleaving of the heart to the high, sad strength of duty. Many of Victor Hugo's verses are concerned with this passion of spiritual doubt. But it is rather the oscillation, the refluence and welter of the great social and moral wave flung forward by the wind of revolution which finds expression through his poetry, than the trials of the individual soul. Moods of distress and dejection beset him; but he recovers himself. His transit from doubt to certitude is made instantaneously, and through no intervening region of probabilities. His will asserts itself, or some magic phrase of the heart is uttered, or he yields gladly to the violence of some external power, and the sceptic is transformed into the prophet. There is no moment at which Victor Hugo cannot exclaim some miraculous word—"Light," or "Progress" or "Humanity," or "God,"—and dissipate the swarm of his shadowy assailants. Happy prisoner in the castle of Giant Despair, he bears in his bosom the key of enfranchisement! Perhaps the poet of Romanticism was even not without a certain æsthetic satisfaction in presence of the skulls which lay grinning in the giant's courtyard.

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* Les Contemplations. "Ibo."

Real trial of the intellect, the sad, careful conduct of the understanding through the loss of early faith to the mature convictions or surmises of manhood — of this, as far as can be discovered from his writings, Victor Hugo knows simply nothing. He has never experienced the grasp of objective fact compelling and controlling the intellect. St. Teresa ascertained that though devils disappeared upon the sign of the cross being made, they returned again; but they were effectually banished by a sufficient dashing of holy water. Victor Hugo repels his spectres of the mind with no less success; only the holy water is not priestly, but democratic or pantheistic.

Victor Hugo's method of truth-discovery, as far as he can be said to discover truth for himself, is the method of simple apprehension, the method of gaze, of intuition; and the point of gaze is determined by an act of choice, or by some transient but for the time predominant mood of feeling. If a new emotional need arise, the point of view changes. Should we happen to be influenced by identical motives we go along with him; otherwise, we stay where we were. He seems never to stand in the presence of an intellectual antagonist, while to suspect the operations of his own mind would appear to him treason against his genius. Consequently he convinces only those who are already of his party. While we possess the same faiths with Victor Hugo he reinforces and enriches those faiths with his own splendid vitality. As soon as we differ from him his voice becomes inarticulate for us. He may fulminate against us; reason with us he will not and cannot.

In reality Victor Hugo's intellectual course has been determined for him by the movements of society. All his thinking has been done on his behalf by the *Zeit-Geist.* For private store of belief he possesses a few wise and great axioms which he applies in the exigencies of life, and which have sufficed to give his career an ideal and heroic character. But when in occasional and unhappy moments he tries on his own account to go beyond these axioms, and to be the constructor of a theory or the framer of a creed, his imagination, working in a sphere governed by laws with not one of which that imagination is conversant, produces only monstrous mythologies, abortions of religion, a huge and grotesque palace of Unreason, a nightmare of the brain. Had Victor Hugo been born in the early Christian period, it is probable that he would have united a passionate communism with the gigantic conceptions of a Gnostic heresiarch. It pleases the poet to regard his works as if each were a fragment of one great system of thought, and in little prefaces which remind one of Napoleon's addresses to his army, to prelude somewhat pompously the victory about to be achieved in the world of speculation. But if the truth must be told, though Victor Hugo is ardently attached to certain ideas supplied to him by the nineteenth-century *Zeit-Geist,* as far as his private thinking is concerned, a fancy serves with him for a thought and an antithesis for an argument. Truth is in part an affair of literary style. The name of God is indeed precious for the purposes of faith; but it is hardly less precious because it enriches the music of a period or adds colour to a verse.

In the region of conscience and the moral will Victor Hugo is essentially sound and sane; although of course the absence of large intellectual power is also the absence of a seat of moral sensibility; and the wave of moral feeling loses that volume and resonance which the contribution of the intellect confers. He reminds one of that other heroic nature, essentially sane through his apparent aberrations, the Italian soldier whose lyrical life has been a song of Italy and of freedom. Victor Hugo and Garibaldi are not responsible for the error, if it be one, of having been born into a world in which moral problems are complicated by the phenomena of time and space. The sun of Justice and the moon of Charity rise and set in their eternal heavens, and are for signs and for seasons and for days and for years. They are loyal to the idea; for them there is no expediency possible, except the infinite expediency of devotion to the idea. But precisely for this reason, precisely because Victor Hugo is in the moral sphere an idealist, all that he contributes for our use is an elementary impulse, and beyond this nothing to the illuminating or edification of the conscience. His ethics are too simple, appropriate for a warfare between angels of light and of darkness, but neither rich enough nor delicate enough for the life of man with man. The "kind calm years, exacting their accompt of pain," have not yielded to him any great body of moral experience. At the age of twenty an ideal of justice and an ideal of charity shone before him as the guiding beacons of his course; and they shine before him no less brightly now. That is much. But the art of navigation does not consist wholly in a forward-gazing attitude, with eye fixed upon the lights which beam across the waves. There are trade winds from eternity; but beside these trade winds there are shifting flaws of time; and it is the meeting of these cross and counter blasts which tries our skill and seamanship. He who would inform his moral will, while he would purify and strengthen it, he who would learn something not about justice and charity merely, but about men and women and the difficult conduct of the higher life, may well close his Victor Hugo.

Victor Hugo's art contributes little to the formation of the wise adult conscience; but it would be an error to suppose that Victor Hugo has been insufficient for the guidance of his own conscience either as an artist or as a man. If he loses all the ethical *nuances* of the individual life and of history, the broad facts of right and wrong impress him upon the whole in an authentic manner. He recognizes the potential angel or devil in each man, if he does not very clearly perceive the man himself, the creature of accidents and phenomena. And the consequence is that Victor Hugo fights upon the right side in nearly every instance, though it is true that in some he does his own side injury by his manner of fighting. He sees the extremes vividly (though not without distorting refractions from his own personality), and misses what lies between. Hence the deficiency in his art of subtlety, of mystery, of the complexity of life. Napoleon the Little of the "Châtiments" is a lay-figure serviceable for the purposes of a passionate rhetoric; he is a bandit, a nocturnal robber, an assassin, a hyena, a poor stage-player, a Nero, a Cartouche; he is everything except Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, a human being with mingled strength and weaknesses, mingled virtue and vice. It is so much easier to paint a demon than a man! The pity is that the criminal is not really arrested by such art as Victor Hugo's. Napoleon the Little could afford to smile at Victor Hugo the Great. A veritable portrait of the human creature, with his timidity and his audacity, his faith in ideas, and his waiting upon events, his showy official splendours and his personal attachment to simple and homely things, the blood upon his hands, which had no itching for blood, and the mask upon his face which concealed what? profound purposes or utter purposelessness?—a portrait of this man by a great artist would have sufficed to put the imperial criminal under an arrest for all time. The Napoleon of Victor Hugo's poems is a monster, "a very shallow monster," "a very weak monster," "a most perfidious and drunken monster."

At the other extreme, the extreme of heroism, self-devotion, exaltation of human virtue, Victor Hugo's method of portraiture equally fails. Very painfully in this direction the pseudo moral-sublime shows itself. A sudden splendour of impulsive gallantry,—the gay singing of a Gavroche, the "Me voilà!" of the boy who returned to plant himself against the sad wall facing the muzzles of the Versailles shooting party,—these are rendered with perfect justness and beauty. Victor Hugo is the Corneille of impulsive gallantry. But what shall we say of the laboured beauty of a Gilliat's suicide? In the poet's hands deliberate heroism assumes an air which even to his countrymen can hardly appear other than theatrical. He seems inexperienced in the calm, unostentatious conduct of the will through periods of trial; he has not discovered how simple and severe a thing it is to do right with silent strength. Nearly every collection of his poems is prefaced with a page of prose, the purport of which is, "Observe how beautiful, how interesting, an attitude my soul assumes in the following volume." Victor Hugo's moral idealism has not enriched or sobered itself through concrete human experience. Were he to attempt a "Divine Comedy," there could be no series of descending circles in his "Inferno;" all horrors would amass themselves in one wide gulf of tyrants, and traitors, and hypocrites, and time-servers. His Paradise would shape itself into no Rose of the Blessed, with its ever intenser and more radiant petals of joy, folded in more closely upon the light of God: all holy Innocents, all holy Martyrs, all holy Virgins, all poets and prophets, would taste one supreme and indivisible bliss. And as to Purgatory—that sacred mount between earth and lunar heaven made beautiful and piteous with mourning and desire—Victor Hugo's cosmogony does not include such a region of compromise.

Yet a certain moderation of temper must also be noted as characteristic of Victor Hugo. The ex-Legitimist did not become suddenly and violently a hater of kings; he remained for a certain period a conciliator among conflicting parties; the democratic poet grew tender to think of the white head of the exiled Bourbon monarch. And recently alike to Communists and to the French nation his counsel has been in favour of mutual forbearance, and against the barbarous system of reprisals. Let us not blame,—he would say,—either party over-much. For the crimes of the one party the Past is responsible,—a Past of repression, of ignorance, of chaotic misery and crime. For those of the other let us condemn not the victors in that unequal struggle, but the blind frenzy of victory. This moderation is a temper of the heart rather than of the intellect. It is the outcome of the large charity of the man, of his pity for human frailty, his fellow-feeling with human sorrow. If his perception of individual character is ordinarily not very exact, some compensation for this lies in his abundant sympathy with that common manhood and womanhood, which is more precious than personal idiosyncracies and points of distinction. As long as there exist babyhood and old age, fatherhood and motherhood, toil by day and sleep by night, as long as there are lovers in the woods, and labourers in the fields, and mourners by the side of graves, so long will Victor Hugo hold man and woman dear. And holding man and woman dear by virtue of their common humanity, his heart instructs him in a certain "sweet reasonableness," and his hatred, his scorn, his desire for vengeance, concentrate themselves upon those exceptional beings, who by their crimes against men and nations, by their apostacy or their treason, have seemed to him to forfeit their title to the privileges of manhood.

Victor Hugo lives on the one hand in the presence of his ideals, the objects of his wonder and his worship—Justice, Charity, Beauty, Liberty, Progress, Humanity. Towards these he rises on passionate wings in "the devout ecstacy, the soaring flight." If these are wronged or profaned while he, their worshipper, their priest, stands by—then mourning and indignation and vengeance, then excommunicating rites and fierce anathema. But, on the other hand, over against these august abstractions are the gracious, abiding realities which rule the heart of man, age after age, with beneficent despotism—children, who for Victor Hugo are something between the angel and the linnet,—the father who has toiled for us, the mother who has served and loved, the husband and the wife, and once again children, the children who lie unforgotten in their graves. And these two groups of powers, the strong ideals and the tender human forms, illuminate and glorify one another. Justice and Charity and Freedom are the deities who, ruling over a nation, bring peace and security and joy to every cottage hearth; therefore they are the more divine. And no less through their presence the child, the mother, become in a higher kind beautiful and sacred. Over that woman with the baby at her breast the eternal Mother of all is bending—the nourisher whose breasts sustain the world: on that man resisting some trivial cruelty, righting some ordinary wrong, gazes approvingly the strong angelic Justiciary whom watchers have seen wiping a blood-stained sword among the clouds on the evening of a day when a tyrant's head has fallen.

The development which it is possible to trace in the mind of Victor Hugo has been no mechanical process of construction, but growth of a vital kind. Viewed from the side of the moral will his character has little history; his conscience consolidates itself, the original fibres grow firmer, more massive, and more resilient, but there is no putting forth of latent powers, no modification of organs or functions under the influence of varying circumstances and an altered moral climate. His intellectual history has been controlled by the *Zeit-Geist* of this democratic nineteenth century. He has stood at gaze in the midst of the spectacle of nature, all vital and changing, in presence of human society, alive and changing also, in presence of God, the ever-changing God, who expands and contracts from age to age and from year to year, who approaches and recedes, rises and descends like the shining clouds upon a mountain side. And gradually, as he looks abroad, man and nature and God, which had seemed to stand apart, flow into one another, coalesce, and form one stupendous, natural-supernatural whole. He looks abroad, and the space around him widens; the horizon changes. In place of the gilded ceilings of Versailles he beholds unfathomable abysses of azure; the priest and altar expand, winds of heaven sweep away the heavy fumes of incense, and it is God himself who stands before the eyes of the nations elevating the host; the little skipping figures of princes and courtiers vanish, and there comes up higher and higher a broad tide - the People—with its voice of threatening and of promise, engulfing the petty eminences of the land where royal palace and ducal castle stood; the stars which had been so long steadfast in the heaven set; the ancient day and night are rolled away; a solemn dawn begins; the sun rises with unimaginable splendour and unimaginable sound; the cry of Liberty is shouted from margin to margin of the hills. Standing at gaze in the midst, with no purposes or plans for his future, Victor Hugo simply allows the great spectacle to operate upon his whole being, and to produce there whatever modifications it is fitted to produce. New forces play through him and pass out of him. If his eyes brighten, that is because the sun has filled them with his splendour. If his court costume happen to be blown away, it is the north wind and the south who have been the thieves. If wings expand, and quiver upon his shoulders, and he soars, it is the Dawn who has required her singer. If he be a traitor to his early faith, his accomplices and abettors are the Heavens and the Earth:—

"You say 'Where goest thou?' I cannot tell,
And still go on. If but the way be straight,
It cannot be amiss: before me lies
Dawn and the day; the night behind me; that
Suffices me; I break the bounds; I *see*,
And nothing more; *believe*, and nothing less;
My future is not one of my concerns."*

But while the poet seemed to be passive, he was unconsciously co-operating with the agencies which surrounded him. In precisely such a medium lay the conditions which favoured the full development of the poet's imagination, and flattered his ambition. In a great monarchical period if Victor Hugo had not perished as a foiled revolutionary, he would perhaps have perished as a mere liver on the brilliant surface of life, satiating his senses with the pomp and colour and pageantry of the courts of kings. To have perfected a literary style might have been the sum of his achievement. His true self could hardly have come into existence. In presence of the great political and social movement of the post-Revolution period, he dilates, he energizes freely, and is joyous. This tide which rises cannot terrify him, for he it is who can render its inarticulate threats and aspirations into human speech. If the dawn descend to illuminate him, he too is able to rise and become one of the splendours of the dawn.

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* Les Contemplations. "Écrit en 1846."

Ideas as they arrive elaborated through creeds, and theologies, and systems of philosophy, enter into no vital relation with the mind of Victor Hugo. Ideas as he sees them in action, a portion of the marvellous spectacle of life, become at once for him sources of imaginative excitement, and as such in the highest degree important. But besides the large impersonal influences which have been among the causes contributing to the growth of the poet's mind, there have been numerous trains of private joys and sorrows, which have brought to his imagination and to his heart sustenance and stimulus. The urge of life has been strenuous with him, and always on the increase. Shock after shock of delight and of pain have fallen upon him, and with each impact a wave of heat has diffused itself, until at length the whole nature of the man has become one glowing, fiery mass. Love and while yet in boyhood marriage with the woman he had loved as a child, a struggle with poverty, victorious leadership in a brilliant aggressive movement in art, a splendid fame in early manhood, political celebrity added to literary celebrity, the rapture of generous deeds, contact with the most quickening contemporary minds, the birth of children, the drowned body of his daughter and of him whom she loved, exile, calumny, solitude, the fidelity of friends, the presence of the tumultuous seas which divided him from his country and from the often-visited grave; recently those twelve epic months of the Year Terrible, Paris in her girdle of fire, and the pale flower-like baby on his knee, the sudden loss of a son who was a comrade, the popular vote, the insult of the Assembly, the hootings and peltings of the Brussels mob, the brilliant revival of his dramatic writings in Republican Paris,—and in the beginning, the middle, and the end, the delights of the woods and of the streets,—these in rapid summary recall only a portion of the gladness and sadness which have gone to make up this life—a life that has already passed the limit assigned to men.

The career of Victor Hugo naturally divides itself into three periods—first, that in which the poet was still unaware of his true self, or seeking that true self failed to find it; secondly, that presided over by the Hugoish conception of beauty; thirdly, that dominated by the Hugoish conception of the sublime. "Les Orientales" marks the limit of the first period; the transition from the second to the third, which begins to indicate itself in "Les Rayons et les Ombres," is accomplished in "Les

Contemplations." The third period is not closed; at the present moment we have the promise from Victor Hugo of important works in verse and prose. Possibly, any hypothesis as to the orbit he describes is still premature.

In a divided household the boy Victor naturally inclined towards the side of his mother, and from her he inherited the monarchical tradition. From Chateaubriand he learned to recognize the literary advantages offered by neo-Catholicism, and under his influence the Voltairean royalism of Victor Hugo's earlier years was transformed into the Christian royalism which was to do service for the writer of odes under the Restoration. The boy ambitious of literary distinction, and furnished with literary instincts and aptitudes, but as yet unprovided with subjects for song from his own experience, must look about in the world to find subjects. He needs something to declaim against, and something to celebrate. The Revolution satisfies one of these requirements, and the monarchy the other. The vantage-ground of a creed is now gained; the dominant conception of his poetry declares itself to him; he is to be the singer of the restored Christian monarchy. If history would only supply themes, he is now prepared to take them up and execute brilliant variations upon them. And history is disposed to assist him. What more fortunate subject can there be for a neo-Catholic royalist ode than the birth of a Christian duke, unless it be the baptism of a Christian duke, or the consecration of a Christian king? Happy age when dukes are born and baptized, and when a philosophic poet of the age of twenty resolves to "solemnize some of the principal memorials of our epoch which may serve as lessons to future societies."[*] Happy age when atheist and regicide hide their heads, when the flood of Revolution has subsided, and the bow appears in the clouds! Highly favoured nation upon whom the presence of a Bourbon confers prosperity and peace, with all the Christian graces, and all the theological virtues:—

> "O, que la Royauté, peuples, est douce et belle!"

In these odes the king is the terrestrial God; and God is the *grand monarque* who rules in the skies. If not the very same, he is a descendant not far removed from the aged and amiable God, something between a Pope and an Emperor, of the mediæval period, seated upon a throne, with a bird above his head, and his Son by his side, a courtly archangel on his right hand, and on the left a prophet, listening to harps, while Madame the Mother of God stands by, hand on breast. He is the God who was careful to punish the men of the Convention, and pulled down Napoleon from his high place; the God who chose Charles X. as the man after his own heart. If to disbelieve in this author of nature and moral governor of the universe be atheism, Victor Hugo is at present an atheist.[†]

But the political and religious significance of these early poems was in truth a secondary affair. To reform the rhythm of French verse, to enrich its rhymes, to give mobility to the cesura, to carry the sense beyond the couplet, to substitute definite and picturesque words in place of the *fadeurs* of classical mythology and vague poetical periphrasis—these were matters awakening keener interest than the restoration of a dynasty or the vindicating of a creed. To denounce the Revolution was well; but how much higher and more divine to bring together in brilliant consonance two unexpected words! Gustave Planche, reviewing at a later period this literary movement, and pronouncing in his magisterial way that the movement was primarily one of style, not of thought, recalls as a trivial circumstance, which however serves to characterize the time, that the ultimate word, the supreme term of literary art, was—"*la ciselure.*" The glow of Royalist fervour was somewhat of a painted fire; the new literary sensations were accompanied by thrills of pleasure which were genuine and intense.

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[*] Preface to the Odes, 1822.

[†] See "L'Année Terrible." "A l'évêque qui m'appelle Athée."

Before 1828, Victor Hugo's royalist fervour had certainly lost some of its efficiency for the purposes of literature. The drama of "Cromwell" had been published in the previous year; and the poet was in open revolt against the great monarchical period of French art—the age of Racine. Either the births and baptisms of dukes occurred less frequently than heretofore, or Victor Hugo was less eager to celebrate them. But if his early faith was falling piece by piece, no new faith as yet came to replace the old, unless it were the artist's faith of "art for art." Accordingly, Victor Hugo in the forefront of his next lyrical volume—"Les Orientales"—proclaims in a high tone the independence of the poet from the trammels of belief. Let no one question him about the subjects of his singing,—if the manner be faultless, that is all which can be required of him. He will not now "endeavour to be useful," he will not attempt "to solemnize some of the principal memorials of our epoch which may serve as lessons to future societies." Farewell to the safe anchorage of neo-Catholicism! 'Let the poet go where he pleases, and do what he pleases: such is the law. Let him believe in one God, or in many; in Pluto or in Satan, ... or in nothing; . . . . let him go north or south, west or east; let him be ancient or modern . . . He is free." What appropriateness was there in these *Orientales* in the midst of the grave preoccupations of the public mind! To what does the Orient rhyme? What consonance has it with anything? The author replies that "he does not know; the fancy took him; and took him in a ridiculous fashion enough, when, last summer, he was going to see a sunset." There was another sunset which Victor Hugo witnessed before long—the setting in a stormy sky of the ancient monarchy of France. Then, too, he thought of the East, and began that greater series of *Orientales*, those songs of the sunrise of the Republic, which still vibrate in the air. These last came not through caprice, but of necessity, and the only freedom which the poet has since claimed has been the freedom of service to his ideas and of fidelity to his creed.

The poems, "Les Orientales," correspond with the announcements of the preface. They are miracles of colour and of sound. They shine and sparkle, and gleam like fiery opals, sapphires, and rubies. They startle the French muse, accustomed to the classic lyre or pastoral pipe, with the sound of sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music. Our eyes and ears are filled with vivid sensation. Does it greatly matter that they remain remote from our imaginative reason, our understanding heart, our conscience? The desires we possess for splendour and harmony are gratified: why should we demand anything further? Victor Hugo, still unprovided with sufficient subjects from his personal experience, and finding the monarchical pageant grow somewhat tarnished, had turned to Greece and Spain. With Spain the recollections of his boyhood connected him. Greece was a fashion of the period. The struggle with the Turkish power had surrounded the names of places and persons with associations which were effective with the popular imagination. Lord Byron had put his misanthropic hero into eastern costumes. The properties—jerreed, tophaike, ataghan, caftan, the jewel of Giamschid, the throne of Eblis—took the taste of the period. The plash of the sack which contains a guilty wife in the still waters of the Bosphorus—the bearded heads attached to the Seraglio walls, and left as food for crows—these were thrilling sensations offered by eastern poetry. "Conscience," "imaginative reason," "understanding heart," what metaphysical jargon is this? Pedantry! we need colour and harmony; we demand a nervous excitation. And in truth, Victor Hugo had advanced a step, for he had lost a faith, and gained a style.

The more ambitious efforts of the years immediately following the publication of "Les Orientales" were in the direction of the theatre, and to the same period belongs the novel "Notre-Dame de Paris," in which the mediævalism of the writer is no longer political, or religious, if it ever were such, but is purely æsthetical, supplying him with the rich and picturesque background before which his figures move. It was a fortunate circumstance for his lyrical poetry that it ceased to be the chief instrument of his ambition. Any deliberate attempt to surpass "Les Orientales" would have overleaped itself, and fallen on the other side. No pyrotechnic art could send up fiery parachutes or showers of golden rain higher than the last. But if instead of the fantastic blossoms of the pyrotechnist he were to bring together true flowers of the meadows, and leaves of the forest trees, the nosegay might have a grace and sweetness of its own. "Les Feuilles d'Automne" was published in the month of November 1831, and Victor Hugo notes as curious the contrast between the tranquillity of his verses and the feverish agitation of the minds of men. "The author feels in abandoning this useless book to the popular wave, which bears away so many better things, a little of the melancholy pleasure one experiences in flinging a flower into a torrent and watching what becomes of it."

There is an autumn in early manhood out of which a longer summer, or a spring of more rapturous joy, may be born. One period of life has been accomplished; better things may come, but there must be an abandonment of the old; a certain radiance fades away; it is a season of recollection; our eye has kept watch over the mortality of man; we know the "Soothing thoughts that spring out of human suffering." It was at this period that Wordsworth wrote his "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality." It was at this period that Victor Hugo wrote "Les Feuilles d'Automne." No other volume of his poetry is marked by the same grave and tender self-possession; there is sadness in it, but not the ecstasy of grief; there is joy, but a wise and tempered joy. The calm of "Les Rayons et les Ombres" may be more profound; it is at all events a different calm—that of one who has the parting with youth well over, who has gone forward with confidence, and discovered the laws of the new order of existence and found them to be good. In "Les Rayons et les Ombres" the horizon is wider and the sky more blue; nature knows the great secret, and smiles. There is something pathetic in the calm of the earlier volume; something pathetic even in the shouts and laughter of the children which ring through it, though they ring clear and sweet as the bells upon the mules of Castile and Aragon.

Victor Hugo, who heretofore had for the most part been looking eagerly abroad for ambitious motives for song, now in "Les Feuilles d'Automne" very quietly folded the wing, dropped down, and found himself. Memories of his childhood, his mother's love and solicitude for her frail infant, the house at Blois where his father came to rest after the wars, the love-letters of thirteen years ago, his daughter at her evening prayer, the beauty of many sunsets, the voice of the sea heard from high headlands, the festival of the starry heaven above, and, below, the human watcher, a "vain shadow, obscure and taciturn," yet seeming for a moment "the mysterious king of this nocturnal pomp,"—these and such as these are the themes over which the poet lingers with a grave sadness and joy. The feeling for external nature throughout is fervent, but large and pure. The poet stands in the presence of nature, and receives her precious influences; he is not yet enveloped by her myriad forces and made one with them; neither does he yet stand at odds with her, the human will contending in titanic struggle with the *ἀνάγκη* of natural law. God in these poems is a beneficent Father.

But now, again, Victor Hugo looked abroad. In “Les Orientales” he had treated subjects remote from his personal history. “Les Feuilles d'Automne” was a record of private joys and sorrows. In “Les Chants du Crépuscule” the personal and impersonal have met in living union; the individual appears, but his individuality is important less for its own sake than because it reflects the common spiritual characteristics of the period. The faith of France in her restored monarchy, her monarchy by divine right, had waned, and finally become extinct; and with the faith of France, that also of her chief poet. Many things had been preparing his spirit to accept the democratic movement of modern society. The literary war in which he had been engaged was a war of independence; it cultivated the temper of revolt, disdain of authority, self-confidence and a forward gaze into the future. None but a literary Danton could have dared in French alexandrines to name by its proper name *le cochon.* The noblesse of the poetical vocabulary had been rudely dealt with by Victor Hugo; and a rough swarm of words, which in a lexicon would have been branded with the obelus, now forced their way into the luxurious tenements of aristocratic noun-substantive and adjective. Victor Hugo had said to verse, “Be free;” to the words of the dictionary, “Be republican, fraternise, for you are equal.”

And in the enfranchisement of speech, was not thought enfranchised also? The poet had eloquently vindicated the rights of the grotesque in art. My Lady Beauty was no more needful to the world than her humorous clown; Quasimodo's face looked forth from the cathedral door, and vindicated all despised and insulted things. It was inevitable that the literary revolution should coalesce with the political revolution. Moreover, the monarchy had discredited itself,—it had been the agent of disorder; and the People had made itself beautiful by the virtue of the days of July.

Yet when the first acclamations which greeted a constitutional king had died away, there came a season of hesitation and surmise, a season of distrust. The dawn had seemed to open before men's eyes; and now again it was twilight—twilight of religious doubt, twilight of political disquietude. "Les Chants du Crépuscule" corresponds to this moment of welter and relapse in the wave of thought. Incertitude within, a vaporous dimness without—such is the stuff out of which this poetry has shaped itself; and the poet himself, hearing "Yes," and "No," cried by conflicting voices, is neither one of those who deny nor one of those who affirm. He is one of those who hope. The mysterious light upon the edge of the horizon, like the distant fire of a forge at night, is it the promise of the dawn, or the last brightness of receding day? Is the voice of Ocean a voice of joy or of fear? What is this murmur which rises from the heart of man?—a song, or perhaps a cry?

Notwithstanding the doubtful accent of "Les Chants du Crépuscule," this volume leaves little uncertainty as to the direction in which the poet is tending. He is one of those who hope; and with Victor Hugo to hope is already half to believe. His former royalist Catholic convictions were not savagely demolished; they remained as a sacred and poetic ruin, appealing, as ruins do, to the sense in us of pathos and pity; but they exercised no authority over the will or the masculine part of the imagination. In "Les Chants du Crépuscule" we can discern this imagination venturing itself into the presence of the popular life and movement, and arrested and aroused by the new and marvellous objects which became visible. An exiled king is deserving of a respectful and sympathising gaze; but see, the billowy inundation of the people, the irresistible advance! and listen, the rumours, the terror, the joy, the mystery of the wind and of these waves that roll before it; the stormy murmur of the people around each great idea! Here is space, and strength, and splendour for the imagination to delight in, more satisfying to it than the livery of courtiers and the ceremonial of state days. And upon the other hand—(for what could Victor Hugo's imagination effect without a contrast?)—observe the gloomy faces of the enemies of liberty and of the people; not kings (for kings were not all tyrants in 1835), but the pernicious counsellors of kings, fulfilled with perjury and boldness, "unhappy, who believed in their dark error that one morning they could take the freedom of the world like a bird in a snare." The material of much future prophecy, triumphant and indignant, lies already in existence here.

But Victor Hugo was not going to allow his poetry to become the instrument of party politics. He must not allow the harmony of his nature to be violated. He must maintain his soul above the tumult; unmoved himself, he must be austere and indulgent to others. He must belong to all parties by their generous, and to no party by its vicious sides. His grave respect for the people must be united with scorn for mobs and mob-leaders. He must live with external nature as well as with man. He may safely point out errors in little human codes if he contemplate by day and by night the text of the divine and eternal codes. And holding himself thus above all that is merely local and transitory, his poetry must be the portrait—profoundly faithful—of himself, such a portrait of his own personality being perhaps the largest and most universal work which a thinker can give to the world.*

Such was the spirit in which "Les Voix Intérieures" and "Les Rayons et les Ombres" were written. It was a time of high resolves, and of successful conduct of his moral nature. And what gives joy and what restores faith like successful conduct of the moral nature? We cannot trace each step of the progress from "Les Chants du Crépuscule" to "Les Rayons et les Ombres," but we can see that the progress was accomplished. The twilight had dissipated itself, and it was the dawn indeed which came, and not the darkness. Human love seemed to grow a more substantial and a diviner thing. Beside the light of their own beauty there was an "auxiliar light," illuminating the faces of the flowers. Some counter-charm of space and hollow sky had been found:

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* Prefaces of "Les Voix Intérieures" and of "Les Rayons et les Ombres."

> "Let no one ask me how it came to pass;
> It seems that I am happy, that to me
> A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass,
> A purer sapphire melts into the sea."

Nature which had been a tender mother, now becomes a strong and beautiful bride, with embracing arms, who has need of her eager lover the poet. God, who had been a beneficent father, is now something more than can be expressed by any human relation: He is joy, and law, and light. God and nature and man have approached and play through one another. What a moment ago was divine grace, is now light, and as it touches the heart it again changes into love, and once more is transformed from love to faith and hope. There is an endless interchange of services between all forces and objects spiritual and material. Nothing in the world is single. Small is great, and great is small. Below the odour of a rose-bud lies an abyss—the whole mysterious bosom of the earth,—and above it in the beauty of a woman's bending face, and the soul behind that face, rises an unfathomable heaven. The calm of "Les Rayons et les Ombres," if it is profound, is also passionate. This is that "high mountain apart," the mountain of transfiguration. They who ascend there say, "It is good for us to be here," not knowing what they say: presently they come down from the mountain, with human help for those who are afflicted and diseased, —help which to some seems supernatural, and which assuredly those who have remained below are not always able to afford.

In the autumn of 1843, Léopoldine, daughter of Victor Hugo, and Charles Vacquerie, who had been her husband during some few spring and summer months, were drowned. After the Coup d'État of December 2, the poet became an exile from France. In 1853 was published in Brussels the volume entitled "Les Châtiments." In 1856 (twelve years had elapsed since his daughter's death) appeared the two volumes of "Les Contemplations."

Joy had been Victor Hugo's preparation for his great sorrow. Had a blow so sudden and dreadful fallen before his soul had been tempered and purified by joy, the soul might have been crushed into formless apathy, or shattered into fragments. But because joy and love and faith had maintained his nature in a state of high efficiency, because every part of it was now vital and sensitive, he was fitted to endure the blow. Extreme anguish can be accepted as a bitter gift if it comes from the hands of Life; martyrdom is unendurable only by one who is already half deceased, and little sensitive to pain. "Les Contemplations" is the lyrical record of twenty-five years. More than any other of Victor Hugo's collections of poetry it holds, as in a rocky chalice, the gathered waters of his life. "The author has allowed the book to form itself, so to speak, within him. Life, filtering drop by drop through events and sufferings, has deposited it in his heart." These deep waters have slowly amassed themselves in the soul's secret places. "Les Contemplations" completes the series of personal memorials which had preceded it by one more comprehensive than all the rest. Here nothing is absent

—reminiscences of school-boy years, youth, the loves and fancies, the gaiety and the illusions of youth, the literary warfare of early manhood, and the pains and delights of poetical creation, friendship, sorrow, the innocent mirth of children, the tumult of life, the intense silence of the grave, the streams, the fields, the flowers, the tumbling of desolate seas, the songs of birds, solitude, the devout aspiration, doubt and the horror of doubt, the eager assault of the problems Whence? and Whither? and Wherefore? and the baffled vision and arrested foot there upon "the brink of the infinite." Into this book the sunlight and clear azure have gone; the storm and the mists. But when these, its tributaries, demand each the book as of right belonging to itself, when the forest claims it, and the blossoming meadow-land, and the star, and the great winds, and the heaven, and the tempestuous sea, and the nests of birds—the poet refuses all these; he gives it to the tomb. An exiled man, he cannot now lay a flower upon his children's grave; he can only send to them his soul.

The first three books contain poems of many moods of joy. The fourth book includes the poems which recall all his daughter's sweetness and pretty ways in childhood —poems of a lovely purity and sadness. The father waits in his study for the morning visit of his child; she enters with her "Bonjour, mon petit père," takes his pen, opens his books, sits upon his bed, disturbs his papers, and is gone like a flying bird. Then his work begins more joyously, and on some page scribbled with her childish arabesques, or crumpled by her little hands, come the sweetest verses of his song. How the winter evenings passed with grammar and history lessons, and the four children at his knee, while their mother sat near and friends were chatting by the hearth! And those summer walks of the father, thirty years of age, and the daughter, ten, coming home by moonlight, when the moths were brushing the window panes. And the sight of the two fair children's heads stooping over the Bible, the elder explaining, and the younger listening, while their hands wandered from page to page over Moses, and Solomon, and Cyrus, and Moloch, and Leviathan, and Jesus. And she is dead; and to set over against all these, there is the walk begun at dawn, by forest, by mountain; the man silent, with eyes which see no outward thing, solitary, unknown, with bent back and crossed hands, and the day seeming to him like the night; and then when the evening gold is in the sky unseen, and the distant sails are descending towards Harfleur, the arrival, and a bunch of green holly and blossoming heath to lay upon the tomb.

Once more as the poems close Victor Hugo attains to peace. But it is not the peace of "Les Rayons et les Ombres," the calm of the high table-lands of joy, the calm of a halt in clear air and under the wide and luminous sky. It is rather the peace of swiftest motion, the sleep of an orb spinning onward through space. For now the stress of life has become very urgent. Joy and sorrow are each intenser than before, and are scarcely tolerable. That atom, the human will, while still retaining consciousness and individuality, is enveloped by forces material and spiritual, and whirled onward with them in unfaltering career towards their goal. Odours, songs, the blossoms of flowers, the chariots of the suns, the generations of men, the religions and philosophies of races, the tears of a father over his dead child, winters and summers, the snows, and clouds, and rain, and among all these the individual soul, hasten forward with incredible speed and with an equal repose to that of the whirlpool's edge toward some divine issue. If the gloom is great, so is the splendour. We, poor mortals, gazing Godward are blind; yet we who are blind are dazzled as we gaze. The poems of later date in these volumes bear tokens of strain: the stress of life has become too intense, and the art of the poet, it may be, suffers in consequence. Shakspere was able, after enduring the visions of Lear upon the heath, and Othello by the bedside, to retire to a little English country town, and enjoy the quiet dignity of a country gentleman. Not all great artists are so framed. With Beethoven in his later period the passion of sound became overmastering, and almost an agony of delight. With Turner in his later period, the splendour of sunlight almost annihilated his faculty of vision. Blake's songs of Innocence and of Experience became mysterious prophecies of good and evil, of servitude and freedom, of heaven and hell. With Victor Hugo the joy and the sorrow of the world have been too exceedingly strong, and his art has had to endure a strain.

"Les Châtiments," published some years earlier than "Les Contemplations," belongs by its subject to a later period of Victor Hugo's life. His private sorrow was for a time submerged by the flood of indignation let loose against the public malefactor. In the last poem of an earlier collection Victor Hugo had spoken of three great voices which were audible within him, and which summoned him to the poet's task. One was the voice of threatening, of protest and malediction against baseness and crime, the voice of the muse who visited Jeremiah and Amos: the second was all gentleness and pity and pleading on behalf of the ignorance and errors of men: the third was the voice of the Absolute, the Most-High, of Pan, of Vishnu, who is affected neither by love nor hatred, to whom death is no less acceptable than life, who includes what seems to us crime as contentedly as what we call virtue. Now, for a season, Victor Hugo listened eagerly to what the first of these three voices had to say. It was the hour for art to rise and show that it is no dainty adornment of life, but an armed guardian of the land. "The rhetoricians coldly say, 'The poet is an angel; he soars, ignoring Fould, Magnan, Morny, Maupas; he gazes with ecstacy up the serene night.' No! so long as you are accomplices of these hideous crimes, which step by step I track, so long as you spread your veils over these brigands, blue heavens, and suns and stars, I will not look upon you." "Les Châtiments" is the roaring of an enraged lion. One could wish that the poet kept his indignation somewhat more under control. He is not Apollo shooting the faultless and shining shafts against Python, but a *Jupiter tonans*, a little robustious, and whirling superabundant thunderbolts with equal violence in every direction. It is now the chief criminal, the Man of December, now it is the jackals who form his body-guard, now the prostitute priest, now the bribed soldier, now the *bon bourgeois*, devotee of the god *Boutique*, and on each and all descend the thunderbolts, with a rattling hail of stinging epithets, and with fire that runs and leaps. This eruption, which is meant to overwhelm the gewgaw Empire, goes on fulgurantly, resoundingly and not without scoriæ and smoke. Victor Hugo's faith in the people and in the future remains unshaken. "Progress," "Liberty," "Humanity," remain more than ever magic watchwords. The volume which opens with "Nox"—the blackness of that night of violence and treason—closes with "Lux," the dreadful shining of the coming day of Freedom. "Doubt not; let us believe, let us wait. God knows how to break the teeth of Nero as the panther's teeth. Let us have faith, be calm, and go onward." Let us not slay this man; let us keep him alive—"Oh, a superb chastisement? Oh! if one day he might pass along the highway naked, bowed down, trembling, as the grass trembles to the wind, under the execration of the whole human race." . . . "People, stand aside! this man is marked with the sign. Let Cain pass; he belongs to God."

And now Victor Hugo's gaze travelled from his own period backward over the universal history of man. Was this triumph of evil for a season, with tyranny and corruption and luxury in the high places, and fidelity, and truth, and virtue, and loyalty to great ideas cast out, fading on remote and poisonous shores, or languishing in dungeons,—was this a new thing in the world's history? The exile in the solitude of his rocky island, and encircled by the moaning seas, loses the tender and graceful aspect of things. As he looks backward through all time, what does he perceive? Always the weak oppressed by the strong, the child cast out of his heritage by violent men, the innocent entrapped by the crafty, the light-hearted girl led blindfold to her doom, old age insulted and thrust away by youth, the fratricide, the parricide, the venal priest on one side of the throne, and the harlot queening it on the other, the tables full of vomit and filthiness, the righteous sold for silver, the wicked bending their bow to cast down the poor and needy. While he gazes, the two passions which had filled "Les Châtiments" from the beginning to the end, the passions of Hatred and of Hope, condense and materialize themselves, and take upon them two forms—the one, that of the tyrant, the proud wrong-doer; the other, that of the Justiciary, the irresistible avenger of wrong.* "La Légende des Siècles" is the imaginative record of the crimes and the overthrow of tyrants. If no collection of Victor Hugo's poetry formed itself so quietly and truly, gathering drop by drop, as "Les Contemplations," there is none which is so much the product of resolution and determined energy as this, "La Légende des Siècles," which next followed. These poems are not lyrical outflowings of sorrow and of joy. The poet, with the design of shaping a great whole out of many parts, chooses from a wide field the subject of each brief epic; having chosen his subject, he attacks it with the utmost vigour and audacity, determined to bring it into complete subjection to his imagination. Breaking into a new and untried province of art now when his sixtieth year was not distant, Victor Hugo never displayed more ambition or greater strength. The alexandrine in his hands becomes capable of any and every achievement; its even stepping is heard only when the poet chooses; now it is a winged thing and flies; now it advances with the threatening tread of Mozart's *commandatore.*

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* M. Emile Montégut has already somewhere called attention to the parts these two figures play in "La Légende des Siècles."

Occasional episodes, joyous or graciously tender, there are in "La Légende des Siècles." The rapture of creation when the life of the first man-child was assured, the sleep of Boaz, Jesus in the house of Martha and Mary, the calm death of the eastern prophet, the gallantry of the little page Aymerillot who took Narbonne, the Infanta with the rose in her tiny hand, the fisherman who welcomes the two orphan children, and will toil for them as for his own—these relieve the gloom. But the prominent figures (and sometimes they assume Titanic size) are those of the great criminals and the great avengers—Cain, pursued by the eye of God, Canute, the seven evil uncles of the little King of Galicia, Joss the great and Zeno the little, but equal in the instincts of the tiger, Ratbert and his court of titled robbers and wanton women, Philip the Second, the Spanish inquisitors and baptizers of mountains—where shall we look for moral support against the cruelty and the treachery and the effrontery of these? Only in the persons of the avengers,—Roland whirling Durandal in the narrow gorge, Eviradnus standing over the body of the sleeping countess, or shooting the corpses of the two defeated wretches down their hideous *oubliette*—only in these and in the future when all dark shadows of crime and of sorrow shall have passed for ever away.

It is to be noted of "La Légende des Siècles" that the aspect of nature as an antagonist of the will of man, or as Victor Hugo would grandiosely express it, as "one form of the triple ἀνάγκη," that aspect presented with such force and infinite detail in "Les Travailleurs de la Mer," and in the earlier chapters of "L'Homme qui Rit," appears distinctly in some of these brief epic records of human struggle and human victory or defeat.

"La Légende des Siècles" and the volume which next followed become each more striking by the contrast they present. Victor Hugo has somewhere told us how one day he went to see the lion of Waterloo; the solitary and motionless figure stood dark against the sky, and the poet stepped up the little hillock and stood within its shadow. Suddenly he heard a song; it was the voice of a robin who had built her nest in the great mouth of the lion. "Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois" viewed in relation to "La Légende des Siècles" resembles this nest in the lion's mouth. The volume was indeed a piquant surprise to those who had watched the poet's career through its later period, and who took the trouble to surmise about his forthcoming works. After the tragic legends came these slight caprices. The songs (while their tone and colour are very different from those of Victor Hugo's youth) are a return to youth by the subjects of many of them, and by the circumstance that once again, as in the "Odes" and "Les Orientales," style becomes a matter of more importance than the idea. These later feats of style are the more marvellous through their very slightness and curious delicacy. Pegasus, who has been soaring, descends and performs to a miracle the most exquisite circus accomplishments. Language, metre, and meaning seem recklessly to approach the brink of irretrievable confusion; yet the artist never practised greater strictness, or attained greater precision, because here more than elsewhere these were indispensable. All styles meet in mirthful reunion. Virgil walks side by side with Villon; Lalage and Jeanneton pour the wine; King David is seen behind the trees staring at Diana, and Actæon from the housetop at Bathsheba; the spider spins his web to catch the flying rhymes from Minerva's indignant nose to the bald head of St. Paul.

Yet all the while an ideal of beauty floats over this *Kermesse;* the goddesses do not lose their heavenly splendour; the sky bends overhead; the verse, while it sips its coffee, retains the fragrance of the dew. As to idea—the idea of such songs as these is that they shall have no idea. Enough of the mystery of life and death, the ascending scale of beings, the searching in darkness, the judicial pursuit of evil! Enough of visions on the mountain heights, of mysterious sadness by the sea! Let us live, and adjourn all these; adjourn this measureless task, adjourn Satan, and Medusa, and say to the Sphinx "Go by, I am gossiping with the rose." Friend, this interlude displeases you. What is to be done? The woods are golden. Up goes the notice-board, "Out for a holiday." I want to laugh a little in the fields. What! must I question the corn-cockle about eternity? Must I show a brow of night to the lily and the butterfly? Must I terrify the elm and the lime, the reeds and rushes, by hanging huge problems over the nests of little birds? Should I not be a hundred leagues from good sense if I were to go explaining to the wagtails the Latin of the

Dies Iræ? Such is the mirthful spirit of the book; not mirth in the "happy, prompt, instinctive way of youth;" but the wilfulness prepense of one who seeks relief from thought and passion. The apparent recrudescence of sensuality in some of these songs is not an affair of the senses at all, but of the fancy: or if the eye is inquisitive and eager, it is because the vague bewildering consciousness of youthful pleasure is absent.

Such songs as these could be no more than an interlude in the literary life of Victor Hugo. But the transition becomes tragic when we pass from "Les Chansons des Rues et des Bois" to "L'Année terrible." The holiday in the woods is indeed over, and all laughter and sportive ways. The fields are trampled by the steady battalions of the invaders. The streets have a grave and anxious air. Paris, the heroic city, the city of liberty, the capital of the world, where Danton thundered, and Molière shone, and Voltaire jested, Paris is enduring her agony. But the empire has fallen. The imperial bandit "passes along the highway naked, bowed down, trembling, as the grass trembles to the wind, under the execration of the whole human race." And Victor Hugo stands in republican France.

"L'Année terrible" is a record for the imagination, complete in every important particular, of the history of Paris, from August 1870 to July 1871; and with the life of Paris, the personal life of the poet is intertwined inseparably, and for ever. Great joy, the joy of an exile restored to his people, the joy of a patriot who has witnessed the overthrow of a corrupt and enervating despotism, and who is proud of the heroic attitude of the besieged city—such joy is mingled with the great sorrow of his country's defeat and dismemberment. He is sustained by his confidence in the future, and in the ultimate victory of the democratic ideas which form his faith; though once or twice this confidence seems for a moment shaken by the rude assault of facts. The extravagance of his love and devotion to France, the extravagance of his scorn and hatred of the invader, must be pardoned, if they need pardon—and passed by. When will a poet arise who shall unite the most accurate perception of facts as they really are—exaggerating nothing, diminishing nothing—with the most ardent passion; who shall be judicial and yet the greatest of lovers? He indeed will make such passion as that of Victor Hugo look pale. Yet the wisdom and charity and moderation of many poems of "L' Année terrible" must not be overlooked: nor the freedom of the poet from party spirit. He is a Frenchman throughout; not a man of the Commune, nor a man of Versailles. The most precious poems of the book are those which keep close to facts rather than concern themselves with ideas. The sunset seen from the ramparts, the floating bodies of the Prussians borne onward by the Seine, caressed and kissed and still swayed on by the eddying water, the bomb which fell near the old man's feet while he sat where had been the convent of the Feuillantines, and where he had walked under the trees in Aprils long ago, holding his mother's hand, the petroleuse dragged like a chained beast through the scorching streets of Paris, the gallant boy who came to confront death beside his friends, —memories of these it is which haunt us when we have closed the book. Of these—and of the little limbs, and transparent fingers and baby smile and murmur like the murmur of bees, and the face changed from rosy health to a pathetic paleness, of the one-year-old grandchild, too soon to become an orphan.

In the works of 1877 no new direction has been taken; but splendours and horrors, heroisms and shames still fill up the legendary record of the centuries; and amidst these glories and dishonours of adult manhood, shines the divine innocence of the child.

1873.

THE POETRY OF DEMOCRACY: WALT WHITMAN.

THAT school of criticism which has attempted in recent years to connect the history of literature and art with the larger history of society and the general movement of civilizations, creeds, forms of national life and feeling, and which may be called emphatically the critical school of the present century, or the naturalist as contradistinguished from the dogmatic school, has not yet essayed the application of its method and principles to the literature and art of America. For a moment one wonderingly inquires after the cause of this seeming neglect. The New World, with its new presentations to the senses, its new ideas and passions, its new social tendencies and habits, must surely, one thinks, have given birth to literary and artistic forms corresponding to itself in strange novelty, unlike in a remarkable degree those sprung from our old-world, and old-world hearts. A moral soil and a moral climate so different from those of Europe must surely have produced a fauna and flora other than the European, a fauna and flora which the writers of literary natural history cannot but be curious to classify, and the peculiarities of which they must endeavour to account for by the special conditions of existence and of the development of species in the new country. It is as much to be expected that poems and pictures requiring new names should be found there as that new living things of any other kind, the hickory and the hemlock, the mocking-bird and the katydid, should be found. So one reasons for a moment, and wonders. The fact is, that while the physical conditions, fostering certain forms of life, and repressing others, operated without let or hindrance, and disclosed themselves in their proper results with the simplicity and sureness of nature, the permanent moral powers were met by others of transitory or local, but for the time, superior authority, which put a hedge around the literature and art of America, enclosing a little paradise of European culture, refinement, and aristocratic delicatesse from the howling wilderness of Yankee democracy, and insulating it from the vital touch and breath of the land, the winds of free, untrodden places, the splendour and vastness of rivers and seas, the strength and tumult of the people.

Until of late indigenous growths of the New World showed in American literature like exotics, shy or insolent. We were aware of this, and expected in an American poet some one to sing for us gently, in a minor key, the pleasant airs we know. Longfellow's was a sweet and characteristic note, but, except in a heightened enjoyment of the antique — a ruined Rhine castle, a goblet from which dead knights had drunk, a suit of armour, or anything frankly mediæval —except in this, Longfellow is one of ourselves—an European. "Evangeline" is an European idyl of American life, Hermann and Dorothea having emigrated to Acadie. "Hiawatha" might have been dreamed in

Kensington by a London man of letters who possessed a graceful idealizing turn of imagination, and who had studied with clear-minded and gracious sympathy the better side of Indian character and manners. Longfellow could amiably quiz, from a point of view of superior and contented refinement, his countrymen who went about blatant and blustering for a national art and literature which should correspond with the large proportions and freedom of the Republic. "We want," cries Mr Hathaway in "Kavanagh," "a national drama, in which scope enough shall be given to our gigantic ideas, and to the unparalleled activity and progress of our people. . . . We want a national literature, altogether shaggy and unshorn, that shall shake the earth, like a herd of buffaloes, thundering over the prairies!" And Mr Churchill explains that what is best in literature is not national but universal, and is the fruit of refinement and culture. Longfellow's fellow-countryman, Irving, might have walked arm-in-arm with Addison, and Addison would have run no risk of being discomposed by a trans-Atlantic twang in his companion's accent. Irving, if he betrays his origin at all, betrays it somewhat in the same way as Longfellow, by his tender, satisfied repose in the venerable, chiefly the venerable in English society and manners, by his quiet delight in the implicit tradition of English civility, the scarcely-felt yet everywhere influential presence of a beautiful and grave Past, and the company of unseen beneficent associations. In Bryant, Europe is more in the background; prairie and immemorial forest occupy the broad spaces of his canvas, but he feels pleasure in these mainly because he is not native to their influences The mountains are not his sponsors; there are not the unconscious ties between him and them which indicate kinship, nor the silences which prove entire communion. Moreover, the life of American men and women is almost unrepresented in the poetry of Bryant. The idealized Red man is made use of as picturesque, an interesting and romantic person; but the Yankee is prosaic as his ledger. The American people had evidently not become an object of imaginative interest to itself in the mind of Bryant.

That the historical school of criticism should not have occupied itself with American literature is then hardly to be wondered at. A chapter upon that literature until recently must have been not a criticism but a prophecy. It was this very fact, the absence of a national literature, which the historical school was called on to explain. And to explain it evident and sufficient causes were producible, and were produced. The strictly Puritan origin of the Americans, the effort imposed upon them of subduing the physical forces of the country, and of yoking them to the service of man, the occupation of the entire community with an absorbing industry, the proximity of Europe, which made it possible for America to neglect the pursuit of the sciences, literature, and the fine arts without relapsing into barbarism—these causes were enumerated by De Tocqueville as having concurred to fix the minds of the Americans upon purely practical objects. "I consider the people of the United States as that portion of the English people which is commissioned to explore the wilds of the New World; whilst the rest of the nation, enjoying more leisure, and less harassed by the drudgery of life, may devote its energies to thought, and enlarge in all directions the empire of the mind." Beside which, before a nation can become poetical to itself, consciously or unconsciously, it must possess a distinctive character, and the growth of national as of individual character is a process of long duration in every case, of longer duration than ordinary when a larger than ordinary variety of the elements of character wait to be assimilated and brought into harmony.

In Emerson a genuine product of the soil was perhaps for the first time apparent to us. We tasted in him the flavour of strange sap, and knew the ripening of another sun and other winds. He spoke of what is old and universal, but he spoke in the fashion of a modern man, and of his own nation. His Greek head pivoted restlessly on true Yankee shoulders, and when he talked Plato he did so in a dialectical variety of Attic peculiar to Boston.* Lowell, at times altogether feudal and European, has also at times a trans-Atlantic air, in the earnest but somewhat vague spiritualism of his earlier poems, his enthusiasm about certain dear and dim general ideas, and more happily in a conception of the democratic type of manhood which appears in some of the poems of later years, especially in that very noble "Ode recited at the Harvard Commemoration, July 21, 1865." But taken as a whole, the works of Lowell do not mirror the life, the thoughts, and passions of the nation. They are works, as it were, of an English poet who has become a naturalized citizen of the United

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* "A Greek head on right Yankee shoulders."—LOWELL.

States, who admires the institutions, and has faith in the ideas of America, but who cannot throw off his allegiance to the old country, and its authorities.

At last steps forward a man unlike any of his predecessors, and announces himself, and is announced with a flourish of critical trumpets, as Bard of America, and Bard of democracy. What cannot be questioned after an hour's acquaintance with Walt Whitman and his "Leaves of Grass," is that in him we meet a man not shaped out of old-world clay, not cast in any old-world mould, and hard to name by any old-world name. In his self-assertion there is a manner of powerful nonchalantness which is not assumed; he does not peep timidly from behind his works to glean our suffrages, but seems to say, "Take me or leave me, here I am, a solid and not an inconsiderable fact of the universe." He disturbs our classifications. He attracts us; he repels us; he excites our curiosity, wonder, admiration, love; or, our extreme repugnance. He does anything except leave us indifferent. However we feel towards him we cannot despise him. He is "a summons and a challenge." He must be understood and so accepted, or must be got rid of. Passed by he cannot be. His critics have, for the most part, confined their attention to the personality of the man; they have studied him, for the most part, as a phenomenon isolated from the surrounding society, the environment, the *milieu*, which has made such a phenomenon possible. In a general way it has been said that Whitman is the representative in art of American democracy, but the meaning of this has not been investigated in detail. It is purposed here to consider some of the characteristics of democratic art, and to inquire in what manner they manifest themselves in Whitman's work.

A word of explanation is necessary. The representative man of a nation is not always the nation's favourite. Hebrew spiritualism, the deepest instincts, the highest reaches of the moral attainment of the Jewish race, appear in the cryings and communings of its prophets; yet the prophets sometimes cried in the wilderness, and the people went after strange gods. American democracy is as yet but half-formed. The framework of its institutions exists, but the will, the conscience, the mature desires of the democratic society are still in process of formation. If Whitman's writings are spoken of as the poetry of American democracy, it is not implied that his are the volumes most inquired after in the libraries of New York or Boston. What we mean is that these are the poems which naturally arise when a man of imaginative genius stands face to face with a great democratic world, as yet but half-fashioned, such as society is in the United States of the present day. Successive editions of his works prove that Whitman has many readers. But whether he had them now, or waited for them in years to come, it would remain true that he is the first representative democrat in art of the American continent. Not that he is to be regarded as a model or a guide; great principles and great passions which must play their part in the future, are to be found in his writings; but these have not yet cleared themselves from their amorphous surroundings. At the same time he is before all else a living man, and must not be compelled to appear as mere official representative of anything. He will not be comprehended in a formula. No *view* of him can image the substance, the life and movement of his manhood, which contracts and dilates, and is all over sensitive and vital. Such views are, however, valuable in the study of literature, as hypotheses are in the natural sciences, at least for the colligation of facts. They have a tendency to render criticism rigid and doctrinaire; the critic must therefore ever be ready to escape from his own theory of a man, and come in contact with the man himself. Every one doubtless moves in some regular orbit, and all aberrations are only apparent, but what the precise orbit is we must be slow to pronounce. Meanwhile we may legitimately conjecture, as Kepler conjectured, if only we remain ready, as Kepler was, to vary our conjectures as the exigencies of the observed phenomena require.

A glance at the art of an aristocratic period will inform us in the way of contrast of much that we may expect to find under a democracy. And before all else we are impressed by the great regard which the artists of an aristocratic period pay to form. The dignity of letters maintains itself, like the dignity of the court, by a regulated propriety of manners. Ideas and feelings cannot be received unless they wear the courtly costume. Precise canons applicable to the drama, the ode, the epic, to painting, sculpture, architecture, music, are agreed upon, and are strictly enforced. They acquire traditional authority, the precedents of a great period of art (such, for example, as that of Louis XIV.), being final and absolute with succeeding generations. "Style is deemed of almost as much importance as thought. . . . The tone of mind is always dignified, seldom very animated, and writers care more to perfect what they produce than to multiply their productions."* The peril to which an aristocratic literature is hereby exposed is of a singular kind; matter or substance may cease to exist, while an empty and elaborately studied form, a variegated surface with nothing below it, may remain. This condition of things was actually realized at different times in the literatures of Italy, of Spain, of France, and of England, when such a variegated surface of literature served for disport and display of the wits of courtiers, of ingenious authors, of noble and gentle persons male and female, and when reflection and imagination had ceased to have any relation with letters.

Again, the literature of an aristocracy is distinguished by its striving after selectness, by its exclusive spirit, and the number of things it proscribes. This is especially the case with the courtly art which has a great monarchy for its centre of inspiration. There is an ever-present terror of vulgarity. Certain words are ineligible in poetry; they are mean or undignified, and the things denoted by them must be described in an elegant periphrasis. Directness and vividness are sacrificed to propriety. The acquired associations of words are felt to be as important, and claim as much attention as their immediate significance, their spiritual power and personal character. In language as in life there is, so to speak, an aristocracy and a commonalty; words with a heritage of dignity, words which have been ennobled, and a rabble of words which are excluded from positions of honour and of trust. But this striving after selectness in forms of speech is the least important manifestation of the exclusive spirit of aristocratic art. Far the greater number of men and women, classes of society, conditions of life, modes of thought and feeling, are not even conceived as in any way susceptible of representation in art which aspires to be grave and beautiful. The common people do not show themselves *en masse* except as they may follow in a patient herd, or oppose in impotent and insolent revolt the leadership of their lords. Individually they are never objects of equal interest with persons of elevated worldly station. Even Shakspeare could hardly find in humble life other virtues than a humorous honesty and an affectionate fidelity. Robin Hood, the popular hero, could not be quite heroic were he not of noble extraction, and reputed Earl of Huntingdon.

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* "Democracy in America," vol. iii. p. 115, ed. 1840.

In the decline of an aristocratic period, dramatic studies of individual character and the life of the peasant or artisan may be made *from a superior point of view.* The literature of benevolence and piety stooping down to view the sad bodies and souls of men tends in this direction. And there are poems and novels, and paintings and sculptures, which flatter the feeling of mild benevolence. Pictures like those of Faed, in which some aged cottager, some strong delver of the earth, or searcher of the sea, some hard-worked father of children, says appealingly, "By virtue of this love I exhibit towards my offspring, by virtue of the correct sense I have of the condescension of my betters, by virtue of this bit of pathos—indubitably human—in my eye, confess now *am* I not a man and a brother?"—pictures like these are produced, and may be purchased by amiable persons of the upper classes who would honour the admirable qualities which exist in humble life. But when the aristocratic period is in its strength, and especially in courtly art and literature, these condescending studies, not without a certain affection and sincerity in them, are unknown. It is as if the world were made up of none but the gently born and bred. At most rustic life is glanced at for the sake of the suggestions of pretty waywardness it may supply to the fancy of great people tired of greatness. To play at pastoral may be for a while the fashion, if the shepherds and shepherdesses are permitted to choose graceful classical names, if the crooks are dainty, and the duties of the penfold not severe, if Phyllis may set off a neat ankle with the latest shoe, and Corydon may complain of the cruel fair in the bitterness of roundel or sonnet. The middle classes, however, the *bourgeoisie,* figure considerably in one department of poetry—in the comic drama. Molière indeed, living under a stricter rule of courtliness, suffered disgrace in consequence of the introduction of so low-bred a person as the excellent M. Jourdain. But to the noble mind of our own Restoration period how rich a material of humour, inexhaustibly diverting, if somewhat monotonous in theme, was afforded by the relations of the high-born and the moneyed classes. The *bourgeois* aping the courtier, the lord making a fool of the merchant, while he makes love to the merchant's wife and daughter—what unextinguishable laughter have variations upon these elementary themes compelled from the occupants of the boxes in our Restoration theatres! There is an innocence quite touching in their openness to impressions from the same comic effects repeated again and again. Harlequin still at the close of the pantomime belabouring Pantaloon is not more sure of his success with the wide-eyed on-lookers in the front row than was the gallant engaged in seducing the draper's or hosier's pretty wife with gold supplied by her husband, in the playhouses favoured by our mirthful monarch and his companions.

All that is noblest in an aristocratic age embodies itself not in its comedy, but its serious art, and in the persons of heroic men and women. Very high and admirable types of character are realized in the creations of epic and dramatic poetry. All the virtues which a position of hereditary greatness, dignity, and peril calls forth—energy of character, vigour of will, disregard of life, of limb, and of property in comparison with honour, the virtues of generosity, loyalty, courtesy, magnificence—these are glorified and illustrated in man; and in woman all the virtues of dependence, all the graces insensibly acquired upon the surface of an externally beautiful world, and at times the rarer qualities called forth by occasional exigencies of her position, which demand virtues of the masculine kind. It is characteristic and right that our chief chivalric epic, the "Faerie Queene," should set before itself as the general end of all the book "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline." The feudal world with Artegall and Calidore, with Britomart and Una, was not wanting in lofty conceptions of human character, male and female

Other characteristics of the art of an aristocratic period may be briefly noted. It is not deeply interested in the future, it gazes forward with no eyes of desire. Why should it? when nothing seems better than that things should remain as they are, or at most that things should be ameliorated, not that a new world should be created. The aristocratic society exists by inheritance, and it hopes from to-morrow chiefly a conserving of the good gifts handed down by yesterday and to-day. Its feeling of the continuity of history is in danger of becoming formal and materialistic; it does not always perceive that the abandonment of old things and the acceptance of new may be a necessary piece of continuity in government, in social life, in art, in religion. At the Present the artist of the period of aristocracy looks not very often, and then askance upon certain approved parts of the Present. But he loves to celebrate the glories of the Past. He displays a preference accordingly for antique subjects, chosen out of the history of his own land, or the histories of deceased nations. Shelley with his eyes fixed upon the golden age to come may stand as representative of the democratic tendencies in art; Scott, celebrating the glories of feudalism, its heroism and its refinements, will remain our great aristocratic artist of the period subsequent to the first French Revolution. The relation of the art to the religion of an age of aristocracy is peculiarly simple. The religious dogma which constitutes the foundation and formative principle of the existing society must have been fully established, and of supreme power, before the aristocratic form of social and political life can have acquired vigour and stability; the intellectual and moral habits favoured by the aristocratic polity—loyalty, obedience, veneration for authority, pride in the past, a willingness to accept things as they come to us from our fathers, a distrust of new things, all favour a permanence of belief. The art, therefore, will upon the whole (peculiar circumstances may of course produce remarkable exceptions) be little disturbed by the critical or sceptical spirit, and, untroubled by doubts, that art will either concern itself not at all with religion, or, accepting the religious dogma without dispute, will render it into artistic form in sublime allegory and symbol, and as it is found embodied in the venerable history of the Church. We may finally note from De Tocqueville the shrinking in an aristocratic society from whatever, even in pleasure, is too startling, violent, or acute, and the especial approval of choice gratifications, of refined and delicate enjoyments.

Now in all these particulars the art of a democratic age exhibits characteristics precisely opposite to those of the art of an aristocracy. Form and style modelled on traditional examples are little valued. No canons of composition are agreed upon or observed without formal agreement. No critical dictator enacts laws which are accepted without dispute, and acquire additional authority during many years. Each new generation, with its new heave of life, its multitudinous energies, ideas, passions, is a law to itself. Except public opinion, there is no authority on earth above the authority of a man's own soul, and public opinion being strongly in favour of individualism, a writer is tempted to depreciate unduly the worth of order, propriety, regularity of the academic kind; he is encouraged to make new literary experiments as others make new experiments in religion; he is permitted to be true to his own instincts, whether they are beautiful instincts or the reverse. The appeal which a work of art makes is to the nation, not to a class, and diversities of style are consequently admissible. Every style can be tolerated except the vapid, everything can be accepted but that which fails to stimulate the intellect or the passions.

Turning to Whitman, we perceive at once that his work corresponds with this state of things. If he had written in England in the period of Queen Anne, if he had written in France in the period of the *grand monarque,* he must have either acknowledged the supremacy of authority in literature and submitted to it, or on the other hand revolted against it. As it is, he is remote from authority, and neither submits nor revolts. Whether we call what he has written verse or prose, we have no hesitation in saying that it is no copy, that it is something uncontrolled by any model or canon, something which takes whatever shape it possesses directly from the soul of its maker. With the Bible, Homer, and Shakspere familiar to him, Whitman writes in the presence of great models, and some influences from each have doubtless entered into his nature; but that they should possess authority over him any more than that he should possess authority over them, does not occur to him as possible. The relation of democracy to the Past comes out very notably here. Entirely assured of its own right to the Present, it is prepared to acknowledge fully the right of past generations to the Past. It is not hostile to that Past, rather claims kinship with it, but also claims equality, as a full-grown son with a father:—

"I conn'd old times;
I sat studying at the feet of the great masters:
Now, if eligible, O that the great masters might return and study me!
In the name of These States, shall I scorn the antique?
Why These are the children of the antique, to justify it.

Dead poets, philosophs, priests,
Martyrs, artists, inventors, governments long since,
Language-shapers on other shores,
Nations once powerful, now reduced, withdrawn or desolate,
I dare not proceed til'. I respectfully credit what you have left, wafted hither:
I have perused it, own it is admirable (moving awhile among it);
Think nothing can ever be greater,—nothing can ever deserve more than it deserves;
Regarding it all intently a long while,—then dismissing it,
I stand in my place, with my own day, here."

It is the same thought which finds expression in the following enumeration of the benefactors of the soul of man in Whitman's prose essay "Democratic Vistas;" after which enumeration, they are dismissed, and a summons is sent forth for the appearance of their modern successors:—

"For us along the great highways of time, those monuments stand—those forms of majesty and beauty. For us those beacons burn through all the nights. Unknown Egyptians, graving hieroglyphs; Hindus with hymn and apothegm and endless epic; Hebrew prophet, with spirituality, as in flashes of lightning, conscience, like red-hot iron, plaintive songs and screams of vengeance for tyrannies and enslavement; Christ, with bent head, brooding love and peace, like a dove; Greek, creating eternal shapes of physical and esthetic proportion; Roman, lord of satire, the sword, and the codex;—of the figures some far-off and veiled, others nearer and visible; Dante, stalking with lean form, nothing but fibre, not a grain of superfluous flesh; Angelo, and the great painters, architects, musicians; rich Shakspeare, luxuriant as the sun, artist and singer of Feudalism in its sunset, with all the gorgeous colours, owner thereof, and using them at will; and so to such as German Kant and Hegel, where they, though near us, leaping over the ages, sit again impassive, imperturbable, like the Egyptian gods. Of these, and the like of these, is it too much, indeed, to return to our favourite figure, and view them as orbs and systems of orbs, moving in free paths in the spaces of that other heaven, the kosmic intellect, the Soul?

"Ye powerful and resplendent ones! ye were in your atmospheres, grown not for America, but rather for her foes, the Feudal and the old—while our genius is Democratic and modern. Yet could ye, indeed, but breathe your breath of life into our New World's nostrils—not to enslave us, as now, but for our needs, to breed a spirit like your own—perhaps (dare we to say it?) to dominate, even destroy, what you yourselves have left! On your plane, and no less, but even higher and wider, will I mete and measure for our wants to-day and here. I demand races of orbic bards, with unconditional, uncompromising sway. Come forth, sweet democratic despots of the west!"

As in all else, so with regard to the form of what he writes, Walt Whitman can find no authority superior to himself, or rather to the rights of the subject which engages him. There is, as Mr Rossetti has observed, "a very powerful and majestic rhythmical sense" throughout his writings, prose and verse (if we consent to apply the term *verse* to any of them), and this rhythmical sense, as with every great poet, is original and inborn. His works, it may be, exhibit no perfect crystal of artistic form, but each is a menstruum saturated with form in solution. He fears to lose the instinctive in any process of elaboration, the vital in anything which looks like mechanism. He does not write with a full consciousness of the processes of creation, nor does any true poet. Certain combinations of sound are preconceived, and his imagination excited by them works towards them by a kind of reflex action, automatically. His *ars poetica* is embodied in the precept that the poet should hold himself passive in presence of the material universe, in presence of society, in presence of his own soul, and become the blind yet unerringly guided force through which these seek artistic expression. No afterthought, no intrusion of reasoning, no calculating of effects, no stepping back to view his work is tolerated. The artist must create his art with as little hesitation, as little questioning of processes, and as much sureness of result as the beaver builds his house. Very nobly Whitman has spoken on this subject, and let those who, because they do not know him, suppose him insensible to any attractions in art except those of the extravagant, the incoherent, and the lawless, read what follows from the preface to " Leaves of Grass : "—

> "The art of art, the glory of expression, and the sunshine of the light of letters is simplicity. Nothing is better than simplicity—nothing can make up for excess, or for the lack of definiteness. To carry on the heave of impulse, and pierce intellectual depths, and give all subjects their articulations, are powers neither common nor very uncommon. But to speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of the movements of animals, and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods, and grass by the roadside, is the flawless triumph of art. If you have looked on him who has achieved it, you have looked on one of the masters of the artists of all nations and times. You shall not contemplate the flight of the grey-gull over the bay, or the mettlesome action of the blood-horse, or the tall leaning of sunflowers on their stalk, or the appearance of the sun journeying through heaven, or the appearance of the moon afterward, with any more satisfaction than you shall contemplate him. The greatest poet has less a marked style, and is more the channel of thoughts and things without increase or diminution, and is the free channel of himself. He swears to his art. . . . . What I tell I tell for precisely what it is. Let who may exalt, or startle, or fascinate, or soothe, I will

have purposes as health, or heat, or snow has, and be as regardless of observation."

Seeing much of deep truth in this, it must be added that, when the poet broods over his half-formed creation, and fashions it with divine ingenuity, and gives it shapeliness and completion of detail, and the lustre of finished workmanship, he does not forsake his instincts, but is obedient to them; he does not remove from nature into a laboratory of art, but is the close companion of nature. The vital spontaneous movement of the faculties, far from ceasing, still goes on like "the flight of the grey-gull over the bay," while the poet seeks after order, proportion, comeliness, melody—in a word, beauty; or rather, as Whitman himself is fond of saying, does not seek but is sought—the perfect form preconceived but unattained, drawing the artist towards itself with an invincible attraction. An artist who does not yield to the desire for perfect order and beauty of form, instead of coming closer to nature is really forsaking nature, and doing violence to a genuine artistic instinct. Walt Whitman, however, knows this in all probability well enough, and does not need to be taught the mysteries of his craft. We will not say that his poems, as regards their form, do not, after all, come right, or that for the matter which he handles his manner of treatment may not be the best possible. One feels, as it has been well said, that although no counting of syllables will reveal the mechanism of the music, the music is there, and that "one would not for something change ears with those who cannot hear it." Whitman himself anticipates a new theory of literary composition for imaginative works, and especially for highest poetry, and desires the recognition of new forces in language, and the creation of a new manner of speech which cares less for what it actually realizes in definite form than "for impetus and effects, and for what it plants and invigorates to grow." Nevertheless, when we read not the lyrical portions of Whitman's poetry, but what may be called his poetical statements of thoughts and things, a suspicion arises that if the form be suitable here to the matter, it must be because the matter belongs rather to the chaos than the kosmos of the new-created world of art.

The principle of equality upon which the democratic form of society is founded, obviously opposes itself to the exclusive spirit of the aristocratical polity. The essential thing which gives one the freedom of the world is not to be born a man of this or that rank, or class, or caste, but simply to be born a man. The literature of an aristocratic period is distinguished by its aim at selectness, and the number of things it proscribes; we should expect the literature of a democracy to be remarkable for its comprehensiveness, its acceptance of the persons of all men, its multiform sympathies. The difference between the President and the Broadway mason or hodman is inconsiderable—an accident of office; what is common to both is the inexpressibly important thing, their inalienable humanity. Rich and poor, high and low, powerful and feeble, healthy and diseased, deformed and beautiful, old and young, man and woman, have this in common, and by possession of this are in the one essential thing equal, and brethren one of another. Even between the virtuous man and the vicious the difference is less than the agreement; they differ by a quality, but agree by the substance of their manhood. The *man* in all men, however it may be obscured by cruel shocks and wrenches of life which distort, by long unnatural uses which deform, by ignorance, by the well-meaning stupidity of others, or by one's own stupidity, by foul living, or by clean, hard, worldly living, is surely somewhere discoverable. How can any human creature be rejected, any scorned, any mocked? Such satire and such comedy as appear in aristocratic society are discouraged by the genius of democracy. The spirit of exclusiveness will, it is true, never fail to find material for its support, and baser prides may replace the calm, conservative, but unaggressive pride of hereditary dignity. Nevertheless it remains no less true that the spectacle of a great democracy present to the imagination, and the temper of the democracy accepted by the understanding heart, favour only such prides as are founded on nature —that is, on the possession, acquired or inherited, of personal qualities, personal powers, and virtues, and attainments.

If this be a true account of some characteristics of the art which arises when a man of imaginative genius stands face to face with a great democracy, Walt Whitman in these particulars is what he claims to be, a representative democrat in art. No human being is rejected by him, no one slighted, nor would he judge any, except as "the light falling around a helpless thing" judges. No one in his poems comes appealing "Am I not interesting, am I not deserving, am I not a man and a brother?"

We have had, he thinks, "ducking and deprecating about enough." The poet studies no one from a superior point of view. He delights in men, and neither approaches deferentially those who are above him, nor condescendingly gazes upon those who are beneath. He is the comrade of every man, high and low. His admiration of a strong, healthy, and beautiful body, or a strong, healthy, and beautiful soul, is great when he sees it in a statesman or a savant; it is precisely as great when he sees it in the ploughman or the smith. Every variety of race and nation, every condition in society, every degree of culture, every season of human life, is accepted by Whitman as admirable and best, each in its own place. Working men of every name—all who engage in field-work, all who toil upon the sea, the city artisan, the woodsman and the trapper, fill him with pleasure by their presence; and that they are interesting to him not in a general way of theory or doctrine (a piece of the abstract democratic creed), but in the way of close, vital human sympathy, appears from the power he possesses of bringing before us with strange precision, vividness, and nearness in a few decisive strokes the essential characteristics of their respective modes of living. If the strong, full-grown working man wants a lover and comrade, he will think Walt Whitman especially made for him. If the young man wants one, he will think him especially the poet of young men. Yet a rarer and finer spell than that of the lusty vitality of youth, or the trained activity of manhood, is exercised over the poet by the beautiful repose or unsubdued energy of old age. He is "the caresser of life, wherever moving." He does not search antiquity for heroic men and beautiful women; his own abundant vitality makes all the life which surrounds him a source of completest joy; "what is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me . . . . not asking the sky to come down to my good-will; scattering it freely for ever."

But it is not those alone who are beautiful and healthy and good who claim the poet's love. To all "the others are down on" Whitman's hand is outstretched in help, and through him come to us the voices—petitions or demands—of the diseased and despairing, of slaves, of prostitutes, of thieves, of deformed persons, of drunkards. Every man is a divine miracle to him, and he sees a *redeemer*, whom Christ will not be ashamed to acknowledge a comrade, in every one who performs an act of loving self-sacrifice:—

"Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row, from three lusty angels with shirts bagged out at their waists;
The snag-tooth'd hostler with red hair redeeming sins past and to come,
Selling all he possesses, travelling on foot to fee lawyers for his brother, and sit by him while he is tried for forgery."

Does no limit, then, exist to the poet's acceptance of the persons of men? There is one test of his tolerance more severe than can be offered by the vicious or the deformed. Can he tolerate the man of science? Yes, though he were to find him peeping and botanizing upon his mother's grave. Science and democracy appear before Whitman as twin powers which bend over the modern world hand in hand, great and beneficent. Democracy seems to him that form of society which alone is scientifically justifiable; founded upon a recognition of the facts of nature, and a resolute denial of social fables, superstitions, and uninvestigated tradition. Moreover he looks to science for important elements which shall contribute to a new conception of nature and of man, and of their mutual relations, to be itself the ideal basis of a new poetry and art—"after the chemist, geologist, ethnologist, finally shall come the Poet worthy that name; the true Son of God shall come singing his songs." Lastly, Whitman has a peculiar reason of his own for loving science; he is a mystic, and such a mystic as finds positive science not unacceptable. Whitman beholds no visions of visible things in heaven or hell unseen to other men. He rather sees with extraordinary precision the realities of our earth, but he sees them, in his mystical mood, as symbols of the impalpable and spiritual. They are hieroglyphs most clear-cut, most brilliantly and definitely coloured to his eyes, but still expressive of something unseen. His own personality as far as he can give it expression or is conscious of it—that identity of himself, which is the hardest of all facts and the only entrance to all facts, is yet no more than the image projected by another ego, the real *Me*, which stands "untouched, untold, altogether unreached:"—

"Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory signs and bows,
With peals of ironical laughter at every word I have written,
* * * * * *
Now I perceive I have not understood anything—not a single object; and that no man ever can.
I perceive Nature, here in sight of the sea, is taking advantage of me, to dart upon me, and sting me,
Because I have dared to open my mouth to sing at all."

To such mysticism science cannot succeed in opposing itself; it can but provide the mystic with a new leaf of the sacred writing in which spiritual truths are recorded.

> "Only (for me, at any rate, in all my prose and poetry), joyfully accepting modern science, and loyally following it without the slightest hesitation, there remains ever recognised still a higher flight, a higher fact, the Eternal Soul of Man, (of all else too), the Spiritual, the Religious—which it is to be the greatest office of scientism, in my opinion, and of future poetry also, to free from fables, crudities and superstitions, and launch forth in renewed faith and scope a hundred fold. To me the worlds of Religiousness, and of the conception of the Divine and of the Ideal, though mainly latent, are just as absolute in Humanity and the Universe as the world of Chemistry, or anything in the objective world. . . . To me the crown of Savantism is that it opens the way for a more splendid Theology and for ampler and diviner songs."

If Whitman seems suspicious of any class of men disposed to be antagonistic to any, it is to those whose lives are spent among books, who are not in contact with external nature, and the stir and movement of human activity, but who receive things already prepared, or, as Whitman expresses it, "distilled." He knows that the distillations are delightful, and would intoxicate himself also, but he will not let them. Rather he chooses to "lean and loafe at his ease, observing a spear of summer grass," to drink the open air (that is, everything natural and unelaborated); he is "enamoured of growing out-doors." At the same time his most ardent aspiration is after a new literature, accordant with scientific conceptions, and the feelings which correspond with democracy. And to the literature of the old world and of feudalism he willingly does justice. "American students may well derive from all former lands, ...

from witty and warlike France, and markedly, and in many ways, and at many different periods, from the enterprise and soul of the great Spanish race, bearing ourselves always courteous, always deferential, indebted beyond measure to the mother-world, to all its nations dead, as to all its nations living—the offspring, this America of ours, the daughter not by any means of the British Isles exclusively, but of the Continent, and of all continents." True culture and learning Whitman venerates; but he suspects men of refinement and polite letters and dainty information, the will-o'-the-wisps of Goethe's "Mährchen," who "lose themselves in countless masses of adjustments," who end by becoming little better than "supercilious infidels," whose culture, as Carlyle long since observed, is of a "sceptical-destructive" kind.

Men of every class then are interesting to Whitman. But no individual is pre-eminently interesting to him. His sketches of individual men and women, though wonderfully vivid and precise, are none of them longer than a page; each single figure passes rapidly out of sight, and a stream of other figures of men and women succeeds. Even in "Lincoln's Burial Hymn" he has only a word to say of "the large sweet soul that has gone;" the chords of his nocturn, with their implicated threefold sweetness, odour and sound and light, having passed into his strain, really speak not of Lincoln but of death. George Peabody is celebrated briefly, because through him, "a stintless, lavish giver, tallying the gifts of earth," a multitude of human beings have been blessed, and the true service of riches illustrated. No single person is the subject of Whitman's song, or can be; the individual suggests a group, and the group a multitude, each unit of which is as interesting as every other unit, and possesses equal claims to recognition. Hence the recurring tendency of his poems to become catalogues of persons and things. Selection seems forbidden to him; if he names one race of mankind the names of all other races press into his page; if he mentions one trade or occupation, all other trades and occupations follow. A long procession of living forms passes before him; each several form, keenly inspected for a moment, is then dismissed. Men and women are seen *en masse*, and the mass is viewed not from a distance, but close at hand, where it is felt to be a concourse of individuals. Whitman will not have the people appear in his poems by representatives or delegates; the people itself, in its undiminished totality, marches through his poems, making its greatness and variety felt. Writing down the headings of a Trades' Directory is not poetry; but this is what Whitman never does. His catalogues are for the poet always, if not always for the reader, *visions*—they are delighted—not perhaps delightful—enumerations; when his desire for the perception of greatness and variety is satisfied, not when a really complete catalogue is made out, Whitman's enumeration ends; we may murmur, but Whitman has been happy; what has failed to interest our imaginations has deeply interested his; and even for us the impression of multitude, of variety, of equality is produced, as perhaps it could be in no other way. Whether Whitman's habit of cataloguing be justified by what has been said, or is in any way capable of justification, such at least is its true interpretation and significance.

One can perceive at a glance that these characteristics of Whitman's work proceed directly from the democratic tendencies of the world of thought and feeling in which he moves. It is curious to find De Tocqueville, before there existed properly any native American literature, describing in the spirit of philosophical prophecy what we find realized in Whitman's "Leaves of Grass":—

> "He who inhabits a democratic country sees around him, on every hand, men differing but little from each other; he cannot turn his mind to any one portion of mankind without expanding and dilating his thought till it embraces the whole world . . . . The poets of democratic ages can never take any man in particular as the subject of a piece, for an object of slender importance, which is distinctly seen on all sides, will never lend itself to an ideal conception. . . . As all the citizens who compose a democratic community are nearly equal and alike, the poet cannot dwell upon any one of them; but the nation itself invites the exercise of his powers. The general similitude of individuals which renders any one of them, taken separately, an improper subject of poetry, allows poets to include them all in the same imagery, and to take a general survey of the people itself. Democratic nations have a clearer perception than any other of their own aspect; and an aspect so imposing is admirably fitted to the delineation of the ideal."

The democratic poet celebrates no individual hero, nor does he celebrate himself. "I celebrate myself," sings Whitman, and the longest poem in "Leaves of Grass" is named by his own name; but the self-celebration throughout is celebration of himself as a man and an American; it is what he possesses in common with all others that he feels to be glorious and worthy of song, not that which differentiates him from others; manhood, and in particular American manhood, is the real subject of the poem "Walt Whitman;" and although Whitman has a most poignant feeling of personality, which indeed is a note of all he has written, it is to be remembered that in nearly every instance in which he speaks of himself the reference is as much impersonal as personal. In what is common he finds what is most precious. The true hero of the democratic poet is the nation of which he is a member, or the whole race of man to which the nation belongs. The mettlesome, proud, turbulent, brave, self-asserting young Achilles, lover of women and lover of comrades of Whitman's epic, can be no other than the American people; the Ulysses, the prudent, the 'cute, the battler with the forces of nature, the traveller in sea-like prairie, desolate swamp, and dense forest is brother Jonathan. But if the American nation is his hero, let it be observed that it is the American nation as the supposed leader of the human race, as the supposed possessor in ideas, in type of character, and in tendency if not in actual achievement of all that is most powerful and promising for the progress of mankind.

To the future Whitman looks to justify his confidence in America and in democracy. The aspect of the present he finds both sad and encouraging. The framework of society exists; the material civilization is rich and fairly organized. Without any transcendentalism or political mysticism about the principle of universal suffrage, not glossing over its "appalling dangers," and for his own part content that until its time were come self-government should wait, and the condition of authoritative tutelage continue, he yet approves the principle as "the only safe and preservative one for coming times," and sees in America its guardian. He dwells with inexhaustible delight upon certain elements in the yet unformed personal character of the average American man and woman. And his experience, and the experience of the nation during the civil war—proving the faithfulness, obedience, docility, courage, fortitude, religious nature, tenderness, sweet affection of countless numbers of the unnamed, unknown rank and file of North and South—practically justifies democracy in Whitman's eyes "beyond the proudest claims and wildest hopes of its enthusiasts." But at the same time no one perceives more clearly, or observes with greater anxiety and alarm, the sore diseases of American society; and leaving us to reconcile his apparently contradictory statements he does not hesitate to declare that the New World democracy, "however great a success in uplifting the masses out of their sloughs, in materialistic development, products, and in a certain highly deceptive superficial popular intellectuality, is so far an almost complete failure in social aspects, in any superb general personal character, and in really grand religious, moral, literary, and æsthetic results." A vast and more and more thoroughly appointed body Whitman finds in the American world, and little or no soul. His senses are flattered, his imagination roused and delighted by the vast movement of life which surrounds him, its outward glory and gladness, but when he inquires, what is behind all this? the answer is of the saddest and most shameful kind. The following passage is in every way, in substance and in manner, highly characteristic of Whitman; but the reader must remember that in spite of all that he discerns of evil in democratic America, Whitman remains an American proud of his nationality, and a believer who does not waver in his democratic faith ;—

"After an absence, I am now (September 1870,) again in New York City and Brooklyn, on a few weeks' vacation. The splendour, picturesqueness, and oceanic amplitude and rush of these great cities, the unsurpassed situation, rivers and bay, sparkling sea-tides, costly and lofty new buildings, the façades of marble and iron of original grandeur and elegance of design, with the masses of gay colour, the preponderance of white and blue, the flags flying, the endless ships, the tumultuous streets, Broadway, the heavy, low, musical roar, hardly ever intermitted even at night; the jobbers' houses, the rich shops, the wharves, the great Central Park, and the Brooklyn Park of Hills (as I wander among them this beautiful fall weather, musing, watching, absorbing)—the assemblages of the citizens in their groups, conversations, trade, evening amusements, or along the by-quarters—these, I say, and the like of these, completely satisfy my senses of power, fulness, motion, &c., and give me, through such senses and appetites, and through my æsthetic conscience, a continued exaltation and absolute fulfilment. Always, and more and more, as I cross the East and North Rivers, the ferries, or with the pilots in their pilot-houses, or pass an hour in Wall Street, or the gold exchange, I realize (if we must admit such partialisms) that not Nature alone is great in her fields of freedom, and the open air, in her storms, the shows of night and day, the mountains, forests, seas—but in the artificial, the work of man too is equally great—in this profusion of teeming humanity, in these ingenuities, streets, goods, houses, ships—these seething, hurrying, feverish crowds of men, their complicated business genius (not least among the geniuses), and all this mighty, many-threaded wealth and industry concentrated here.

"But sternly discarding, shutting our eyes to the glow and grandeur of the general effect, coming down to what is of the only real importance, Personalities, and examining minutely, we question, we ask, Are there, indeed, *Men* here worthy the name? Are there athletes? Are there perfect women, to match the generous material luxuriance? Is there a pervading atmosphere of beautiful manners? Are there crops of fine youths and majestic old persons? Are there arts worthy Freedom, and a rich people? Is there a great moral and religious civilization—the only justification of a great material one?

> "Confess that rather to severe eyes, using the moral microscope upon humanity, a sort of dry and flat Sahara appears, these cities, crowded with petty grotesques, malformations, phantoms, playing meaningless antics. Confess that everywhere in shop, street, church, theatre, bar-room, official chair, are pervading flippancy and vulgarity, low cunning, infidelity—everywhere the youth puny, impudent, foppish, prematurely ripe—everywhere an abnormal libidinousness, unhealthy forms, male, female, painted, padded, dyed, chignoned, muddy complexions, bad blood, the capacity for good motherhood deceasing or deceased, shallow notions of beauty, with a range of manners, or rather lack of manners (considering the advantages enjoyed) probably the meanest to be seen in the world."

Such a picture of the outcome of American democracy is ugly enough to satisfy the author of "Shooting Niagara—and after?" but such a picture only represents the worst side of the life of great cities. Whitman can behold these things, not without grief, not without shame, but without despair. He does not unfairly contrast the early years of confusion and crudity of a vast industrial and democratic era with the last and perfected results of an era of feudalism and aristocracy. He finds much to make him sad; but more to make him hopeful. He takes account of the evil anxiously, accurately; and can still rejoice. Upon the whole his spirit is exulting and prompt in cheerful action; not self-involved, dissatisfied, and fed by indignation. Contrast with the passage given above Whitman's preface to "Leaves of Grass" prefixed to Mr Rossetti's volume of Selections, with its joyous confidence and pride in American persons and things, or that very noble poem "A Carol of Harvest, for 1867," in which the armies of blue-clad conquering men are seen streaming North, and melt away and disappear, while in the same hour the heroes reappear, toiling in the fields, harvesting the products, glad and secure under the beaming sun, and under the great face of Her, the Mother, the Republic, without whom not a scythe might swing in security, "not a maize-stalk dangle its silken tassels in peace." If all enthusiasm about political principles be of the nature of *Schwärmerei*, Whitman's feeling towards the Republic deserves that name; but he would have the principles of democracy sternly tested by results,—results however not only present but such prospective results as are logically inevitable, and he has faith in them not because they seem to him to favour freedom any more than because they seem to favour law and self-control, and security and order. He, as much as Mr Carlyle, admires "disciplined men," and believes that with every disciplined man "the arena of *Anti*-Anarchy, of God-appointed *Order* in this world" is widened; but he does not regard military service as the type of highest discipline, nor the drill-sergeant as the highest conceivable official person in the land.

The principle of political and social equality once clearly conceived and taken to heart as true, works outward through one's body of thought and feeling in various directions. As in the polity of the nation every citizen is entitled by virtue of the fact of his humanity to make himself heard, to manifest his will, and in his place to be respected, so in the polity of the individual man, made up of the faculties of soul and body, every natural instinct, every passion, every appetite, every organ, every power, may claim its share in the government of the man. If a human being is to be honoured as such, then every part of a human being is to be honoured. In asserting one's rights as a man, one asserts the rights of everything which goes to make up manhood. It is the democratic temper to accept realities unless it is compelled to reject them; to disregard artificial distinctions, and refer all things to natural standards, consequently to honour things because they are natural, and exist. Thus we find our way to the centre of what has been called the "materialism" of Whitman—his vindication of the body as it might be more correctly termed. Materialist, in any proper sense of the word, he is not; on the contrary, as Mr Rossetti has stated, "he is a most strenuous asserter of the soul," but "with the soul, of the body, as its infallible associate and vehicle in the present frame of things." And as every faculty of the soul seems admirable and sacred to him, so does every organ and function and natural act of the body. But Whitman is a poet; it is not his manner to preach doctrines in an abstract form, by means of a general statement; and the doctrine, which seems to him of vital importance, that a healthy, perfect body—male or female—is altogether worthy of honour, admiration, and desire is accordingly preached with fulness and plainness of detail.

The head of his offending with many who read, and who refuse to read him, lies here. That lurking piece of asceticism, not yet cast out of most of us, which hints that there is something peculiarly shameful in the desire of the sexes for one another, of the man for the woman, and of the woman for the man, will certainly find matter enough of offence in one short section of "Leaves of Grass," that entitled "Children of Adam." And one admission must be made to Whitman's disadvantage. If there be any class of subjects which it is more truly natural, more truly human *not* to speak of than to speak of (such speech producing self-consciousness, whereas part of our nature, it may be maintained, is healthy only while it lives and moves in holy blindness and unconsciousness of self), if there be any sphere of silence, then Whitman has been guilty of invading that sphere of silence. But he has done this by conviction that it is best to do so, and in a spirit as remote from base curiosity as from insolent licence. He deliberately appropriates a portion of his writings to the subject of the feelings of sex, as he appropriates another, "Calamus," to that of the love of man for man, "adhesiveness," as contrasted with "amativeness," in the nomenclature of Whitman, comradeship apart from all feelings of sex. That article of the poet's creed, which declares that man is very good, that there is nothing about him which is naturally vile or dishonourable prepares him for absolute familiarity, glad, unabashed familiarity with every part and every act of the body. The ascetic teaching of many Mediæval writers is unfavourable to morality by its essential character; Whitman's may become unfavourable by accident. "As to thy body, thou art viler than muck. Thou wast gotten of so vile matter, and so great filth, that it is shame for to speak, and abomination for to think. Thou shalt be delivered to toads and adders for to eat." "If thou say that thou lovest thy father and thy mother because thou art of their blood and of flesh gotten, so are the worms that come from them day by day. If thou love brethren or sisters or other kindred, because they are of the same flesh of father and mother and of the same blood, by the same reason should thou love a piece of their flesh, if it be shorn away." "All other sins [but wedlock] are nothing but sins, but this is a sin, and besides denaturalizes thee, and dishonours thy body. It soileth thy soul, and maketh it guilty before God, and moreover defileth thy flesh."* These were the views of pious persons of the great thirteenth century. Here the body and the soul are kept in remote severance, each one the enemy of the other. Such spirituality, condemned alike by the facts of science and by the healthy natural human instincts, is seen by Whitman to be, even in its modern modifications, profoundly immoral. The lethargy of the soul induces it willingly to take up under some form or another with a theory which directs it heavenwards on the swift wings of devotional aspiration, rather than heavenwards for joy, but also earthwards for laborious duty, to animate, to quicken, to glorify all that apart from it is dull and gross. Both directions of the soul are declared necessary to our complete life by Whitman —the one in solitude, the other in society.

> "Only in the perfect uncontamination and solitariness of individuality may the spirituality of religion positively come forth at all. Only here, and on such terms, the meditation, the devout ecstasy, the soaring flight. Only here, communion with the mysteries, the eternal problems, whence? whither? Alone, and identity, and the mood,—and the soul emerges, and all statements, churches, sermons, melt away like vapours. Alone, and silent thought, and awe, and aspiration,—and then the interior consciousness, like a hitherto unseen inscription, in magic ink, beams out its wondrous lines, to the sense. Bibles may convey, and priests

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* Quotations from the "Mirror of S. Edmond" and "Hali Meidenhead," published by the Early English Text Society.

expound, but it is exclusively for the noiseless operation of one's isolated self, to enter the pure ether of veneration, reach the divine levels, and commune with the unutterable."

Then the soul can return to the body, and to the world, and possess them, and infuse its own life into them :—

"I sing the Body electric ;
The armies of those I love engirth me, and I engirth them ;
They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to them,
And discorrupt them, and charge them full with the charge of
the Soul."

Having acknowledged that Whitman at times forgets that the "instinct of silence," as it has been well said, "is a beautiful, imperishable part of nature," and that in his manner of asserting his portion of truth there is a crudity which needlessly offends, everything has been acknowledged, and it ought not to be forgotten that no one asserts more strenuously than does Whitman the beauty, not indeed of asceticism, but of holiness or healthiness, and the shameful ugliness of unclean thought, desire, and deed. If he does not assert holiness as a duty, it is because he asserts it so strongly as a joy and a desire, and because he loves to see all duties transfigured into the glowing forms of joys and of desires. The healthy repose and continence, and the healthy eagerness and gratification of appetite, are equally sources of satisfaction to him.* If in some of his lyrical passages there seems entire self-abandonment to passion, it is because he believes there are, to borrow his own phrase, "native moments," in which the desires receive permission from the supreme authority, conscience, to satisfy themselves completely ;—

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* Whitman writes :—"Since I have been ill, (1873-74-75), mostly without serious pain, and with plenty of time and frequent inclination to judge my poems, (never composed with eye on the book-market, nor for fame, nor for any pecuniary profit), I have felt temporary depression more than once, for fear that in LEAVES OF GRASS the *moral* parts are not sufficiently pronounc'd. But in my clearest and calmest moods I have realized that as those LEAVES, all and several, surely prepare the

> "From the master—the pilot I yield the vessel to ;
> The general commanding me, commanding all—from him permission taking."

Whitman's most naked physical descriptions and enumerations are those of a robust, vigorous, clean man, enamoured of living, unashamed of body as he is unashamed of soul, absolutely free from pruriency of imagination, absolutely inexperienced in the artificial excitements and enhancements of jaded lusts. "I feel deeply persuaded," writes one of Whitman's critics who has received the impression of his mind most completely and faithfully,* "that a perfectly fearless, candid, ennobling treatment of the life of the body (so inextricably intertwined with, so potent in its influence on the life of the soul), will prove of inestimable value to all earnest and aspiring natures, impatient of the folly of the long prevalent belief that it is because of the greatness of the spirit that it has learned to despise the body, and to ignore its influences ; knowing well that it is, on the contrary, just because the spirit is not great enough,

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way for, and necessitate morals, and are adjusted to them, just the same as Nature does and is, they are what consistently with my plan, they must and probably should be. (In a certain sense while the moral is the purport and last intelligence of all Nature, there is absolutely nothing of the moral in the works or laws or shows of Nature. They only lead inevitably to it—begin and necessitate it)."

* "A Woman's Estimate of Walt Whitman." From late letters by an English Lady to W. M. Rossetti. "The Radical," May, 1870.

not healthy and vigorous enough, to transfuse itself into the life of the body, elevating that and making it holy with its own triumphant intensity; knowing too how the body avenges this by dragging the soul down to the level assigned itself. Whereas the spirit must lovingly embrace the body, as the roots of a tree embrace the ground, drawing thence rich nourishment, warmth, impulse. Or rather the body is itself the root of the soul—that whereby it grows and feeds. The great tide of healthful life that carries all before it, must surge through the whole man, not beat to and fro in one corner of his brain. 'O the life of my senses and flesh, transcending my senses and flesh.' For the sake of all that is highest, a truthful recognition of this life, and especially of that of it which underlies the fundamental ties of humanity—the love of husband and wife, fatherhood, motherhood—is needed."

The body then is not given authority over the soul by Whitman. Precisely as in the life of the nation a great material civilization seems admirable to him and worthy of honour, yet of little value in comparison with or apart from a great spiritual civilization, a noble national character, so in the life of the individual all that is external, material, sensuous, is estimated by the worth of what it can give to the soul. No Hebrew ever maintained the rights of the spiritual more absolutely. But towards certain parts of our nature, although in the poet's creed their rights are dogmatically laid down, he is practically unjust. The tendencies of his own nature lead him in his preaching to sink unduly certain articles of his creed. The logical faculty, in particular, is almost an offence to Whitman. The processes of reasoning appear to him to have elaboration for their characteristic, and nothing elaborated or manufactured seems of equal reality with what is natural and has grown. Truth he feels to be, as Wordsworth has said, "a motion or a shape instinct with vital functions;" and were Whitman to seek for formal proof of such truth, he, like Wordsworth, would lose all feeling of conviction, and yield up moral questions in despair. "A slumbering woman and child convince as an university course can never convince:"

> "Logic and sermons never convince,
> The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul."

Whitman becomes lyrical in presence of the imagination attempting for itself an interpretation of the problems of the world; he becomes lyrical in presence of gratified senses and desires; but he remains indifferent in presence of the understanding searching after conclusions. There is something like intolerance or want of comprehensiveness here; one's heart, touched by the injustice, rises to take the part of this patient, serviceable, despised understanding.

Whitman, as we have seen, accepts the persons of all men, but for a certain make of manhood he manifests a marked preference. The reader can guess pretty correctly from what has gone before what manner of man best satisfies the desires of the poet, and makes him happiest by his presence; and what is the poet's ideal of human character. The man possessed of the largest mass of manhood, manhood of the most natural quality, unelaborated, undistilled, freely displaying itself, is he towards whom Whitman is instinctively attracted. The heroes honoured by the art of an aristocracy are ideal, not naturalistic. Their characters are laboriously formed after a noble model, tempered as steel is tempered, welded together and wrought into permanent shape as their armour is. The qualities which differentiate them from most men are insisted upon. They are as little a growth of nature (in the vulgar sense of the word *nature*), as is a statue. Corneille's stoical heroes, for example, are the work of a great *art* applied to human character. Our true nature can indeed only be brought to light by such art processes, but there is an art which works with nature, and another art which endeavours to supersede it. Only through culture, only through the strenuous effort to conceive things at their best, not as they are, but as they may and ought to be, only through the persistent effort to constrain them to their ideal (that is their most real) shapes, can human character and human society and the works of man become truly natural. Such art does not supersede nature, but is rather nature obtaining its most perfect expression through the consciousness of man. So declares Polixenes in "A Winter's Tale:"—

"Nature is made better by no mean,
But nature makes that mean; so, over that art,
Which, you say, adds to nature, is an art
That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scion to the wildest stock;
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race: This is an art
Which does mend nature—change it rather; but
The art itself is nature."

Whitman has not failed to perceive this truth, but he fears that it may be abused. Meddling with nature is a dangerous process. Any idea or model, after which we attempt to shape our humanity, must proceed from some *view* of human nature, and our *views* are too often formal and contracted, manufactures turned out of the workshop of the intellect, of which the ultimate product cannot but be a formal and contracted character. But human nature itself is large and incalculable ; and, if allowed to grow unconstrained and unperverted, it will exhibit the superb vitality and the unimpeachable rectitude of the perfect animal or blossoming tree. Using *natural*, then, in the vulgar sense, there are some men more than others a part of nature ; men not modelled after an idea remote from the instincts of manhood ; vigorous children of the earth, of wholesome activity, passionate, gay, defiant, proud, curious, free, hospitable, courageous, friendly, wilful. In such men Whitman sees the stuff of all that is most precious in humanity. "Powerful uneducated persons" are the comrades he loves to consort with :

"I am enamour'd of growing out-doors ;
Of men that live among cattle, or taste of the ocean, or woods ;
Of the builders and steerers of ships, and the wielders of axes and mauls, and the drivers of horses ;
I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out."

These are certainly not the persons who engage the imagination in the literature of an aristocracy.

It must not, however, be supposed that Whitman sets himself against culture. He would, on the contrary, studiously promote culture, but a culture which has another ideal of character than that grown of feudal aristocracies, and which, accepting the old perennial elements of noblest manhood, combines them "into groups, unities appropriate to the modern, the democratic, the West." No conception of manhood can be appropriate unless it be of a kind which is suitable not to the uses of a single class or caste, but to those of the high average of men. The qualities of character which are judged of most value by the democratic standard are not extraordinary, rare, exceptional qualities; the typical personality, which the culture sets before itself as its ideal, is one attainable by the average man. The most precious is ever in the common. Such a culture, Whitman holds, will be that of "the manly and courageous instincts, and loving perceptions, and of self-respect." Central in the character of the ideal man is the simple, unsophisticated Conscience, the primary moral element: "If I were asked to specify in what quarter lie the grounds of darkest dread, respecting the America of our hopes, I should have to point to this particular. . . . . Our triumphant, modern Civilizee, with his all-schooling, and his wondrous appliances, will still show himself but an amputation while this deficiency remains." If Whitman appears to be antagonistic to culture, as we commonly understand or misunderstand the term, to refinement, intellectual acquisition, multiform and delicate sympathies, the critical spirit, it is "not for absolute reasons, but current ones." In our times, he believes, refinement and delicatesse "threaten to eat us up like a cancer. . . . . To prune, gather, trim, conform, and ever cram and stuff, is the pressure of our days. . . . Never, in the Old World, was thoroughly upholstered Exterior Appearance and show, mental and other, built entirely on the idea of caste, and on the sufficiency of mere outside acquisition—never were Glibness, verbal Intellect more the test, the emulation—more loftily elevated as head and sample,—than they are on the surface of our Republican States this day."

In antagonism to the conception of culture which bears such fruit as this, Whitman desires one which, true child of America, shall bring joy to its mother, "recruiting myriads of men, able, natural, perceptive, tolerant, devout, real men, alive and full." In like manner Whitman's models of womanly personality—the young American woman who works for herself and others, who dashes out more and more into real hardy life, who holds her own with unvarying coolness and decorum, who will compare, any day, with superior carpenters, farmers, "and even boatmen and drivers," not losing all the while the charm, the indescribable perfume of genuine womanhood, or that resplendent person down on Long Island, known as the Peacemaker, well toward eighty years old, of happy and sunny temperament, a sight to draw near and look upon with her large figure, her profuse snow-white hair, dark eyes, clear complexion, sweet breath, and peculiar personal magnetism—these portraits, he admits, are frightfully out of line from the imported feudal models—"the stock feminine characters of the current novelists, or of the foreign court poems (Ophelias, Enids, Princesses, or Ladies of one thing or another), which fill the envying dreams of so many poor girls, and are accepted by our young men, too, as supreme ideals of female excellence to be sought after. But I present mine just for a change."

In the period of chivalry there existed a beautiful relation between man and man, of which no trace remains in existence as an institution—that of knight and squire. The protecting, encouraging, downward glance of the elder, experienced, and superior man was answered by the admiring and aspiring, upward gaze of the younger and inferior. The relation was founded upon inequality; from the inequality of the parties its essential beauty was derived. Is there any possible relation of no less beauty, corresponding to the new condition of things, and founded upon equality? Yes, there is manly comradeship. Here we catch one of the clearest and most often reiterated notes of Whitman's song. The feelings of equality, individualism, pride, self-maintenance, he would not repress; they are to be as great as the soul is great; but they are to be balanced by the feelings of fraternity, sympathy, self-surrender, comradeship. European Radicals have for the most part been divided into two schools, with the respective watchwords of *Equality* and *Fraternity*. Whitman expresses the sentiments of both schools, while his position as poet rather than theorist or politician, saves him from self-devotion to any such socialistic or communistic schemes, as the premature interpretation of the feeling of fraternity into political institutions has given birth to in untimely abortion. One division of "Leaves of Grass," that entitled "Calamus" (Calamus being the grass with largest and hardiest spears and with fresh pungent *bouquet*), is appropriated to the theme of comradeship. And to us it seems impossible to read the poems comprised under this head without finding our interest in the poet Walt Whitman fast changing into hearty love of the man, these poems, through their tender reserves and concealments and betrayals, revealing his heart in its weakness and its strength more than any others. The chord of feeling which he strikes may be old—as old as David and Jonathan—but a fulness and peculiarity of tone are brought out, the like of which have not been heard before. For this love of man for man, as Whitman dreams of it, or rather confidently expects it, is to be no rare, no exceptional emotion, making its possessors illustrious by its singular preciousness, but it is to be widespread, common, unnoticeable.

"I hear it was charged against me that I sought to destroy institutions;
But really I am neither for nor against institutions:
(What indeed have I in common with them? Or what with the destruction of them?)
Only I will establish in the Mannahatta, and in every city of These States, inland and seaboard,
And in the fields and woods, and above every keel, little or large, that dents the water,
Without edifices, or rules, or trustees, or any argument,
The institution of the dear love of comrades."

In this growth of America, comradeship, which Whitman looks upon as a sure growth from seed already lying in the soil, he believes the most substantial hope and safety of the States will be found. In it he sees a power capable of counterbalancing the materialism, the selfishness, the vulgarity of American democracy—a power capable of spiritualizing the lives of American men. Many, Whitman is aware, will regard this assurance of his as a dream; but such loving comradeship seems to him implied in the very existence of a democracy, "without which it will be incomplete, in vain, and incapable of perpetuating itself." In the following poem the tenderness and ardour of this love of man for man finds expression, but not its glad activity, its joyous fronting the stress and tumultuous agitation of life :—

"When I heard at the close of the day how my name had been receiv'd with plaudits in the capitol, still it was not a happy night for me that follow'd ;
And else, when I carous'd, or when my plans were accomplished, still I was not happy ;
But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect health, refresh'd, singing, inhaling the ripe breath of autumn,
When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and disappear in the morning light,
When I wander'd alone over the beach, and undressing, bathed, laughing with the cool waters, and saw the sun rise,
And when I thought how my dear friend, my lover, was on his way coming, O then I was happy ;
O then each breath tasted sweeter—and all that day my food nourish'd me more—and the beautiful day pass'd well.
And the next came with equal joy—and with the next, at evening, came my friend ;
And that night, while all was still, I heard the waters roll slowly continually up the shores,
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands, as directed to me, whispering, to congratulate me,
For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the same cover in the cool night,
In the stillness, in the autumn moonbeams, his face was inclined toward me,
And his arm lay lightly around my breast—and that night I was happy."

Various workings in the poems of Whitman of the influence of the principle of equality as realized in the society which surrounds him have now been traced. No portion of the poet's body of thought and emotion escapes its pervading power, and in a direct and indirect manner it has contributed to determine the character of his feeling with respect to external nature. In the way of crude mysticism Whitman takes pleasure in asserting the equality of all natural objects, and forces, and processes, each being as mysterious and wonderful, each as admirable and beautiful as every other; and as the multitude of men and women, so, on occasions, does the multitude of animals, and trees, and flowers press into his poems with the same absence of selection, the same assertion of equal rights, the same unsearchableness, and sanctity, and beauty, apparent or concealed in all. By another working of the same democratic influence (each man finding in the world what he cares to find) Whitman discovers everywhere in nature the same qualities, or types of the same qualities, which he admires most in men. For his imagination the powers of the earth do not incarnate themselves in the forms of god and demi-god, faun and satyr, oread, dryad, and nymph of river and sea—meet associates, allies or antagonists of the heroes of an age, when the chiefs and shepherds of the people were themselves almost demi-gods. But the great Mother—the Earth—is one in character with her children of the democracy, who, at last, as the poet holds, have learnt to live and work in her great style. She is tolerant, includes diversity, refuses nothing, shuts no one out; she is powerful, full of vitality, generous, proud, perfect in natural rectitude, does not discuss her duty to God, never apologizes, does not argue, is incomprehensible, silent, coarse, productive, charitable, rich in the organs and instincts of sex, and at the same time continent and chaste. The grass Whitman loves as much as did Chaucer himself; but his love has a certain spiritual significance which Chaucer's had not. It is not the "soft, sweet, smale grass," embroidered with flowers, a fitting carpet for the feet of glad knights and sportive ladies, for which he cares. In the grass he beholds the democracy of the fields, earthborn, with close and copious companionship of blades, each blade like every other, and equal to every other, spreading in all directions with lusty life, blown upon by the open air, "coarse, sunlit, fresh, nutritious." The peculiar title of his most important volume, "Leaves of Grass," as Mr Rossetti has finely observed, "seems to express with some aptness the simplicity, universality, and spontaneity of the poems to which it is applied."

The character of Whitman's feeling with respect to external nature bears witness to the joyous bodily health of the man.* His communication with the earth, and sea, and skies, is carried on through senses that are never torpid, and never overwrought beyond the measure of health. He presses close to nature, and will not be satisfied with shy glances or a distant greeting. He enjoys the strong sensations of a vigorous nervous system, and the rest and recuperation which follow. His self-projections into external objects are never morbid; when he employs the "pathetic fallacy" the world shares in his joyousness; he does not hear in the voices of the waters or of the winds echoes of a miserable egotism, the moan of wounded vanity, or the crying of insatiable lust. He is sane and vigorous. But his relation with nature is not one in which the senses and perceptive faculty have a predominant share. He passes through the visible and sensible things, and pursues an invisible somewhat—

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* The above was written before the beginning of Whitman's long and baffling attack of paralysis. A spiritual beauty, not unconnected with the environing presence of Death, illuminates the best of his recent poems.

> "A motion and a spirit that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things ;"

and of this he can never quite possess himself. "There is [in his poems] a singular interchange of actuality and of ideal substratum and suggestion. While he sees men with even abnormal exactness as men, he sees them also 'as trees walking,' and admits us to perceive that the whole show is in a measure spectral and unsubstantial, and the mask of a larger and profounder reality beneath it, of which it is giving perpetual intimations and auguries."*

In the direction of religion and philosophy there is in the democratic state of society a strong tendency, as De Tocqueville has shown, towards a pantheistic form of belief, and a strong tendency towards the spirit of optimism. The equality existing between citizens, and the habit of mind which refuses to observe the ancient artificial social distinctions, give the general intellect a turn for reducing things to unity, a passion for comprehending under one formula many objects, and reducing to one cause many and various consequences.† Where castes or classes of society exist, one caste or class seems to object singularly little to the perdition of the inferior breeds of the human race—"this people who knoweth not the law are cursed." The Hindú could contemplate the fate of a Mlechha, the Jew that of a Gentile, the Mohammedan that of a Giaur, without overwhelming concern. But when the vision of a common life of the whole human race has filled the imagination, when a real feeling of solidarity is established between all the members of the great human community, the mind seems to shrink in horror from the suspicion that the final purposes of God or nature, with respect to man, can be other than beneficent. Society in the democratic condition is not fixed and desirous of conservation, but perpetually moving, and men's desires (apart from the results of scientific observation) induce them to hope, to conjecture, to believe that this movement is progressive. Biology and natural history with their doctrines of development and evolution, the science of origins with its surveys of the earliest history of our race, seems to confirm the conviction, so flattering to men's desires, that nature and man harmoniously work under laws which tend towards a great and fortunate result. The events of the past are interpreted in the light of this conviction. Faith in the future becomes passionate, exists in the atmosphere, and obtaining nutriment from every wind, appears to sustain itself apart from all evidence—that miracle which belongs to every popular faith. The past progress of the race, the great future of the race to match the greatness of its past, the broad dealings of Providence or of natural law with mankind—when the thoughts of these, and feelings corresponding to such thoughts, have occupied the mind and heart, there appears something not only horrible, but something artificial, inconsequent, non-natural, in the notion of endless and fruitless penal suffering. And it is a noteworthy fact—the more remarkable when we bear in mind the Puritanical basis of American religion—that in the many new forms of religion which America has put forth as a tree puts forth leaves, in the many attempts towards the realization of a new conception of our relation to God and to one another, an almost constant element is the belief in the final happiness of all men.

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* W. M. Rossetti. Prefatory notice to "Poems by Walt Whitman."

† See "La Démocratie en Amérique," tome 3, chaps. vii., viii.

The religious faith of Whitman, as far as it has definite form, reminds one of that taught in the Pedagogic Institution of Wilhelm Meister's *Wanderjahre*, in which from the Three Reverences inculcated, reverence for what is above us, reverence for what is around us, reverence for what is beneath us, springs the highest reverence, reverence for oneself. And with Whitman as with the Pedagogic company perfect reverence casts out fear. But he is not anxious to give his creed a precise form; he is so little interested in the exclusion of heretics that he does not require very accurate symbols and definitions.

> "And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,
> For I, who am curious about each, am not curious about God,
> (No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God and about death)."

Finding the present great and beautiful, contented with the past, but not driven into the past to seek for ideals of human character and a lost golden age, Whitman has entire confidence in what the future will bring forth. He knows not what the purposes of life are for us, but he knows that they are good. Nowhere in nature can he find announcements of despair, or fixity of evil condition. He is sure that in the end all will be well with the whole family of men, and with every individual of it. The deformed person, the mean man, the infant who died at birth, the "sacred idiot," will certainly be brought up with the advancing company of men from whose ranks they have dropped :—

> "The Lord advances, and yet advances ;
> Always the shadow in front—always the reach'd hand, bringing up the laggards."

At times this optimism leads Whitman to the entire denial of evil ; "he contemplates evil as, in some sense, not existing, or, if existing, then as being of as much importance as anything else ;" in some transcendental way, he believes, the opposition of God and Satan cannot really exist. Practically, however, he is not led astray by any such transcendental reducing of all things to the Divine. Any tendency of a mystical kind to ignore the distinction between good and evil, is checked by his strong democratic sense of the supreme importance of personal qualities, and the inevitable perception of the superiority of virtuous over vicious personal qualities.

By one who feels profoundly that the differences between men are determined, not by rank, or birth, or hereditary name or title, but simply by the different powers belonging to the bodies and souls of men, there is small danger of the meaning of *bad* and *good* being forgotten. And Whitman never really forgets this. The formation of a noble national character, to be itself the source of all literature, art, statesmanship, is that which above all else he desires. In that character the element of religion must, according to Whitman's ideal, occupy an important place, only inferior to that assigned to moral soundness, to conscience. "We want, for These States, for the general character, a cheerful, religious fervour, imbued with the ever-present modifications of the human emotions, friendship, benevolence, with a fair field for scientific inquiry [to check fanaticism], the right of individual judgment, and always the cooling influences of material Nature." These are not the words of one who moves the landmarks of right and wrong, and obscures their boundaries. For Whitman the worth of any man is simply the worth of his body and soul; each gift of nature, product of industry, and creation of art, is valuable in his eyes exactly in proportion to what it can afford for the benefit of body and soul. Only what belongs to these, and becomes a part of them, properly belongs to us—the rest is mere "material." This mode of estimating values is very revolutionary, but it is essentially just and moral. The rich man is not he who has accumulated unappropriated matter around him, but he who possesses much of what "adheres, and goes forward, and is not dropped by death."

Personality, character, is that which death cannot affect. Here again Whitman's democratic feeling for personality overmasters his democratic tendency towards pantheism. He clings to his identity and his consciousness of it, and will not be tempted to surrender that consciousness in imagination by the attractions of any form of *nirvana*. Death, which is a name to him full of delicious tenderness and mystery not without some element of sensuousness curiously blended with it—("O the beautiful touch of Death, soothing and benumbing a few moments, for reasons"), is but a solemn and immortal birth :—

> "Dark Mother, always gliding near, with soft feet,
> Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
> Then I chant it for thee—I glorify thee above all;
> I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come
> unfalteringly." *

From such indications as these, and others that have gone before, the reader must gather, as best as he can, the nature of Whitman's religious faith. But the chief thing to bear in mind is that Whitman cares far less to establish propositions than to arouse energy and supply a stimulus. His pupil must part from him as soon as possible, and go upon his own way.

> "I tramp a perpetual journey—(come listen all!)
> My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut from
> the woods;
> No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair;
> I have no chair, no church, no philosophy;
> I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, or exchange!
> But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,
> My left hand hooking you round the waist,
> My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents, and a plain
> public road."

That plain public road each man must travel for himself.

Here we must end. We have not argued the question

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* So Whitman kept his *Passage to India* (full of the thought of death) for last word even to his Centennial dithyramb. "Not as in antiquity, at highest festival of Egypt, the noisome skeleton of death was also sent on exhibition to the revellers, for zest and shadow to the occasion's joy and light—but as the perfect marble statue of the normal Greeks at Elis, suggesting death in the form of a beautiful and perfect young

which many persons are most desirous to put about Walt Whitman—"Is he a poet at all?" It is not easy to argue such a question in a profitable way. One thing only needs to be said,—no adequate impression of Whitman's poetical power can be obtained from this study. A single side of his mind and of his work has been examined, but such criticism as the present, narrowed and perhaps hardened by a tendency half doctrinaire, we attempt with an abiding remembrance of the truth expressed by Vauvenargues:—"Lorsque nous croyons tenir la vérité par un endroit, elle nous échappe par mille autres." To pass through and beyond a *view* of such a writer as Whitman,—a writer whose best function is to supply stimulus and energy,—and to enter into a vital personal contact with him is essential to true knowledge of his character. But views may help us on our way.*

man, with closed eyes leaning on an inverted torch—emblem of rest and aspiration after action—of crown and point to which all lives and poems should steadily have reference, namely the justified and noble termination of our identity, this grade of it, and outlet preparation to another grade."

* Any one who desires to know Whitman aright, would do well to make acquaintance with "Notes on Walt Whitman, as Poet and Person," by John Burroughs (New York, J. S. Redfield, 1871), and his more recent essay on Whitman in "Birds and Poets" (1877).

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